



Face It Together

The newsletter for adult members of The Birthmark Support Group

Welcome



Welcome to the eighth edition of the Face It Together Newsletter.

A new year has started and with it the plans for another year of events to get people together.

We have plans for two fun days this year. One in Manchester and one in Chigwell. If you would like to organise an event near you please let me know!

BSG Outings 2009

9th May 2009 – Summer Fun Day at **Manchester High School for Girls**, Grangethorpe Road, Manchester M14 6HS.

27th September 2009 – Fun Day at **Chigwell School**, High Road, Chigwell, Essex IG7 6QF

As usual, we will be advertising details on the website, nearer the dates, but you can expect all the usual delights. BBQ, refreshments, entertainment for all the family!

Walk for Skin 2009

Following the success of the last two Walk for Skin events the BSG is pleased to announce its affiliation again with the British Skin Foundation “Walk for Skin 2009”. The Walk for Skin is the biggest multi-charity fundraiser for skin disease, and will be taking place at venues all across the UK.

There will be eleven fabulous walks in country parks across the UK. Walks are generally 3-4 miles long, with shorter and longer options available at some venues.

This year the Walk will include added attractions at the Walk for Skin village; live music, entertainment, refreshments and of course fantastic goody bags for all participants.

Joining the Walk for Skin couldn't be easier – simply choose a venue and register free of charge, either online at www.walkforskin.org.uk or by phone on 0207 391 6341. Once registered, entrants will receive a sponsor form, walkers' pack and information about their chosen venue.

When you register on the website you can buy a Walk For Skin T-Shirt but we would like to offer you the chance to buy a Birthmark Support Group T-Shirt at cost (approx £5). Please complete the T-Shirt order form on the website and make a note that the T-Shirt

is for the Walk for Skin. Then send the order form as requested to Louise at the address on the form.

Area	Venue	Date
London	Kensington Gardens	10 th May
Glasgow	Mugdock Country Park	31 st May
Cheddar	Cheddar Caves and Gorge	17 th May
Midlands	Coombe Country Park	17 th May
Manchester	Heaton Park	17 th May
S'hampton	The Common	31 st May
Newcastle	Tyne Riverside Country Park	17 th May
Leeds	Temple Newsam	7 th June
Cardiff	Bute Park	17 th May
Edinburgh	Holyrood Park	31 st May
Dundee	Camperdown Country Park	31 st May

After registering for the Walk we would recommend that you use the Justgiving website to make it easier for your friends to donate and also to save you having to send cheques in the post etc.

Select www.justgiving.com and search for “Walk for Skin” not “Birthmark Support Group” select it and then create your own page. You should mention the Birthmark Support Group as your chosen charity in text box on your justgiving page to explain why you are doing the Walk for Skin.

The Walk for Skin organizers then know that when your sponsorship money is received from Justgiving that they should send 50% of it to the Birthmark Support Group as you requested on your registration.

Please remember it is important to use the same name on both websites!

We would also really appreciate if you could let Orla know faceittogether@birthmarksupporgroup.org.uk if you are doing the Walk particularly if you are using the justgiving website.

Charity at Work

Most workplaces now have a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) committee. One definition for CSR is about how companies manage the business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society. Even if there is not a formal committee you will often find that your employer will make donations to charities that their employees are involved with. One of the most common ways employers do this is to “match” sponsorship raised by an employee up to say a £500 limit! Might be worth checking out before you start raising sponsorship for the Walk for Skin. I'm sure your Manager or HR team will be able to point you in the right direction.

One of the ways my employer does this is to pair up with a local school and provide transport and support for employees to spend at least one hour a week at the school, helping the students with extra reading etc. We also donate our surplus computer equipment to this school.

This year I applied to the Lloyd's Charities Trust, on behalf of the BSG for an award. I can make the application because I work in the Lloyd's Market. The Lloyd's Charities Trust is the grant making charity for the Lloyd's market. Established over fifty years ago, Lloyd's Charities Trust has a long tradition of providing charitable support to a wide range of national and international charities on behalf of the Lloyd's market. Donations are made by the Trust to a number of charities focusing on children and young people; social welfare development and medical health projects. This year we were lucky enough to be chosen. Below are some pictures from the day! Thank you Lloyd's!



Graham White, Chairman of Lloyd's Charities Trust presenting an award to me



Graham White, Chairman of Lloyd's Charities Trust, Stanford Jeffrey & Me from the BSG, Grahame Chilton, Lloyd's Charity Trust

Another way your employer can help is to be a member of the Give As You Earn Scheme (GAYE). GAYE the UK's largest payroll giving scheme - you can give directly from your pre-tax salary, so money that would normally go to the taxman goes to charity instead.

