

vital link

Transforming lives through disabled people



"I Have Known Nothing but Love Each Day"

The August 2013 Hinwick Holiday



**Sleepless Nights
to Change Lives**



**'Going the
Extra Mile'**



**54 Miles of
Fund-Racing**



'Coast to Coast'

Guests and helpers met and exceeded challenges, relaxed and grew closer to God and each other through an exciting week of fellowship at our new DCF Hinwick holiday and retreat. One guest said 'I have known nothing but love each day'. This special holiday was launched with the help of the generous legacy left by Doreen Hilder, a long-time DCF member and friend. Her legacy enabled us to subsidise the costs of this first year, and give new guests the chance to enjoy the holidays she loved so much.

We held the holiday at Hinwick Hall near Wellingborough, a totally accessible venue used during term-time as a Livability college for young disabled people. The week began with the retreat 'Time Out With God', where twenty two people gathered to spend time with God in and around the house's lovely grounds. With short introductions to each session, and a variety of quiet activities such as painting, poetry, and stones to decorate, everyone enjoyed these times of quiet reflection. We've had some wonderful feedback, with people saying they felt 'enfolded by love' at a 'very special weekend'.

The theme for the holiday was 'all things are possible with God', and throughout the week everyone attending was constantly thanking God for proving this.

Holiday co-leader and DCF co-ordinator, Jenny Edwards MBE, wrote 'we were thoroughly spoilt by the care and attention of the staff at this wonderful new venue, fed some amazing food and shared some wonderful fellowship. For the first time on a DCF holiday, we had arranged for guests to try archery, wall climbing, the 'King Swing' (a high-seated rope

swing, where daring passengers fly through the air at 40 miles per hour) and canoeing at a Christian activity centre nearby called Rock UK. Due to our only wet day, we were unable to go canoeing, but all other activities were tried and conquered by many of our guests. Determination and excitement ran through the group as people managed the top of the wall, or went unbelievably high on the King Swing, the cheers and general noise was deafening as each encouraged another. We truly proved that 'all things are possible with God'. One guest said that the 'challenges helped me to re-evaluate my way forward' once back at home, and others enthused about how much they'd enjoyed trying all the new activities, and how proud they were of each other for trying the new things.

Quieter craft activities were available in the evening, as well as hand bell ringing and time to chat over a cup of tea or coffee. Later each evening, everyone came together to praise God for the day that had passed and to share thoughts from Jenny on 'Traffic Lights! Red was highlighting when we are negative about a new direction or task asked of us, yellow was when we delayed an answer, testing God and asking for a sign that it is His plan, and Green was for when we finally trust in the Lord and go ahead and prove that 'All things are possible with God'.

The week was blessed in so many ways, and everyone involved would love others to experience this blessing on a DCF holiday. Why not try a holiday and/or retreat next year, or volunteer to help? All ages 18 and above are very welcome and we would love to see new faces!

Family Holiday 2014

Through the roof

Contact Details

Great Britain Office:

PO Box 353,
EPSOM, KT18 5WS

Phone:

01372 749955

Email:

info@throughtheroof.org

Web:

www.throughtheroof.org

Northern Ireland Contact:

Email:

ni@throughtheroof.org

Churches inc

Fellowship DCF

Wheels
for the world

integr8

Our Vision

*'... is of a world
where all people live
interdependently,
mutually giving and
receiving as God
intended.'*

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We are now taking bookings for the Dalesdown 2014 holiday for families with autistic children, running from 14 to 17 April – there was a full report of last year's fantastic holiday in the Summer issue. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Margaret on **01372 737045** or Margaret@throughtheroof.org.



Join everyone at Dalesdown in 2014!
Spaces are available for families and helpers.

What Do You Think...?

As a result of Through the Roof's work: Are people growing in Christian faith? Do disabled people feel they belong more in church and community life? Are church activities more fully including disabled people?

