

# Newsletter

Issue 20

May 2007



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# THE LINK BEN NEVIS '07 CHALLENGE

## £5,000 and counting

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Paddy Minne, Tristan Stocking, Richard Alderson, Andrew Bassett, Stephen McClean and Simon Hodge at the summit. Stephen is a member of THE LINK Youth Programme.

"This is a walk. There's no climbing involved." That's what Paul told the group who volunteered to Climb Ben Nevis in March of this year. It turned out to be the coldest, wettest day imaginable but 14 of them made it. Not all were experienced but together they defeated the elements and raised a huge amount of money for the Development Fund. See page 4 for details.

# TOTSTIME @ THE LINK

If we were to ask what your least favourite day of the week is, would you choose Monday? Most of us experience that 'Monday morning feeling' at times but not so the dozen babies and tots who come excitedly to The Link each Monday, accompanied by their Mums, grannies and carers.

In June last year we had said our goodbyes to Joan Hosford and Kathleen Allsopp, volunteers who had encouraged the children and befriended the grown-ups over a period of nine years. We take this opportunity to thank them for the love, care and enthusiasm they showed as they organised activities week by week.

During the summer a small group comprising volunteers, mums and grannies, met to plan for the new term. Numbers were low at the outset but it was good to see old friends. The children played happily while the adults shared responsibility to ensure that normal service resumed as quickly as possible!



We are delighted to welcome Jane Petherick and Elizabeth Black to the Totstime team and we would like to thank the mums, grans and carers for their support. What talented people they are! Not only can they sing and dance, they are also extremely artistic and great at telling stories. Most weeks the children paint, draw or create something at craft time which they proudly take home. You can see examples of our lovely creations in the Totstime Gallery, also known as the Games Room.

A variety of equipment, toys, books and puzzles allow the tots to play together or spend time on a one to one activity. Babies and mums have a special area where they can play safely, but everyone comes together at snack time to enjoy a drink, toast, cheese and plenty of fruit, prepared by the Lunch Club Ladies. And of course there's a treat on special occasions such as birthdays. The adults take turns to stay with the little ones while everyone enjoys a cuppa and scone. Our busy morning ends with lively singing or music making and our goodbye song.

At least once a term we organise a special outing. In September we visited Stormont Play Park where we gathered autumn leaves. Late in November we spent an enjoyable morning at the Ark Farm where the children dressed up for the story of Jesus' birth. They also helped to feed the animals and went on a special journey to see Santa. Just before Christmas it was Santa's turn to travel to The Link to see the boys and girls.

Everyone involved in Totstime is excited at the prospect of moving to new premises, and young though they are, even the tots will be taking part in some fund raising activities, and having lots of fun in the process.

**Elizabeth Murdie**



## from Diane . . . . . **Conflict, Community and Change**

*And what does the law require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*  
Micah 6: 8

What a momentous couple of months we have just been through! There are probably few people who would have imagined the sight of Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness together on the steps of Stormont, seeking to work positively together for the benefit of the whole community of Northern Ireland. For me, however, it was not just the fact of this positive engagement, but the attitudes of the two men as they presented themselves to the community in a friendly and courteous way.

A couple of years ago The Link was involved in a number of consultations for the 'Shared Future' document which the Government was trying to prepare. What came across strongly, through representations from community and church groups, was that it would be important for our local politicians to model 'good relations' if the community were ever to move forward. I hope and pray that we are on our way.

So, it is all change at Stormont as we say 'Goodbye' to direct rule ministers and 'Hello' to our 'friendly, caring,' local politicians. Many of them are new and on a steep learning curve, and all have a huge task ahead of them.

Change is always difficult. We have all suffered the stress of changes in our own life - moving house, having a child, a new minister in our church...and the stress of this often leads to conflict.

The Link has been offering some support and training in this area to try and help people develop an understanding of the dynamics of conflict, understand how we behave around conflict and change in conflict situations and then, hopefully, how we can deal with the issue of conflict. We have learned that we are all experts in conflict. The challenge is how to respond to it in a constructive way which enables blessing rather than hurt, 'shalom' rather than anger and fear, good rather than evil.

During a residential to Lucan, Co. Dublin a couple of weeks ago a number of our staff and volunteers were introduced to the church community of Lucan Presbyterian Church. It is certainly an unusual mix of people from a large number of ethnic backgrounds and traditions, but they have found a love and acceptance in this place. There is an understanding there that we are all on a journey. Backgrounds and traditions may still be there, but there is a hope for a larger Kingdom - the Kingdom of God. Perhaps if we move outside our narrow confines and take God out of the box where we sometimes place Him, we may begin to see beyond the people who are different to us, to individuals who have lives and experiences which matter to God.

