

Link Up Friendz

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Link Up announces
new Director

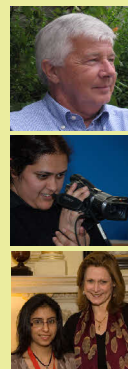
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Winter 2009

Registered Charity number 1060481

www.linkup.org.uk

Link Up Scoops National IT Volunteering Award

Link Up's Computer Project for people with learning disabilities has won **IT4 Communities 'Best Accessible Project 2009'** and they were presented with their award at the British Computer Society.

Young volunteers recruited from local high schools in Harrow run the project. They support our friends on a 1:1 basis teaching them IT skills every Saturday morning. This activity is currently funded by **Harrow Family Learning** and a recent donation from **EDF Energy**.

It is commendable that our volunteers give up their time to supervise our friends with learning disabilities, which has enabled them to keep up with their peers at school and college. Link Up would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all our dedicated volunteers and to **Stanmore College** for the free use of their IT suites.



Computer Project student
Mukund Dattani with his IT
volunteer buddy Shreena Poojara

Big thank you to our sponsors:



Family Learning

stanmore college

empowering people with learning disabilities

Link Up Announces New Director!

We are pleased to announce the appointment of a new Director, Richard Coe, to take over from Mike Coker who, for 11 years, has spearheaded our multi-faceted services for learning disabled people in Harrow.

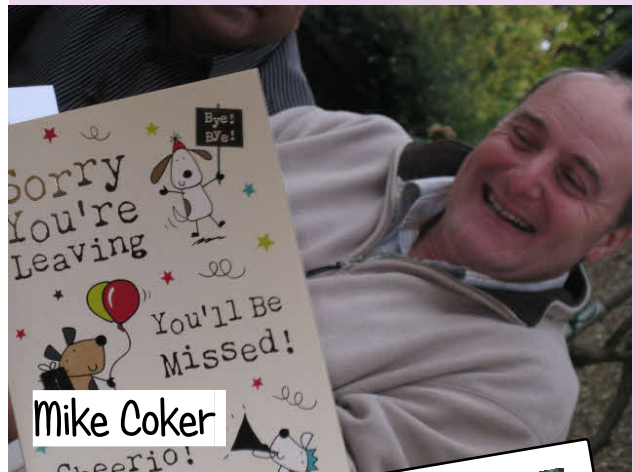
Richard is a business consultant with more than 25 years experience as CEO in the commercial field both in the UK and overseas. He started his career in the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) in 1967 and was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to the community in the Caribbean in 1999. He says that he is very pleased to lead the tremendously dedicated team at Link Up and looks forward to further energising the activities of the organisation in association with Harrow Council and partner agencies.



On 19th June 2009 Link Up Staff and Trustees threw a farewell party for Mike to wish him the best of luck for the future and to say a big thank you for all his hard work and commitment towards improving the lives of our friends at Link Up

Thank You Mike & Good Luck!

Please join us in providing a warm welcome to Richard and saying a big 'Thank you and au revoir' to Mike. We would like to thank Mike for the sterling work he has done with Link Up over the years. We are glad that he has kindly agreed to provide us with voluntary consulting in fundraising and will continue to support our activities as a volunteer.



Yummy cream cake made by Trustee: Marianne Leeson



Mike cuts the Link Up cake



Three cheers for Mike!