These are the questions we constantly ask ourselves to ensure as best we can, that the work continues to make a real difference and we are being good stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us. To paint a fuller picture

we'd really value your input and comments from your perspective and experience of the work. Please contribute your thoughts via the online questionnaire at www.throughtheroof.org/wdyt any time before the end of January 2014. If you prefer, you can e-mail us to request a copy of the one-page survey, or phone us to respond that way. In the next Vital Link we'll let you know the findings, as together, with God's help, we seek to make an even bigger difference.

Enabling Church Presentations

ENABLING Church
Disability, Wholeness
and Christian Theology



Enabling Church conferences in Durham and Bristol witnessed a range of excellent presenters – most with personal experience of disability themselves. One delegate stated that, *"The people I have met have inspired me"*, whilst another found the event to be a great source of wisdom... *"Lots to tell the Church, lots of lessons learned"*.

The day featured personal content from young trainee vicar and wheelchair user,

Haydon Spenceley, reflecting on his identity in Christ; whilst Through the Roof's Chair, Dr Mike Townsend, spoke powerfully on engaging with the church community. Finally, theologian, Roy McCloughry, delivered an uplifting call to action to inspire us all to make a world of difference.

You can hear audio presentations from the events via Premier Radio's website at www.disabilityweek.org.uk



**Reninca is our
new International
Mission Manager
- she'll be starting
work for TTR in
November**

Welcome to Reninca!

We're pleased to welcome Reninca Hill as Through the Roof's newest team-member. She says, 'I am really excited about my new role as International Missions Manager. I have been working in Haiti with disabled children and adults for the past five years and I'm looking forward to using my skills with Through the Roof, getting to know you all, and working together to help support disabled people in developing countries.'

Reninca brings a passion for disabled people, overseas mission and prayer to the charity and we'll learn more about her in our next newsletter.



Thank You Nigel

**Nigel working hard at loading a wheelchair
container for our upcoming Ghana distribution**

Nigel Drury has now left his post as TTR's International Mission Manager, after a year of valuable work developing Wheels and Integr8 overseas missions. Thank you to him, and we all send him our best wishes and prayers in his new role with the Diocese of Guildford. As his 'farewell', Nigel will be leading the Integr8 mission trip to Moldova, which we'll report back on in March.



John is 11 years old, and his new chair will help him get about, and even start attending school

Sleepless Nights to Change Lives

Wheels for the World have returned from Elburgon, Kenya, having seen 190 people. It was a successful trip characterised by the resourceful and skilled work of the team.

'Irene really needed a large pram, but acquiring one was a problem', writes volunteer therapist, Wendy, 'I spent a lot of time and some sleepless nights, making sketches, working on it, until the last day.'

'She was brought to see us on the first day by her mother. It was said she'd had polio. We were stumped for ideas as we could not sit her up – she was so deformed – so we couldn't give her a wheelchair. We sent her away, saying we would think about it and try come up with something.'



Irene and family with her new 'chariot'



The 2013 Elburgon team, who fitted 190 people with wheelchairs and mobility aids

'Debbie and I were considering putting two wheelchairs together, one behind the other. Roy and I worked on this, taking the back off one wheelchair, putting two pieces of wood on the front frame to equalize the height (it would have been too simple if they had been the same!) and then screwing a long piece of wood into both wheelchairs as a base. Roy added struts between the legs of the wheelchairs to strengthen the connection. We made a foam mattress with liner bags to protect it and covered it with blankets. We then left it with the Kenya team (who'd been trained to fit wheelchairs) to make contact with Irene's family.'

It was with great relief that we received a photo of Irene in her successful 'chariot'! Before, Irene either lay on the hard ground, or was carried. Now she can lie comfortably in her vehicle and see her surroundings. When we sent her away originally, her mother never complained but looked very disappointed, so I am really glad we managed to help.'

This is just one story from the distribution – you can find more at www.throughtheroof.org/wheels-blog. Every chair (or chariot!) given by Wheels changes the life of the recipient and their whole family – sometimes even whole communities. More Wheels trips are coming up next year. Your prayer and support really makes these life-changing distributions possible. Thank you!

