



Childhood First



Kent Friends

Spring Newsletter 2020 | Issue 8



Message from Sarah

Dear Friends

I am pleased to introduce the 8th edition of the Kent Friends' newsletter, celebrating our fundraising successes and also looking to the future of Childhood First and upcoming developments and events.

2019 saw our generous supporters help us to meet and exceed our fundraising target of £5,500. This money has been raised specifically to go towards a new Summer House project at Greenfields, home to 10 children and young people aged 5-11.

Moving forward, it is going to be a busy time for the Childhood First Kent communities as they seek to expand their services

by refurbishing and adding an extension on to Greenfields and, in time, acquiring and developing a new property in Biddenden to look after children aged 11-18.

Special thanks to all those who have taken part in one of our recent events, to all the able helpers who have made it possible to run them and not forgetting the generosity of charitable trusts and private donors.

With warm wishes

Sarah Scarratt
Trustee

List of Current Committee Members

- Sarah Scarratt (Chair)
- Catriona Prest (Secretary)
- Amanda Petch
- Susie Christian
- Amanda Taggart
- Emma Griffin
- Bridget Griffiths
- D Massey
- Clara King (Fundraising & Events Manager)



Childhood First

Childhood First provides residential care and treatment to children and young people who have suffered the most severe emotional trauma within their family setting.

Local authorities refer these children to Childhood First because of their outstanding reputation for delivering the highest quality of care and treatment that leads to the best possible outcomes.



Greenfields House and School

Greenfields is a residential therapeutic community with a special school, providing therapeutic care, education and treatment for up to 10 children aged 5-11. They specialize in the treatment of children who present with severe emotional, psychological and behavioural problems as a result of attachment difficulties rooted in early life trauma and abuse.

Out of respect for their privacy and in order to safeguard the children and young people in Childhood First's care, it wouldn't be appropriate to share images or further information about their adverse experiences. This can make it difficult to really communicate the breadth

and impact of Childhood First's work. Instead, we have included below some testimonies from Childhood First staff which begin to explain the healing process through their eyes, followed by a story of one young boy's incredible bravery.



The Gables

The Gables is a residential therapeutic community with a special school, providing specialist therapeutic care, education and treatment for 'hard to place' children with complex needs, aged 10-18. The Gables combines individual therapy with a strong group-based culture which helps children engage with their difficulties, and support one another in recovering and achieving their potential.

Staff Testimonials

To see a child change from being incredibly violent, consistently violent, and then that starting to fade away and that child saying to me that they don't want to hurt me anymore, that to me is a profound thing. It's a massive thing.

Link worker, 2 years at CF

If they feel safe then they can start to progress in every aspect of their lives. That's the important thing, to help them feel safe and secure in their environment and their relationships. That's the challenge. And it can be very challenging.

Deputy team leader and Supervisor,
3.5 years at CF

There is always a pull to family. The children will always want to go back to or engage with their families. If I can help to improve that engagement, really, genuinely, any movement forward is good

Placement and family support worker, 7 years

As you start to feel more significant and the child treats you as more significant and starts to seek more support and validation from you, that's when it starts to get more emotionally intense but for me it's a nice thing. It doesn't feel like a job. You start to live it and for me it's become a primary focus in life.

Therapeutic Care-worker, 6 months with CF

Martin's Story

Martin was born into a family where both parents suffered mental illness. After the birth, he was transferred to a psychiatric unit with his mother, so that she could receive treatment for severe depression. Martin then went into foster care for eight months, following which he was sent home.

Martin lived for four years in an environment dominated by drug use, domestic violence and suicide attempts by both parents. He was sexually abused by his father. He developed emotional and behavioural difficulties, including extreme physical aggression.

Martin was moved into foster care at the age of four, but was repeatedly reunited with his parents, only to be sent back to foster care. Martin came to us aged seven, when no foster carer could safely manage him anymore. By then he had moved home 40 times in his short life.

Our initial experience of Martin was a very angry and physically aggressive little boy. He was unable to conform to any boundaries and would break his toys repeatedly. Our first challenge was to keep Martin, and everyone else in the home, safe.

On the basis of our developing relationships with Martin, as part of the structured daily round of community life, we were then able to begin the painstaking work of piecing together an understanding of his inner world and working therapeutically to heal him.