Forever Friends

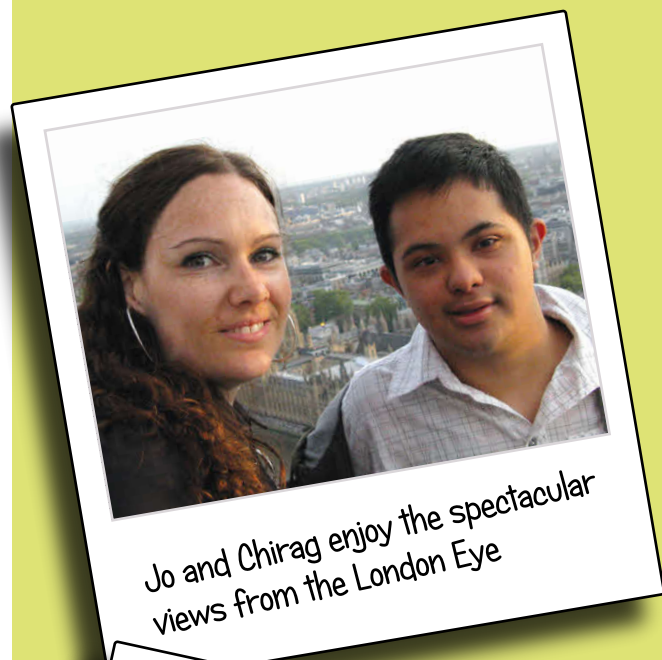
At Link Up we value the importance of friendship and the wonderful benefits it can bring to both members with learning disabilities and our volunteers. Link Up volunteer Jo King writes about her wonderful friendship with her neighbour, 19 year old Chirag Kunverji.

“ When I left Australia to come to London last year I had no idea what to expect, other than lots of rain! I didn't imagine that an organisation such as Link Up would become such a big part of my life and make me smile as much as it has. I have met some amazing people, both staff and friends and have had heaps of fun, even when I'm being thrashed at pool, which seems to happen fairly often at Link Up's 1:1 Club.

My friendship with Chirag in particular has been really great. We were both excited when we found out that we lived on the same street and since then we've been on the London Eye together, discovered a few strange animals at the London Zoo and played some badminton at the Junior Club. It's been so special getting to know my neighbours and because of Link Up we know we'll spend time together on a regular basis, in addition to running into each other leaving the house!

I started volunteering at Link Up because I wanted to make a difference in someone else's life, but it turns out that these friends that I've made have actually made more of a difference in mine. Thank you to everyone I've met through this amazing organisation, you all have a very special place in my heart. ”

If you're interested in supporting a person with a learning disability on a **One 2 One** basis then please contact John or Rizwana at the Link Up office.



Everybody needs good neighbours!

With a little understanding you can find the perfect blend

Neighbours, should be there for one another

That's when good neighbours become good friends!

Vishal's Big Jump For Link Up

Vishal Ram is one of Link Up's young volunteers and has been involved in our work for the last two years. He has been doing a great job at our Saturday morning Computer Classes supporting children with learning disabilities to develop essential computer skills. And as if that wasn't enough, dare-devil Vishal decided to do a tandem Sky Dive to raise much needed funds for Link Up's various educational initiatives.

The event took place in Cambridge at Chatteris Airfield in July 2009 where Vishal fell forward into the clouds at 10,000ft! Imagine Vishal standing at the edge of an open doorway in an aircraft - the noise of the engines and the wind ringing in his ears with only the outline of distant fields below. Now imagine him leaning forward out of that doorway and letting go - falling forward into the clouds, diving down through the air as he freefalls at over 120mph!

