



# TeenTalk

The newsletter for teenage members of The Birthmark Support Group

## New Face Behind TeenTalk



Hi there! I am Suzanne. I live in a town called Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, and have taken over as the person who will be dealing with any emails or letters you send to TeenTalk. We are not saying Good Bye to Jacki,

she is still a member of TeenTalk and will be about at the Fun Days etc.

About a week after I was born, an outline appeared on my face around my right eye. This developed into a strawberry haemangioma, which grew and became very heavy, sealing my eye shut. As the mark was over my eye and there was a risk of losing my sight, I had an operation to remove some of the birthmark – but unfortunately my sight could not be saved and I cannot see out of my right eye at all. I then had two further operations to “tidy up” the quarter of my face that was affected by the mark. Like many of us, I suffered times of low self-esteem – during my teens I wore my hair over my face, and even refused to put make-up on my “bad eye”, thinking that if I ignore it everyone else would as well! I also have further birthmarks down the right side of my body, from my bottom to my toes, which made P.E. and swimming at school a real misery. I did try camouflage make-up and laser treatment, but soon gave up – it just wasn’t for me.

With lots of love and support from my family and friends, and a blossoming self-belief, over the past few years my confidence has grown and grown. I went to University, and even fulfilled my dream to become a dancer, before following a successful career

in fashion and retail management. I now work at a local College, training apprentices to gain their various qualifications, alongside being mummy to Olivia Grace (2 years old). I used to be so nervous of being photographed, but have now appeared in various articles in national newspapers and magazines about my birthmarks – talking about it all has been such a liberating experience, and I hope that reading about me has helped others too. I wish that the Birthmark Support Group had been around when I was a child, having people with similar experiences to talk to would really have helped my parents and me in so many ways.

I look forward to hearing from you all, chances are I have been through what you are going through, or know someone that has that I can put you in touch with – it’s good to talk! Contact me at [teentalk@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:teentalk@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk) or write to TeenTalk at: BM The Birthmark Support Group, London, WC1N 3XX. Also, if you would like to HELP me with the running of TeenTalk, I will be delighted to hear from you!

*Suzanne*

## DVD finished and almost ready to go

So, after much talking and planning the DVD is finished, 40,000 copies have been produced, and it is almost ready to go out to every doctor and every secondary school in the UK. So if you are at secondary school then it will hopefully arrive on your headteacher’s desk early in the summer term.

At the moment there aren’t enough copies (or enough money!) to send one to every primary school but if you are still at primary school and would like one sent to your

headteacher then email your school's name and address to:

[teentalk@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:teentalk@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk) and we will make sure one is sent.

So why are we sending it to schools? Well one of the films on the DVD has been made so that it can be used by schools to help explain to other children about the different sorts of birthmark and how perhaps they should treat others who may look a little different. We are most grateful to the following members of TeenTalk who appear on this film: Polly Calver, Laura Pullen, Holly Farquhar, Lucy Albery, Prudence Patterson, George Nicholson, Tomass Slater, Paige Wolfe and Zainab Ali.

### **At times having a birthmark is definitely worth it (says Polly)!**



Hi, my name is Polly and I'm thirteen years old. I have a birthmark on my face, arm and leg and recently loads of exciting things have been happening.

Firstly, about this time last year, I went to Great Ormond Street Hospital one Sunday to be filmed with some other members of TeenTalk for the DVD about birthmarks. The following week a camera crew came to my school in Buckingham to film me with my friends so I end up in the DVD quite a lot and at one point I even sing! The DVD has been made now and will soon be sent to all secondary schools. I went to the launch of it at Great Ormond Street in October and met Esther Rantzen.

In April I am also going to appear in the Sugar magazine. I'm not entirely sure what the article is going to be like yet but in January I went up to London for a photo shoot. This was loads of fun - I even had a makeover and had my hair styled. At times having a birthmark is definitely worth it!

*Polly Calver*

### **Birmingham Fun Day**

Why not join Suzanne, Olivia and other members of TeenTalk at the Birmingham Fun Day on 11th May? Full details are on the website. See you there?

### ***Are you a member of Teentalk?***

*If you have a birthmark and are aged between 10 and 21 and have not joined Teentalk then why not give it a try? It doesn't cost anything, all you have to do is email:*

[teentalk@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:teentalk@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk)

### ***Why should you want to join us?***

*For some, growing up with a birthmark does not cause the slightest of problems but for many it can bring its challenges. Teentalk aims to bring together those who have not experienced difficulties, or those who have but have been able to deal with them, with those who are finding life a little more difficult, to offer advice and support. We also want those who would just like to make new friends, exchange emails or letters, and occasionally meet up and have fun.*

*If you would like to join Teentalk, or help with running it, then do email Suzanne; she'd love to hear from you!*