

# Advocacy Into Action



## Funding Success for Advocacy and Parents!

2010 got off to a great start with the fantastic news that the Henry Smith Foundation has agreed to invest in Advocacy Into Action and fund a full time parent's advocacy worker for three years. Beginning in April, the project will work with parents who have a learning disability and who have children going through child protection system.

From our past experience, we know that the situations and challenges faced by these parents are complex, time consuming, emotionally draining and long term. However, this has not put us off supporting parents who find themselves in this position. The main service strands of our new project will be to:

- ✓ offer the services of a knowledgeable, experienced advocacy worker who will provide direct advocacy, particularly at formal settings such as child protection reviews, looked after reviews, Childrens' Hearings and the sheriff court;
- ✓ develop a network of organisations and people who share our vision of equality and signpost parents to services best able to meet their needs (for instance referring someone to a supported employment office or for housing advice).
- ✓ establish a support network for both parents with a disability and a peer support network for volunteer advocates.

The launch of this new project is very exciting, especially in the current financial climate, where small voluntary organisations like ours are facing funding cuts. We would like to thank Maggie, Elizabeth and Sandra for their testimonials and for supporting us during the application interview. A very big thank you to Tammy, who at only 3 months stole everyone's hearts!

## A wee word of encouragement to all volunteer advocacy workers!



I have been a Citizen Advocate for two ladies for a number of years now - they both have had major changes in their lives in the last few months - positive changes to give them a better quality of life - brilliant!

One lady has had a number of health problems, which she has coped with in an amazing way - however she did need a move to a downstairs flat. This was difficult as she never seemed to quite make it to the top of the housing list. There was a real role for advocacy in helping, with others, to make sure she was not forgotten about - I was able to keep in touch with the Housing Department and with Councillor David Alexander who was also most helpful. The great news is that this lady is now settled in a lovely flat which is just right for her.

The other young lady had been in hospital for nearly five years. It has proved very difficult to find a suitable place for her to move on to and then to get the necessary funding in place. Lots of meetings, phone calls and letters. I looked for help from Michael Matheson MSP, as well as taking legal advice at my advocacy partners request. However, very recently, this lady has been discharged from hospital and is now back living in the community with appropriate support.

It has been a difficult time for both ladies and I also have found it demoralising when progress was slow. At one point I was feeling that perhaps Advocacy into Action staff should be involved rather than me as a volunteer. I felt it was all taking too much time and getting too complicated and most of all, little in the way of progress.

However ..... I am just writing this to encourage other advocates to keep going even when it feels a real uphill struggle for both you and your advocacy partner. To have a part in supporting people to live a full life is a privilege - I am glad I stuck with it and look forward to continuing to offer advocacy support to both ladies. Also—thanks to Angela and Elizabeth at Advocacy into Action for always being available to listen, advise and encourage.

Ivy Blair Citizen Advocate

## Get the word out!

Last year we applied for and were awarded a small grant from Cash Back For Communities to fund a short term working group of up to 10 young people in the Falkirk community. The group will be working to make our social network sites (like Bebo, Facebook and Twitter) the best on the web!



The group will run from the 3rd of February to the 25th of May, every Tuesday night from 6pm to 8pm. So if you are aged between 14 and 18 and are interested in social networking sites, volunteering, journalism, or just meeting some new people and having a laugh, please give Cheryl or Nicola a call (633321).

## Successful Launches!



Our graffiti mural in all its glory!

At the beginning of October we formally launched our Young People's Project (funded by The Big Lottery). Students representing all the major schools in Falkirk and Clackmannanshire attended the two days and there was fantastic

media interest in the events and in the project itself. In Falkirk, we commissioned Keiran Gorman, a graffiti artist from Zap Graffiti Arts to help us create a mural. Not only did we learn the basic skills of a graffiti artist, but we are really pleased with the resulting banner and new strapline for the Young People's project "My voice, my choice". In Alloa, Reach Out provided us with a fantastic display of art work

created by their members in Alloa. The Scottish Society for Autism also created a piece of stained glass to commemorate our launch and they attended the day with glass jewellery and gifts to sell. We would like to thank everyone who helped us have two really great days, publicising our work, seeing people who have supported our project and meeting new people.

## AGM 2009

Thanks to all who attended our AGM in November last year. It was great to see so many of our supporters and to look back over what has been a very successful year for Advocacy Into



Moira accepts a small token of thanks at the AGM

Action. It was also an emotional event as we said goodbye to Moira Jack who has been a Director for over 5 years. For the past 4 years Moira has served as Treasurer and has made sure that our finance systems have been sound. Moira is the kind of person to whom nothing is ever a bother and we will miss her support and kindness dreadfully. Moira wants to spend more time with her family but has promised us she won't be a stranger.

In addition, we said thank you to Lizzy Whitehead who also stood down from the Management Committee. Lizzy and her husband Steve, now have a new baby and brother for Maggy. We wish them all well!

Tracy Reynolds was voted onto the management committee and the full committee now is: Tom Scott, Chairperson, Andrew Rae, Vice Chairperson, Joy Tomlinson, Secretary, Stuart Adams, Corrine Kelbie (who joined the committee earlier on in the year), Anthony McElroy, Jason Wallace, Tracy Reynolds, and Susan Grassekamp. The position of Treasurer will be filled at the February Committee meeting. Also with regard to finance, it was decided at the AGM to thank ATN for their past services as external auditors and to appoint Alexander Sloan of Edinburgh as our accountants for 2010.

Enclosed with your newsletter is a questionnaire so that we can find out your views about Advocacy Into Action. We do this so that we can review our service and update our business plan—please take a few moments to complete our questionnaire. Thanks!