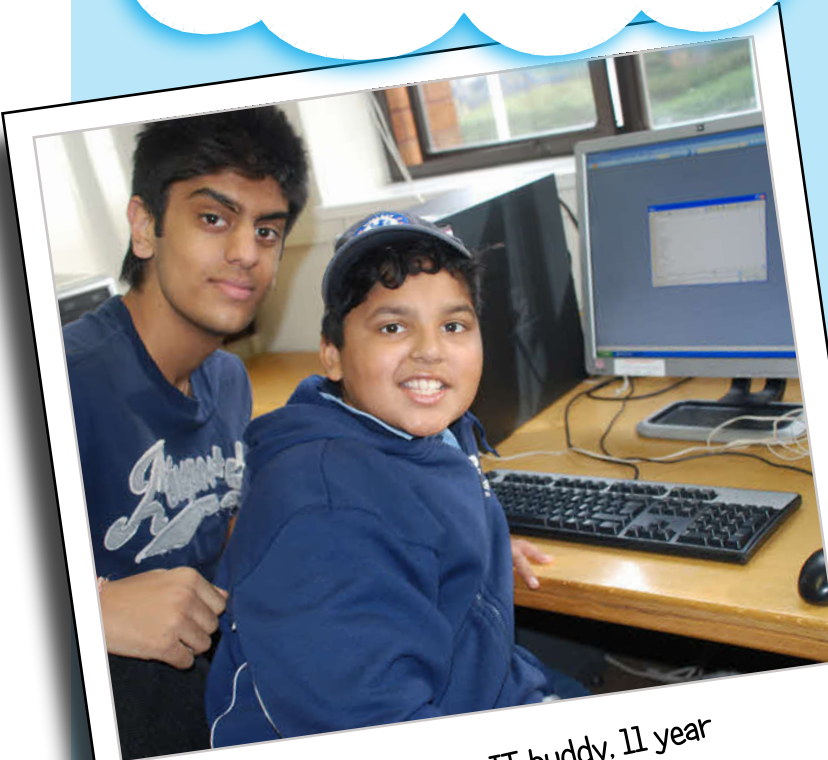
Link Up would like to say a BIG thank you to Vishal for his courageous BIG jump which raised a sky high.....

£500!

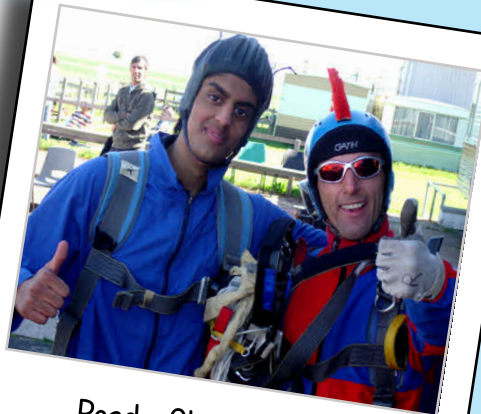
“ The skydive was one of the most amazing experiences I have ever faced and I am only glad I could do it for Link Up. Falling through the sky at 120mph isn't as scary as it sounds (okay it was a little scary) and I honestly cannot wait to do it again. Thank you to all those who helped raise funds for the jump and a big thank you to Link Up for an amazing two years. ”

Vishal Ram

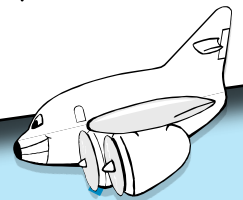
Would you dare to **Jump 4 Link Up?**
If so, we would love to hear from you!



Vishal Ram supporting his IT buddy, 11 year old Joel Ramnath at Link Up's Saturday Computer Club



Ready, Steady. Jump!
Dare-devil Vishal geared up for the big event



Against All Odds

“ When I hear the word miracle, I instantly think of Natalie Killestein.

When she was born, the doctors told her parents, Kay and Alan, that she would live her life completely immobile. Walking and talking would be totally out of the question. Yet before me sits a well adjusted 37 year old woman, who certainly has no problem walking or talking anymore.

Natalie's life is an incredible success story. Despite living with a variety of serious health issues, she still maintains a highly active life. She is a student at Choices 4 All, a charity organisation in Harrow that offers training to people with learning disabilities. Natalie is currently involved in a Catering Course there, as well as learning other practical life skills in classes throughout the week. She has also just completed a DJ Training course run by Link Up, which will allow her to DJ at their Changes Nightclub in time to come.

