

News & Views

'You, Me and Brain Injury'

was the awareness raising catchphrase for Brain Injury Week in May. It could have been written with Headway B&S client **Robert Griffiths** in mind!

Robert was a self employed builder and a very happy and active family man. His life changed on 2 June 2016 when he suffered a bleed on the brain. After a month in hospital Robert came home and his wife Debbie gave up her job to become his full time carer. Wheelchair bound to begin with, Robert's sight was affected, he suffered memory loss, reduced concentration, difficulty processing information, lack of motivation, and expressive aphasia.

In the following months Robert became very low and slept most of the time. He had lost his business, and all ability to provide for his family.

After some unsuccessful attempts at finding suitable outside support, Debbie found Headway B&S Carers Department. They helped to get a social worker, funding for some Lifestyles support, and then a Headway Sports department placement in March 2017.

At first Robert was quiet and withdrawn - and walked slowly with a stick. But over the following months he improved significantly! Headway staff have observed a huge improvement in his balance, stamina and fitness as well as cognition and mental well being. Robert's memory and concentration have also



improved. "Headway Sports have given him his life back," said Debbie, who went on to say: "I'm over the moon with the support he's received - he's a different person for the better!" Robert echoed this sentiment and said: "I love everything and everyone in Sports and feel much better now."

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Picture: Robert and his wife Debbie

NEW LOOK NEW FOCUS

Your new look newsletter will focus more closely on clients, fundraising, news and events.

Please tell us what you think!
Editor Rick Wise

You, Me...continued from page 1

Popular and compassionate, Robert continues to improve and can now swim 16 lengths of the pool with ease. He is Headway's top cricket batsman and enjoys the camaraderie with fellow clients and staff.

And the story goes on...

Robert's wife Debbie has been so moved by the support they have received that she took a very brave decision to have her head shaved to raise funds for Headway Sports. This amazing sponsored head-shave took place at the first ever annual presentation evening for Headway Birmingham & Solihull Sports & Wellbeing.

The Sports Presentation

Evening took place at Langley Hall Social Club on 16 March, and celebrated the achievements of our sports users across the year. During the course of the evening Debbie Griffiths was encouraged by clients and staff alike as her emotional head-shave took place! (Pic: above right.)



The Sports champions were:

Tennis: Angela Thompson. Swimming: Robert Griffiths. Cricket: Alan Johnson. Soft Archery: John Varney. Real Archery: Alex Dyhouse. Boccia: Faisal Yasin. Cycling: Tony Carter. Fishing: Gary Evans. Golf: John France. Horseriding: Roger Donegan. Table Tennis: Tim Marshall. Shooting: David Stocks. Bowling: Stephen Edwards. Photography: Mark Hannaby. Walking Football: Richard Clarke

There were Special Achievement presentations, and awards for 'Most Improved' and 'Best Newcomer' in a sport. Tim Marshall received 'Sportsman of the Year' Award. Well done everyone!

Below: some of the trophy winners



A Special Thank You

to Lifestyles client Helen Driscoll for her moving words describing the support she's had from us, and for her gift of £10,000 to help us continue our work. Helen sustained a brain injury in 2017 after a fall. After five months she was struggling to cope and at a very low ebb. "I literally wanted to smash my head against a wall at some moments - I had memory issues, my ability to speak when tired would disappear, and I would often not understand what was being said to me" she wrote in a letter to Headway after eventually contacting us. She continued: "From my first contact with a sympathetic and helpful person at Headway, I immediately felt a huge relief, and the sense of isolation - all around me as if I were encased in a huge block of ice - started to crack. It was an important moment in my life and my recovery." Helen went on to say that Solyman, her Lifestyle worker, has been a lifeline. "He is



empathetic and immensely encouraging. Above all else he has made me feel understood in a world where no outside person has any idea of what a brain injury does to you." Helen explained that having someone to share the difficulties, and triumphs too, has made all the difference. In difficult times she would comfort herself with the knowledge that she could share the problem. Helen finished her letter by saying: "I thank Headway from the bottom of my heart. My only regret is that I did not contact you sooner." Thank you once again Helen, who is pictured above with Solyman!

Disney Magic!

Client Anne Tebbutt has always wanted to visit Disneyland with her favourite character, Pooh Bear. This dream came true in May when she was able to be accompanied by her Headway support workers on a self-funded visit to Disneyland Paris!

Headway Lifestyles support has also helped to change Anne's life for the better in other ways too, including a recent move to a supported apartment, helping her to live independently in the community.





Thank You to everyone who supported our third Easter Fun Run!

The run was held at Cofton Park on Sunday 25 March, and a record 150 runners took part. Many were in Easter themed costume, helping to raise over £1,500 for our specialist brain injury services.

Julie Wedgbury, the Fundraising

Manager at Headway B&S, said: "We were so lucky with the weather as a week earlier the park was covered in snow!" She thanked the local supermarkets for donating bottled water and Easter eggs, and Birmingham company Frenkel Topping who sponsored the race numbers and medals. The winners were all local to south Birmingham, with Matt Cockle the first male to finish, Laura Leslie the first

female, with Emma Swallow and Sue Hill awarded for their Easter outfits.