As a result of sustained and expert therapeutic attention, Martin was gradually able to integrate his experience of himself and others, and to articulate and process what had happened to him. In a loving community, he began to develop the capacity for trust and for hope.

Martin's physical violence diminished as his ability to put feelings into words increased. He began to be able to accept adult reassurance and praise.

Martin left us at age 10, ready and able to cope in a residential special school, where he could mix with a wider group of children and be looked after and educated in a less intensive environment. Martin is 15 now and is working towards his GCSEs.

News

The Gables extension

As the result of a major programme of works to upgrade The Gables, the home has doubled its capacity since its inception in October 2012.

The building development, which commenced in March 2018 and which was completed in October 2018, has enabled us to deliver an 'Outstanding' service, thus improving the therapeutic care whilst nurturing and supporting the children and young people that reside in the home with minimal disruption.

Since the completion of the building project, a recent Ofsted inspection saw the home retain its 'outstanding' rating, with the inspector noting that "The home provides an environment where the children can begin to overcome the impact of their negative experiences (trauma), thus enabling them to manage the intensity of their emotions more effectively

Orette King,
Director of the Gables



Goal Exceeded!

Thanks to your support we have exceeded our target of £5,500 and raised an incredible £6,335 for the Summer House project at Greenfields. Please see below a piece from Natalie, Deputy Director of Greenfields, on what they plan to do and how it will benefit the children and young people in their care. As always, thank you for your invaluable support.



Here at Greenfields a pivotal part of our work is ensuring that the children in our care are able to learn and heal, have a sense of belonging and a place they can call their home. An important part of that healing process is to allow them to have a childhood and give them positive experiences and the opportunities to be able to play. Our vision is to create an extra play space for the children in a cosy and contemporary summer house in place of our well-loved bike shed, situated in the small garden. We want a space the children can use year-round, even if the weather is grotty and they don't want to play outside. These facilities will enrich the children's play and encourage them to stay active.

Future Plans

Greenfields Extension

Three out of four of the Childhood First communities have recently been updated and refurbished, ensuring that the properties continue to provide the warm and therapeutically designed environment necessary

for the children to overcome their trauma. Greenfields now requires refurbishment and an extension, to increase their capacity by one extra bedroom and also introduce new spaces for the children and staff.

Oakwood

2020 will see Childhood First embark on ambitious plans to expand their capacity by acquiring a third community in Kent, next door to Greenfields and The Gables, for children aged 11-18.

2019 Events Summary

Vintage Bridge Tea

Friday 8th November

The annual Bridge Tea held at Benenden Village Hall in November was once again a huge success. Chicago bridge was the format and the players tucked into a magnificent array

of sandwiches, scones and cakes all served on vintage cake stands. An incredible £1,359 was raised via ticket sales and a raffle which was supported very generously.



Literary Laughs Book Quiz

Thursday 5th December

We held another sellout quiz at The Lime Wharf Café at Bodiam Boating Station in early December and raised an impressive £1,140.30! Each year, proceeds from the quiz go towards Christmas presents and treats for the children.



Wreath Making Day

Friday 6th December

14 Guests attended our wreath making day in Headcorn. Once again Amanda Taggart from Jolly Lovely gave an expert demonstration. Lunch was then served with a goodly amount of mulled wine to round off this very successful day which raised £1,163.54!



Dates for your Diary

19
JUNE

Great Dixter House & Gardens with Fergus Garrett | 5:45pm

We are delighted to be hosting an exclusive fundraising event at Great Dixter House and Gardens. Drinks and canapés will be served in this beautiful setting with an address by head gardener Fergus Garrett who will give a rare insight into life at Great Dixter.

Guests will enjoy a private tour of the medieval hall house and also have time to explore this legendary garden.

Invitations to this event will be sent out mid-March.

30
OCT

Vintage Bridge Tea Friday Benenden Village Hall

3
DEC

Literary Laughs Book Quiz The Lime Wharf Café, Bodiam Boating Station

4
DEC

Wreath Making Day Friday Headcorn

Get Involved & Contact

If you are interested in supporting childhood first in any of the capacities detailed above please get in touch on

cking@childhoodfirst.org.uk | 020 7928 7388



Childhood First

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