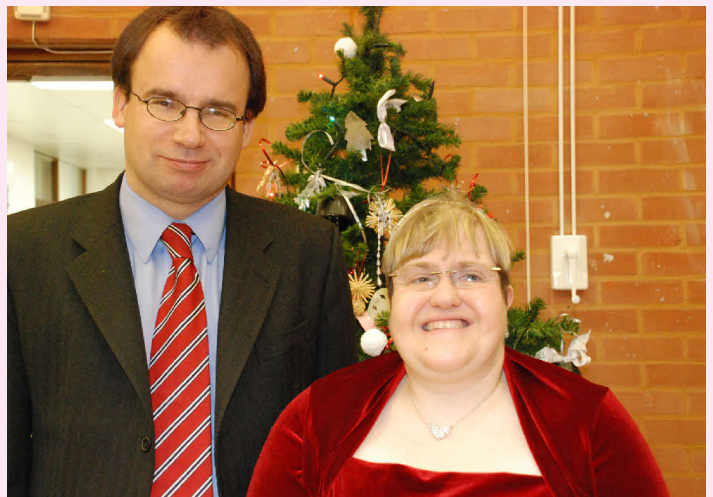


Natalie first met her volunteer friend, **Sheila Talbott**, 20 years ago. Sheila and Natalie's first meeting went well and since then they have spent many hours together bowling, swimming, horse riding and enjoying regular meals out, amongst many other things. They have become very important to each other, as well as their families and have supported one another through many significant moments. Natalie's mother Kay says that, "Sheila is not just Natalie's friend, she's like family now."



Natalie - Living life to the full !!

Natalie met another special friend through Community Link Up. His name is Gareth Thomas. She has a real soft spot for the local MP and often talks about the time they have spent together. She shows a keen interest in politics and much to her delight had the opportunity, through Gareth, to visit the Houses of Parliament.



Against all odds, Natalie is living a very full and happy life. She has a wonderful family, loving friends and amazing community support. But over and above all that, what she has achieved in life has gone far beyond all expectations. For someone who was said to be unable to think, speak or move, Natalie is a reminder that even when we are told that we can't do something, sometimes with a little bit of faith, perseverance and help from our friends, we can. You are an inspiration Natalie.

Jo King

”

Healthy Eating Workshop

On June 11th 2009, Archie, our Health Improvement Project Co-ordinator ran a Healthy Eating workshop at our **Junior Club** to raise awareness about Healthy Eating and get the children excited about cooking and eating great wholesome food!

Children, parents and the young volunteers learnt to make healthy pizzas using wholemeal naan bread and a variety of vegetable toppings. This was then followed by a fruit smoothie demonstration. Fifteen families with children aged from 5 - 15 years enjoyed making the recipes. It was a great opportunity to demonstrate that healthy food can taste really good and that it doesn't have to cost the earth!

The workshop provided lots of beneficial information for the parents illustrating how easy it is to include the recommended five fruit and vegetable portions in a day. It also developed culinary skills which will support independent living, taught how to plan and make choices, developed creativity and boosted confidence levels.

At the end of the workshop, Archie handed out easy to read recipe sheets to encourage the children to make the recipes at home.

A big thank you to NHS Harrow for funding this workshop.

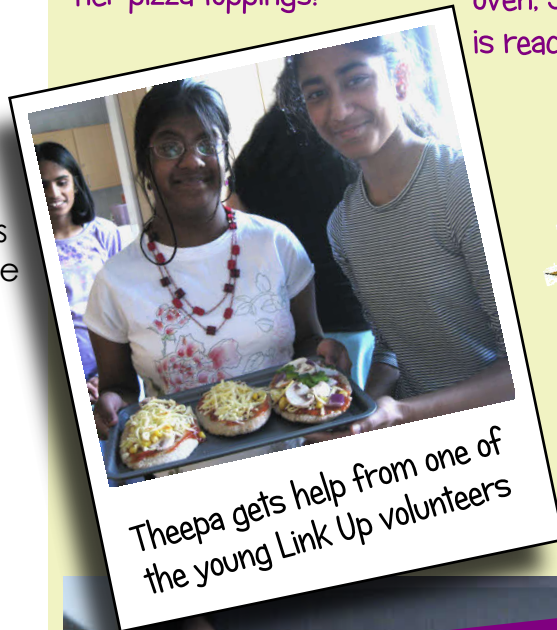


NHS
Harrow

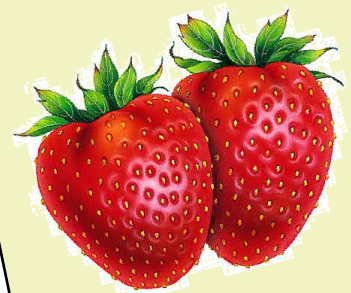


5 year old Simran chooses her pizza toppings!