Developing a New Role

Can you turn Biblical truths into creative content that will encourage the Christian community to be a place of belonging for disabled people and their families?

Through the Roof is committed to serving the church, as God's vehicle for true and lasting change, to become fully inclusive for disabled people, so we're stepping out in faith to look for a new team-member to join in this mission. We have always produced publications relevant to the practical aspects of disability. We now intend to build on these and produce Christian content that will aid people's knowledge, understanding and spiritual journey.



Congratulations!

...to TTR's Youth Ambassador, Philippa and her new husband Will Lomas, who were married on the 7th September at Potton Baptist Chapel, Bedfordshire. Please pray for them as they begin their lives together.

The brand new post of part-time 'Training Resources Developer' will suit someone with a heart for disabled people, who is committed to advancing the Christian faith through producing Christian resources and materials, messages, booklets etc. A full job specification is available from our website www.throughtheroof.org/jobs-with-ttr or by contacting the office.



Laughter and sharing on the Hinwick Holiday

'Going the Extra Mile'

by Dr. Mike Townsend, TTR Chair of Trustees

Would you go the extra mile? In New Testament times, the ruling Romans could compel a Jew to carry a load for the distance of a mile – one thousand paces. Jesus said, "If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles" (Matt 5:41).

Through the Roof volunteers do just as Jesus said. They go the extra mile.

I visited the exciting new DCF holiday at Hinwick, full of challenging activities including climbing walls and archery. The college was filled with laughter. I got to thinking about why so many disabled people are cheerful. Have you noticed it? Ok! Some of us, as Dallas Willard describes it, are 'insufferably grim' – not coping. He goes on to say,

'Shared laughter is one of the surest ways of human beings to come together and break the stalemate of life'.

Chris, one of the DCF helpers at Hinwick, brimmed with joy, "I used to have a high-flying job. But I battled alone. Now I just love supporting disabled people on DCF holidays."

A key part of my thinking about disability is inter-dependence alongside independence. God knew that it was not good for us to be loners (Genesis 2:18.) Most of us disabled people need to work together with others to make the most of life. Being together with others is the way God intended everyone to function. It makes us cheerful.

Jesus did more than just go the extra mile. He went the whole road for us. Hebrews 12:2 says, 'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

For Chris, and many others, that extra mile is not onerous but joyful, fun and follows Jesus' footsteps.



Jenny on the first ever DCF overseas holiday recce, in Israel in 1990

40 Years Serving DCF

'It was a cold, brisk but beautiful afternoon when I took a walk along the old dockside of Bristol when I was drawn to a plaque on a wall that was to be the instrument of a complete change in my life...'

This extract from Jenny Edwards MBE's book 'The first 50 years of Disabled Christian Fellowship' recalls the start of her involvement with the work. 2013 marks 40 years of Jenny serving DCF.

Jenny continues, 'I was a nurse in Bristol... I was also a keen Christian (and) God certainly had His hand firmly on my life. The plaque on the wall said 'Disabled Christians Fellowship'. I pushed the door and walked in (which) was

totally out of character as I am not good at situations with people I am not familiar with! At first I did not see anyone, until a voice asked if they could be of assistance. The voice was soft and gentle and belonged to a lady full of understanding and grace – Janet, Secretary of DCF.

That impulsive visit was the first of many, the grounding of a great friendship and the start of a new life where DCF would play a prominent part in everything I did. Many lives have been touched over the years. Through all God has been the constant companion...'

CEO, Tim Wood said: "Jenny has inspired hundreds of people with her strong faith and trust in the Lord. 40 years' volunteering is a significant milestone, we thank God for Jenny's continued dedication to those that society excludes and overlooks."

Jenny's book is available from TTR.

From Joni Eareckson Tada

Dear Roof-Breaking Friends...