We were pleased to welcome Frenkel Topping representative Tom Matthieson who ran the race himself then stayed on to congratulate the winners and present the certificates and prizes.

Pic: The winners! Laura Leslie, Matt Cockle, Sue Hill, Tom Matthieson, Emma Swallow.

Calling All Cyclists!

The Heart of England Bike Ride takes place on Sunday 8 July from Packwood House near Lapworth. Organised by Knowle & Dorridge Lions Club to raise money for Headway and their other chosen charities, it includes a 12 mile leisure ride and a 50 mile sportive.

For details visit:
www.knowleanddorridgelions.com/bikeride



A Marathon Effort!

Debbie Baxter set herself a challenge when she applied for the single place available to Headway in April's Virgin London Marathon! 53 year old Debbie said: "Having been a nurse for over 30 years, I've looked after people with many types of brain injuries and seen first-hand the brilliant work

that Headway do. I was honoured to get the ballot place and determined to do the charity proud." Debbie has indeed done us proud, raising £3,765.40!

Training started well last winter, but by March she was having trouble with a knee and hip injury. Despite this she was determined to go ahead and said afterwards: "I wanted to attempt it to say thank you to everyone who had given me such fantastic support. I couldn't have completed the course without some help from Sam Tibbins and Daniel Cooke over the last few miles." (pic below)

You are an inspiration Debbie, and we are proud of you. Thank you!



Tennis - Faisal Yassin and Angela Thompson are two of our sports clients enjoying regular tennis sessions with support from the **Dan Maskell Tennis Trust**. Thank you!



The Henry Smith Charity

Sincere thanks to the trustees at the Henry Smith Charity for funding our Family Support and Fast Track worker. This 3 year grant will help us reach out more quickly to families whose lives have been rocked by a serious brain injury.



Improving life after brain injury

Registered Charity No 1008798
Company Reg number 2686647

Leighton House
20 Chapel Rise,
Birmingham Great Park,
Rednal,
Birmingham B45 9SN

Headway House
Moseley Hall Hospital,
Alcester Road,
Birmingham B13 8JL

Website:

www.headway-bs.org.uk
enquiries@headway-bs.org.uk

Main Contact telephone:
0121 457 7541

Headway Charity Shops:
69 Thornbridge Avenue,
Great Barr,
Birmingham B42 2PW
tel: 0121 357 1296

183 New Road, Rubery,
Birmingham B45 9JP
tel: 0121 453 4798



Volunteers Please!

Headway depends on its team of unpaid volunteers in order to offer a high level of client service, and more volunteers are urgently needed. We have vacancies in most areas of our work. Interested? Please call Alison in Personnel for more details on 0121 457 7541 and please pass this article on to anyone you think might be interested in volunteering!

Stop press: Volunteers in our Rubery Charity Shop urgently needed

Patron Tony Belli - We are delighted to confirm that Tony Belli has agreed to become a patron of our charity.

Formerly a Headway trustee, he is currently Professor of Trauma Neurology at the University of Birmingham, a consultant Neurosurgeon at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and an advisor to NICE and the Care Quality Commission. He is a Member of the Expert Panel on Concussion and Head Injury of the Football Association and Rugby Football Union. We very much appreciate Professor Belli's active support of our work.



Limericks! In a 'Living with a Brain Injury' session at Leighton

House clients were asked to create limericks about their brain injuries and how it has affected their lives and feelings. Examples of client's limericks were posted on Facebook.

This inspired the mother of a 12 year old boy with a brain injury to do the same. Here is what he wrote.

Clients and staff are very touched to see that

Headway's work is reaching and helping others affected by brain injury.

I fell off my bike and hit my head
A lot of time I spent in bed.
NO more heading the ball because it's a pain
and i fall but i often laugh at least im not dead.
I go to school part time at break I laugh and
climb with my friends I have fun while
we play in the sun and i get my work
done on time.

Leighton House 10th Anniversary...

On Monday 14 May, coinciding with the start of *Brain Injury Awareness Week*, the 10th anniversary of the opening of Leighton House was celebrated. Opened in 2008 by Ann Leighton, the widow of Headway B&S founder Stafford Leighton, the grade II listed building is home to our range of specialist brain injury services together with Headway House in Moseley.

The day was celebrated by clients and staff who tucked into tea and cakes and racked their brains in a Leighton House history quiz!

Pic: Some of the clients & staff enjoying the sunshine outside Leighton House.



Hats for Headway!

Staff at our charity shop in New Road, Rubery joined in the 'Hats for Headway' fun during Brain Injury Week. They have loads of summer stuff in now (as well as these crazy hats!) and so well worth a visit...



Thank You to everyone who voted for our Sensory Garden and Gardening Project in Tesco's *Bags of Life* initiative. We were delighted to get the most votes and therefore the full £4,000 towards our project. We look forward to transforming our garden spaces over the coming months!

TESCO
Bags of Help