After a 10 minute bake in the oven, Simran's healthy pizza is ready to eat!



Theepa gets help from one of the young Link Up volunteers



Smoothie Operators!

The children were excited to learn how to make fruit smoothies

Literacy Project Honoured at No.10

Eighteen year old Ashni Sedani, our young volunteer who takes a lead on Link Up's Literacy Project, **"Write Here, Write Now"** has been honoured at No. 10 Downing Street with a National Year of Reading Hero award. Ashni was presented with her award by the Prime Minister's wife, Sarah Brown.

“Receiving this award, meeting Sarah Brown and visiting No.10 has been an amazing experience. Mrs Brown was so personable, she really showed such interest in what we've achieved and in the difference that individuals can make within a community. **"Write Here, Write Now"** is supported by 12 enthusiastic Link Up volunteers and the project is flourishing thanks to funding from **Starbucks, Three Valleys Water and Enid Blyton Trust**. Special thanks also go out to **Stanmore College** for the free use of the classroom and to Link Up's Volunteer Co-ordinator, Rizwana Malik, who kindly gives up her Saturday mornings to co-ordinate the project.”

Ashni Sedani



A proud moment: Ashni receives her Reading Hero award from Sarah Brown at 10 Downing Street



Hitesh Gohel from Jato Dynamics congratulates Ashni on her award



stanmore college

Hearts 'n' Crafts

Hearts 'n' Crafts Cards are made by our Link Up friends with learning disabilities, advancing their craft skills. It is an emerging social enterprise with a strong focus on client development and involvement from local volunteers. The vibrant, fun-filled workshops offer our friends, helped by staff and volunteers, opportunities for creative expression and communication and can be particularly helpful to those who find it hard to express their thoughts and feelings verbally.

Every card marks a small but significant step in the maker's creative and personal development. The workshops are also a great place for our friends to meet new people and see friendships grow.

We make handmade cards for every occasion and are expanding the project by helping our clients create other handicraft items such as bookmarks, jewellery, picture frames etc. The cards are for sale at fetes and craft fairs in the Harrow area.

This project received a generous donation from **The Worshipful Company of Saddlers** and **The Triangle Trust** which went towards our start-up costs. We also receive ongoing support from **Harrow NHS**.

If you have a learning disability and would like to learn new skills in arts and crafts, then contact Archie at the Link Up office.

*Triangle
Trust
1949 Fund*



**NHS
Harrow**



"I use paper, sequins, ribbons and lots of imagination!"

Sarah



**Hearts
'n'
Crafts**

Young volunteer Zoya Zhan supports Chirag Kunverji to make a range of birthday cards.

Chirag has a great eye for colour and design and is currently working towards a GCSE in Art.

Mind the Gap!

For people with learning disabilities, using public transport can present particular challenges. To raise awareness of this important issue, Link Up put together a contemporary drama production, working in partnership with two local Harrow Schools.

Ranu Mehta-Radia, our Schools Project Co-ordinator invited a group of Year 12 students from **Heathfield School** (a high achieving girls school in Pinner) to put in a funding application to **Youth Opportunity Fund**, which enables young people to access funding to deliver projects which they initiate and take a lead on. The students were then matched up with eight pupils from a co-ed special needs school **Shaftesbury High**, and an exciting drama production called **Mind the Gap!** unfolded.



Jack



The final production came together at the Travellers Studio at Harrow Arts Centre on 1st April 2009 where the budding actors had the opportunity to perform in front of their teachers as well as members from Harrow Council and other local disability organisations. At the end of the event, all the participants were given certificates of achievement which were handed out by our special guest Nisha Childs - Senior Audience Development Officer from The London Transport Museum.