You just decide how much you want to give each month. Then your donation comes out of your pay packet before the taxman touches it. You benefit because you don't pay any tax on the donations you make. If you're a basic rate taxpayer, a gift of £5 only actually costs you £4 - so you can pass the tax relief on to the charity.

To find out more and to see if your company is registered to handle GAYE payments log onto www.cafonline.org and under the "For Individuals"

section just select "Give As You Earn" from the left hand menu!

FiT Members Taking Over!!!

I went to a BSG committee meeting in January and the subject of developing Face It Together came up. I mentioned that it appears the adults seem happy with the function of the group as it stands. I'm basing this assumption on the fact that there were no comments after the last newsletter.

I have to say I was feeling a little disheartened by the apparent lack of interest when it was pointed out to me that the FiT membership is very active and is now represented in most areas of the group structure.

There are 3 FiT Trustees... Nick Ward, Chairman, Stanford Jeffrey and me!

On the support team, we are represented by Jane Walker!

Alex Pratt is in charge of the website and IT functions of the charity.

I guess this does mean that the group does what you need, but given how many representatives you have in formal roles now all you have to do is say what you want and we shall make it happen!!! We are "Taking Over" after all!

A note from Alex Brewer

My name is Alex and I am 29 years old, 6ft 2" tall with brown hair and eyes. I was born with my birthmark but have always felt conscious of it and I suppose it has held me back especially where relationships are concerned. I live in a small country village near Norwich, which I really like. My family is important to me and we all live close to each other. I still live at home with my parents. We have a large garden, so it keeps me busy. I trained at horticultural college so gardening is what I do best. I enjoy music, darts, pool, wildlife and country walks. I have never been able to talk to someone who is the same as me and I felt happy when I found this support group, so perhaps at last I can chat to someone who feels as I do. I always feel that it is my birthmark that puts girls off liking me even though my friends and family do not think so. Perhaps there is someone out there, lonely like myself who would like a good friend.

Please send an email to faceittogether@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk and your email will be forwarded to Alex.

Do you or don't you? The eternal dilemma

By Stanford Jeffrey

Have you ever found yourself in the position where you notice that a complete stranger has a birthmark? More often than not it will be a facial birthmark, since it is a person's face that is the primary recognition trigger for all humans to differentiate and identify one individual from another.

Do you find yourself wondering “should I talk to that person because my child has a birthmark?” In my case, I have often wondered “should I talk to that person because I have a birthmark?” Perhaps we notice a child with a birthmark and ponder to ourselves “Do the parents know about the BSG?” “Dare I approach that stranger and initiate a conversation?”

The questions we could ask are potentially endless, but here are just a few of the queries that have gone through my mind when such an opportunity has presented itself:

- ☺ Should I talk to that person, since I would love to know if they are a member of the BSG?
- ☺ Should I talk to that person, because if they don't know about the BSG then it may make a positive difference to someone's life or possibly a difference to a whole family if I make them aware of the BSG?
- ☺ Should I talk to that person because if they don't know about the BSG they may welcome the opportunity to get involved and perhaps help the group in some way?
- ☺ If I talk to that stranger will they be offended?
- ☺ What can I say that will not cause any offence, sound sympathetic, genuinely interested and concerned and not sound patronising or intrusive?
- ☺ How would I feel if a complete stranger came up to me, uninvited, and asked me a personal/intimate/embarrassing question?
- ☺ How has that birthmark affected that child/person/family?
- ☺ Is there some inoffensive, soothing, warm and engaging phrase I ought to memorise for occasions such as this? And if so, why don't I know it?!!!!

The list is, as I said potentially endless. So, do we leave it at that, or dare we pluck up the courage, from goodness knows where, to sympathetically, confidently, caringly enquire – “Excuse me – and please, please, forgive me if you think this is intruding, but I have a child with a birthmark and I was wondering what sort of advice you were given by your child's paediatrician when you first discovered that your child had a birthmark.”

Or perhaps you might say - “Excuse me – and please forgive the intrusion, but how old is your child?” – Hopefully they will give you an engaging answer and then perhaps you could go on to say something like - “The reason that I ask is because I have a child with a birthmark and I was wondering what sort of advice you were given by your child's paediatrician when you first discovered that your child had a birthmark and I wondered if things had improved recently.”

Sounds demanding, doesn't it? Altogether too much bother? Just plain old scary?

Well yes. All of these things. But should this stop us from trying?

The next time you have an opportunity to mention birthmarks and the Birthmark Support Group to anyone who may stand to benefit from hearing about us and what we do – give it a go.

It takes courage, but perhaps the contact you make will bring real benefits for a child, their parents, or maybe even the BSG. Good luck. And please let us know how you get on!