As I look at all the ministry happening at Through the Roof this season, I am amazed – the team is really ‘going the extra mile.’ But I was especially touched to read how the lives of needy people with disabilities in Kenya have been transformed through Wheels for the World. Especially Irene – please do not miss our article about this incredible woman and the fantastic Wheels team who really went the third and fourth mile to help create a very special wheelchair like no other!

This is what I love about Through the Roof. Because when you have a disability, you can almost become overwhelmed by all the needs.

Yet God brings caring Christians who do not mind ‘taking the shirt off their backs’ to make certain the compassionate touch of Christ is proclaimed as well as portrayed.

So thank you for going the extra mile through your prayers and gifts – together, we are making Jesus so very real to those who need Him most! And as you give and pray (or volunteer), may the blessing of Ruth 2:12 be yours, ‘May the Lord repay you for what you have done; may you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel.’



Joni and Ken with Wheels for the World in El Salvador

Celebrate this Summer!



Fylde Coast, off on their Trafford Centre trip



Croydon group members share the delicious birthday cake, made by Wendy Spear from Emmanuel

DCF groups get out and about

Over the Summer, we've heard from several DCF groups, writing in to tell us all about their sunny excursions and activities. If you're interested in finding out more about DCF groups near you, and joining in the fun, please contact the office.

‘We took the Castle Point DCF group out for the day at the end of June to Brightlingsea, about a 60 mile trip, on the border of Essex. We'd booked a Methodist church hall as a base, so they made us tea before we went out, and we came back for a fish and chips lunch. Then we went to the Beach which is great for everyone as you can get wheelchairs really close to the beach, the weather was good and we all were blessed and had a wonderful time of fellowship.’

Since the visit, and contacts made with local ministers, Essex County Council have invited the local churches to discuss the needs of disabled people in north Essex, and those local ministers have asked Simon from Castle Point if he would like to talk about TTR and DCF at the meeting.’

Fylde Coast DCF also got in the summer spirit by organizing a coach trip to the Trafford Centre on a sunny July day. The group had a great time, enjoyed travelling together, and meeting up with another friend at the centre. Once there, they managed to hire an extra scooter, so the whole group could access the centre and enjoy their fellowship together. 2013 is the tenth birthday of Croydon DCF. The 20-strong members continue to be strong and dedicated, and celebrated in style this September at their home base of Emmanuel Church with a musical recital by ‘Everyone Matters’ (formerly of the London Mozart Players) featuring a great variety from Mozart to Moravian folk songs!

The TTR Epsom office sent a lovely message with warm congratulations and encouragement. Members said about the group “It’s an opportunity to have Fellowship together with Christian friends” and “I really enjoy the meetings and they’ve meant a lot to me” and they all want to thank God for His blessings and pray for all other DCF groups.



'A Vision for Inclusion'

Urban Saints have taken a journey to become a leading voice for inclusion in the church, and TTR have been glad to partner with them to improve both of our work. Mark Arnold, Chief Operating Officer of Urban Saints writes

youth work. 'All Inclusive?' has been delivered to 600 leaders in 20 UK churches, and national conferences like Spring Harvest and Hand in Hand. A key part of this training is the personal video stories of young disabled people, including Philippa from TTR. We also resource leaders through our Energize website (web.energize.uk.net), and include Through the Roof's excellent 'Parachute Bible Stories'.

Dance and drama at Club Capernum, Wiltshire, who run inclusive youth work and holidays and support the 'All Inclusive?' programme

about that journey and partnership.

"There's a boy in my group with ADHD; he's a nightmare, what can I do to exclude him?" - a question I was asked by a youth leader who was struggling to cope with a boy with additional needs.

We have seen amazing examples, across groups and churches connected to Urban Saints of how to do inclusion well for disabled children and young people. We've also seen examples of how, when leaders lack information and inspiration, the outcome can be very different.

Several years ago, we connected with TTR when they met with our Regional Directors at our Leadership Team meeting. This gave us the kickstart to take inclusion seriously, explore how we support groups and churches, and work to improve the support they provide to children and young people.

