

Your Committee has increased by one member since last year and there are now five people on the Committee: John our Secretary, Ian our Treasurer, Rosie our main fundraiser (and with Chris, organiser of the Photo Competition), Julia and me.

As I said last year, for a long time we have tried to let people know that we have funds available to help people with a learning disability and their families but requests remain few and far between. This year, though, we have reached a milestone in that we have given out over £100,000 of the legacy that the Society received in 2010. When we received this legacy the Committee set out a plan to use this money up over 10 years, donating approximately £30,000 each year. We also get smaller donations. Last year we were saddened to hear that Ted Clifford had passed away. Ted has been associated with Mid-Sussex MENCAP almost since it began and has been a strong supporter of the Society. A collection was made at Ted's funeral and that money has been used to buy a wheelchair friendly picnic bench for Woodlands Mead School.

In the main, where we do make donations, they tend to be to other organisations that help and support people with a learning disability rather than making donations to individual people. In the year under review we have helped some individuals by paying for new furniture and equipment for four youngsters setting up a new home in Burgess Hill; buying an iPad and helping two young people to get to their course in Crawley. We have also helped some organisations including support for The Yews and providing heating for Signposts. It is strange that given the stringent service cuts by West Sussex County Council, we have not had a flood of requests for help.

We still hold less frequent Committee meetings (five again this year) and try to do our business through e-mails in between meetings. This does seem to be working despite one or two problems. We have moved these meeting back to the evenings so as to accommodate visiting guests.

There is still the question of whether there is a need for a Mid-Sussex MENCAP local Society? On balance, there probably is given that we have helped one or two people and enabled some organisations to keep going. There used to be seven local MENCAP Societies in West Sussex but now there are only two - Worthing and little us. If Mid-Sussex MENCAP disappears, then that will call into question the limited help that we do give to individuals and organisations and would probably mean the end of Gateway and our Photo and Art competitions. But we are an aging Committee (apart from Julia) and we won't always be around. There is an urgent need for people to take our place on the Committee.

We have continued to develop and keep up to date as well as we can our web site [www.midsussexmencap.org.uk](http://www.midsussexmencap.org.uk) and it remains one of our main methods of giving information to people about what is happening around Mid-Sussex and further afield.

For many years, probably near to 30 years, we have received very good levels of support from National MENCAP liaison Officers and this has helped us greatly in keeping up to date with developments at National level which affect the lives of people with a learning disability and their carers. Unfortunately, last year, James and Annabel left MENCAP to work with the Quality Care Commission and we miss them sorely. We have had a replacement but someone who has been given a much larger area of the country to look after and the result

is that there has been very limited contact with the new Officer. This will impact on our ability to keep members up to date with developments but we will do our best.

The really good side of the Society's activities and what continues to keep the Committee energised are the two successful Gateway Clubs. Their success is due to the excellent work that Diane does as our Gateway Leader, supported by her many volunteers. Diane has worked hard on recruiting new volunteers with great success. The Mid-Sussex club is now well settled into the St Andrew's Church Hall in Burgess Hill. Our links with the East Grinstead Gateway Club remain strong thanks to the good work that Diane does in maintaining a positive relationship with the members and committee at that Club.

Last year we held our annual Mary Wheeler Art Competition which was again very successful with over 80 entries of a very high quality. Everyone who came along to the prize-giving ceremony enjoyed seeing the pride and feelings of achievement that the winners had when receiving their prizes. I must again put on record our sincere thanks to Ross Thompson for the hard work that he puts in to judging the entries.

Last year, we also held our other much awaited annual event, the Photo and Film Competition, now in its 30<sup>th</sup> year. The prize-giving ceremony at the Martlets in Burgess Hill in June was a great success and again it was good to see the pride on people's faces as they received their prizes. This was the second year that the Competition had been organised by Rosie and Chris and they continue to amaze us with the amount of work and energy that they put into making the competition a success.

In the summer we held what is now our annual Summer Party and Disco. Again it was very successful with music from the Horsham Accordion Band and Gary and the day was enjoyed by many people. This will definitely be an annual event for us.

We have continued to raise funds and publicise ourselves with flag days in Hassocks and Haywards Heath and I want to thank all who helped us in these flag days by giving up an hour or so to 'shake a tin'.

Finally, I would like to thank all those people who help us on a voluntary and paid basis to make Mid-Sussex MENCAP a success. This includes all my colleagues on the committee as well as Diane and the volunteers at Burgess Hill and East Grinstead Gateway clubs. I would also like to thank all those who help with our fund-raising activities, whether through giving up an hour or so on flag days, making cakes, or donating items for Tombolas and the like. I hope that I haven't missed anyone out – Mid-Sussex MENCAP's continued success depends on a joint effort.

Peter Evans

Chairman, Mid-Sussex MENCAP

April 2014

## **FUTURE PLANS**

Our plans for 2014/2015 are to:

1. Continue to examine and review our Policies to ensure that they remain relevant and conform to legal and insurance requirements and to add to our Policies where necessary
2. Generate, and meet, more requests for financial help from our membership, individuals with a learning disability and other people and organisations associated with people with a learning disability in the Mid-Sussex area
3. Continue to support the Club Leader and volunteers and to develop and expand all Gateway activities in Mid-Sussex and East Grinstead
4. Continue all our efforts at fundraising, both to generate income and to publicise and market our presence in Mid-Sussex and our role in supporting people with a learning disability.
5. Run the Photo and Film Competition and the Mary Wheeler Art Competition
6. Do what we can, where necessary in conjunction with other organisations, to help and support those affected by the cuts in services from West Sussex County Council

Peter Evans

Chairman, Mid-Sussex MENCAP

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