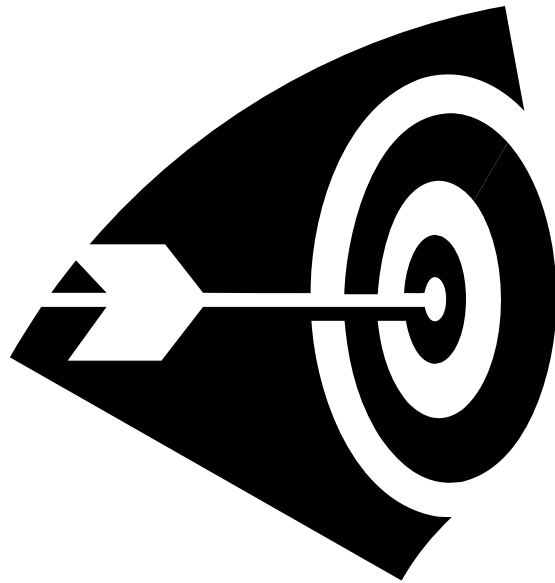
Diane Holt



The Link Group in Áras an Uachtaráin—the home of the Irish President.

# Development Fund

TARGET £250,000



So Far . . .	Ben Nevis	£4351.41
	CCC Breakfast	£1076.30
	May Ball	£2706.00
	Gifts	£ 600.82
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£8734.53</b>

## Donations

- Put your loose change in a Collection Box
- Send a cheque
- Donate by website [www.thelinkcentre.org](http://www.thelinkcentre.org) - there is a 'Donate now' button on every page. It's simple, straightforward and you can use your credit card.
- Come along to the special Fund Raiser and abseil down Scrabo Tower - see next page.
- Have a 'Link' coffee morning and we will supply the speaker to talk about the fund.

# FUND RAISER

## SCARE

yourself silly!  
& support your  
local community

## ABSEIL

Scrabo Tower

# 06/10

# 2007

and raise funds for the  
"The Link" Newtownards.



135 FEET

Sponsor forms available from The Link 14-16 South Street Newtownards  
BT23 4JT. Registration fee £25 Minimum £100 sponsorship required.  
Closing Date for entries 24th September 2007. To register and receive a  
sponsorship pack telephone 028 9182 1124 email: [info@thelinkcentre.org](mailto:info@thelinkcentre.org)

the link.

# Comber Churches welcome Migrant Workers



Bill Crawford and James Russell man look after the information stand at Super-Valu, Comber

Most of us will have met at least one person who has come from another country to work in Northern Ireland. If you live in Comber, you will realise that there are several East European visitors, who work mostly on farms, in the hospitality industry or in a factory. This year the Comber Churches Action Forum (CCAF) have set out to make these folk welcome. On the first Friendship Evening around 45 people attended from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine and Russia.

CCAF began by preparing information leaflets in 5 languages and distributing them at Super-Valu. Since then 4 evening gatherings have taken place in McBride's of Comber. Topics covered have included 'Getting a House' - Housing Executive; 'Personal Safety' - PSNI; 'Opening a Bank Account' - Local Bank; 'General Information' - Citizens Advice Bureau and the churches.

As friendships were formed, CCAF asked what the main issues were. They were summarised as follows:

- Poor working conditions in local businesses
- Uncertainty over vehicle insurance details
- Immigration problems
- Housing difficulties
- Loneliness

Attendances have varied, but on the whole good contacts have been made. The 6 churches - Catholic, Methodist, Church of Ireland, Comber Christian Centre and both Presbyterian Churches - have been encouraged, and have benefited from their co-operation. Perhaps their example will inspire some of you to try something similar. The Link will be pleased to help you get started. Contact Diane at 028 9182 1124.



Irene Donaldson and Frank Algie on board ship. The Senior Citizens celebrated their last lunch club meeting of the year by taking a trip down the Lagan. It was also Frank's 92nd birthday.

## Introducing . . . . . Natalie gregory

- Age:** 23
- Home Town:** Originally Belfast—now Killinchy
- Position:** Training and Activities Project Worker for the MARC Programme
- Marital Status:** Single - options open!!
- Interests:** Activities with her church (Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle)
- Favourite Food:** Pasta
- Favourite song:** 'Thank you for the cross, Lord'
- Pet hate:** Lying
- Pipe Dream:** To jump out of an aeroplane (preferably with a parachute!)
- Ambition:** To stay within God's will for her life, and to help people
- THE LINK?** Loving it. Has enjoyed meeting all the team members and working with them. Loves the role she has been placed in and looks forward to developing relationships with programme participants.



## Introducing . . . . . Jason creighton

- Age:** 20
- Home Town:** Originally Larne—now West Winds, Newtownards
- Position:** Volunteer with Youth Project and staff member with West Winds Youth Club
- Marital Status:** Single—has a 15 month-old son called Jamie
- Hobbies:** Snooker; building radio control cars
- Favourite Food:** Sausages
- Favourite song:** 'Sweet Child of Mine'
- Pet hate:** Someone invading his space
- Future Plans:** Wants to travel the world, starting with Canada
- Ambition:** To build and customise American Choppers—specialised motor bikes
- THE LINK?** A great place to work. The staff have made him feel very welcome. The Link provides real opportunities for those who use its services. He likes working here.



# PICTURE GALLERY

## The May Ball



Alison Moorhead, Gareth McCluskey, Anne Morrow and Keith Falloon enjoy the drinks reception



Magic George in full flow



Diane Holt welcomes guests



Brian and Eleanor McFetridge, Elizabeth Murdie and Pamela Woodward relax before dinner

2007

Abseil down Scrabo Tour  
on 6 October

2007