An inclusion training session for Hitchin 'Phase' in 2011 was such a success that we decided to launch 'All Inclusive?' (www.urbansaints.org/allinclusive), a training programme helping churches embrace inclusion in children's and

The national voice this training and speaking has provided allows us to unite other agencies, children's and youth workers, parents and other interested people. With Children Worldwide, we have launched the 'Additional Needs Alliance' (www.facebook.com/groups/additionalneedsalliance) to provide a forum and opportunity for the exchange of ideas, inspiration, support, and resources.

We encourage young people to be a positive voice for inclusion too, and with Prospects and Rock UK we are launching 'Challenge for Life' (www.facebook.com/ChallengeforLifehome), where young people with and without learning difficulties take part together in challenges such as mountain climbing or an adventure centre day.

God has blessed us and encouraged us on our journey so far. He has opened doors and brought us into partnership with others, as well as increasing the profile and voice that we have for this vision for inclusion. We look forward to all that is to come!

Could TTR help your church or organization become more inclusive? Contact us or Urban Saints.



URBAN SAINTS

Changes and Challenges by Jenny Edwards



Jenny tries out the archery at the Hinwick Hall holiday

On the front of one of my old diaries I have written 'We cannot come to what God wants us to be by remaining as we are', and I am frequently reminded of this when challenged by God to try something out of my comfort zone! Somehow we are not happy when others recognise a gifting we have and we fail to see it in ourselves, and so the old 'I cannot do with change' attitude creeps in. As a person who is always happier with the familiar, I am challenged by change, but have been pleasantly surprised by how often I can manage change with God's help, and this helps me in my relationship with Him, to move forward and grow in Him. Are you being challenged, is God asking you to move out of your comfort zone? Give it a try, and God will bless you in your obedience to Him.

54 Miles of Fund-Racing



Angela, a Wheels supporter, organised the alternative London to Brighton ride

Teams at 'Disability Initiative' (DI), a charity that specialises in the provision of services to adults with complex physical disabilities and acquired brain injury, have completed a 54 mile sponsored alternative 'London to Brighton' Motomed cycle event. Organised by Angela Wickenden, it took place during June 2013 to raise funds for activities at DI and for 'Wheels for the World'. 40 of DI's physically disabled clients completed this static bike ride, raising an amazing £2160 for Wheels, and a similar amount for DI.

Lucy Brown, CEO of Disability Initiative said, "Our clients thoroughly enjoyed participating in the London to Brighton event and were extremely enthusiastic, and very competitive!" Winning team, the 'Friday Finishers' cycled throughout June and completed the course in a collective time of 4 hours, 4 minute and 1 second. Thank you to everyone who took part to help the Wheels programme – you all deserve your own medals! Contact us if you have a novel idea to raise funds – we can support you.

Churches Inc Charter



Through the Roof have teamed up with fellow disability charity, Livability, to create a charter for churches wanting to demonstrate they are a positive place for disabled people to attend.

Launched at the recent 'Enabling Church' conferences the Charter, named after TTR's Churches Inc programme, comprises of two halves. The top half has three 'Belief' statements based on Bible passages that people can identify with, which Through the Roof regularly refer to in articles and presentations. These are:

'We believe...'

- God made everyone in His image and equally valuable (*Genesis 1*)
- Jesus calls us to love people that society overlooks and excludes (*Luke 14*)
- Without disabled people and their gifts, church is incomplete (*1 Corinthians 12*)

These are complemented by three action points demonstrating a commitment to make positive changes:

'So we will...'

- Act to make church an increasingly accessible place
- Encourage church to make its activities more inclusive
- Welcome and build community life with disabled people

The aim is to encourage churches to adopt the charter and join a growing movement that sees disabled people as a blessing not a burden in the Kingdom of God.

Through the Roof can resource churches wanting to take the next step by offering a growing range of publications and resources; sharing people's stories on our website; and providing training or speakers with personal experience of disability.

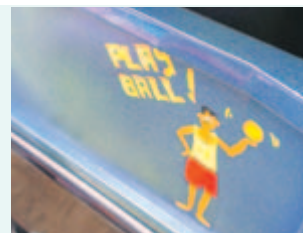
Livability are working with Premier Christian Media on a themed website to promote the charter to a wider audience www.churchesinc.org.uk. You can visit our Facebook page www.facebook.com/throughtheroof or contact us to add your backing to the campaign, ask any tricky questions, or comment on inclusion in your church context.

Loading Up!



Loading up over 150 chairs at the Aldershot Warehouse

The Aldershot warehouse saw its first ever container-loading in August. 156 wheelchairs and many more mobility aids were loaded up by a team of staff and volunteers, and are now on their way to Ho, Ghana. Are you in the Aldershot area, and able to help out next time? All help would be very welcome! We're also looking for a regular warehouse volunteer to help out at the Aldershot unit for around a day a week – the role would involve assessing wheelchairs, sorting and packaging crutches and Bibles and some light cleaning of wheelchairs, and full training would be given. If you're interested in helping out in any way, please contact us at the office.



One of the chairs on the way to Ghana, brilliantly refurbished and decorated at the Parkhurst Prison Workshop



Ready for 192 miles, at the start of the Coast to Coast walk



Helen cooling down after more hard walking



The end of an amazing journey!

'Coast to Coast' by Helen Edwards

I've been involved in the DCF holiday programme for over 20 years now, helping out from long before Through the Roof was born. I've watched some guests come back year after year, and seen the changes God has worked in them over that time. And not just the guests! I can see the changes God has worked in me over that time too. This year I led the Babbacombe holiday for the first time; something that would have been impossible just a few years ago, yet I believe God blessed the holiday mightily.

Many characters have stood out for me over the years, perhaps one of the most profound being Sharon Key, who went on to found the Trent Valley Group.

I know the guests value the help provided for them on the holidays, as most would not be able to come without it. I very much appreciated the team of helpers we had in Babbacombe this year, with the care they gave the guests – the holiday could not happen without them.

However, I am often concerned by the amount we have to charge helpers to come on the holidays, and we are always trying to raise money to keep these costs down.

To this end I decided to take on a fundraising challenge this summer. I walked the Coast to Coast walk: 192 miles from St Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hood's Bay in North Yorkshire.

The first day wasn't promising. We set off from St Bees in strong winds and heavy rain, and this lasted all day.

I'm told there are wonderful views from this section of the walk, including across to the Isle of Man. We could barely see the next waymarker!

The second day dawned with much more promise – no waterproofs needed, and views opening up as we climbed into the Lake District proper.

From here the scenery changed gradually throughout the walk – from the rugged walking with steep and scrambly ascents and descents and the dramatic views of the Lake District, on to the much gentler farmland of eastern Cumbria, which reminded me very much of walking at home in Oxfordshire. Then into the Yorkshire Dales with their gently undulating farmland and frequent stone walls crossed by quite unique stiles, and onto the heather-covered North York Moors, before a final cliff-top walk, descending into Robin Hood's Bay and a well earned paddle in the sea – and the first and last ice-cream of the holiday!

Thank you very much to all those of you who sponsored me, and those who have been raising money to add to the total in other ways. I believe that, at the time of writing, I have raised almost £1500 for the holiday fund. Thank you, too, for those of you praying for me. I remained safe and injury-free throughout, with just one small blister just before the end (though it does mean that the person who sponsored me per blister has got off very lightly!)

Deep Fried Donations

Eileen and Karen travelled to Rosebery school in Epsom to receive a cheque for over £330 raised by the girls of Ruby House during their recent fundraising week. The girls gathered the money using empty Pringles cans for donation pots, and by selling Krispy Kreme doughnuts to other students. Thank you to everyone in Ruby House for all your hard work and fantastic generosity!

Eileen and Karen receive a cheque from the dedicated fundraisers and doughnut-sellers of Ruby House