Contemporary Drama Project



Mark, Annie, Cezary and Yusuf



Girls Allowed: enthusiastic volunteers from Heathfield

Tharshi, Krishni, Pavitri, and Ines

“ The Mind the Gap! project was inspired by Link Up as a vast number of our peers with learning disabilities did not travel independently on public transport due to the barriers they faced. They relied on being driven to and from destinations by their parents or by community transport. As a group we decided that a drama project revolving around travel training would be the most effective way to raise awareness. It was a great way for our new found friends to express their concerns about using public transport. ”

Hilda Kwafo - Akoto



Aisha & Caroline



Nazia

Do You Have The

V

Factor ?

Volunteering is the perfect way to gain experience, keep your skills up to date and explore new opportunities!

It can also be something you do in addition to your day job or can be a great way of getting you back into the workplace if you are not working.

What surprises most people is that becoming a Link Up volunteer does not necessarily mean a big time commitment. Some of our volunteers give 1-2 hours of their time once or twice a month, and for this small investment the return is truly enormous. In enabling someone with a learning disability to do things that most of us take for granted, you can bring about a really positive change in their life.

Volunteering is about U

- ★ You can learn new skills
- ★ Spend time doing the things you enjoy
- ★ Boost your confidence
- ★ Make new friends
- ★ Improve your job prospects
- ★ Have lots of fun!

Are you up for the LinkUp challenge?

To apply, call us now on 020 8868 5808
or email linkup@linkup.org.uk



Hallelujah teaches Shamir IT skills



Sonali and Bernadette enjoy a game of cricket



Hilda supports Amanda with travel training

V

olunteering 4

V

ulnerable people

Claremont High Supports Link Up

Young volunteers make an amazing difference in our community. Claremont High School students have raised **£621** for Link Up at their charity events. They are now going to be running an arts project with Link Up. This project will include art workshops for our friends, which the students will run at a local venue. Link Up would like to say a big thank you to all the pupils and staff at Claremont High School for making this happen!



Umesh and Rizwana collect a generous donation from the school

Put the Kettle On!

On Saturday 31st October, **Friends of Charlken** (one of Link Up's affiliated friendship groups) held a **Coffee Morning** at Pinner Methodist Church in aid of Link Up.



Phoebe

The event was organised by dedicated Link Up volunteer, Phoebe Vasiliou with help from a few other members of the Friends of Charlken group.

As well as the lovely cakes and biscuits, a bric-a-brac sale also took place with many interesting items up for grabs including jewellery, music and DVDs. Many thanks to everyone who donated these items, which have now found new homes. All the hard work paid off with sales amounting to a generous **£220** plus **£180** from a previous sale!!!

Link Up would like to say a special thank you to Phoebe for organising the event.

Gift Recycling

Do you have any unwanted gifts? Would you like them to find a new home, where they're wanted, loved, and needed?

If so, Friends of Charlken are appealing for unwanted gifts to sell at their coffee mornings. The items must be in good condition.

Please get in touch!

Unfortunately we are unable to take any clothes, shoes, books or VHS videos

Media Workshops at the BBC !!

Due to the success of our in-house '**Media & Me**' training programme, Link Up's dynamic media students were invited to the BBC's Digital Learning Centre based in White City, West London to participate in two exciting workshops, exploring creative ways of using multimedia and new technology.

Our friends were inspired to **IMAGINE**, **EXPLORE**, **LEARN & CREATE** while getting to grips with cutting-edge technologies and having bags of fun at the same time! During the workshops they had the chance to work alongside an array of highly creative facilitators who are all leaders in their respective fields and with their support our friends had the opportunity to explore new ways of developing and expressing their creativity.



Our creative media students



BBC's state of the art classroom



Nazia



Kenji creates a Dr Who animation!



Natasha

If you would like to develop your media skills, then contact Archie at the Link Up office.

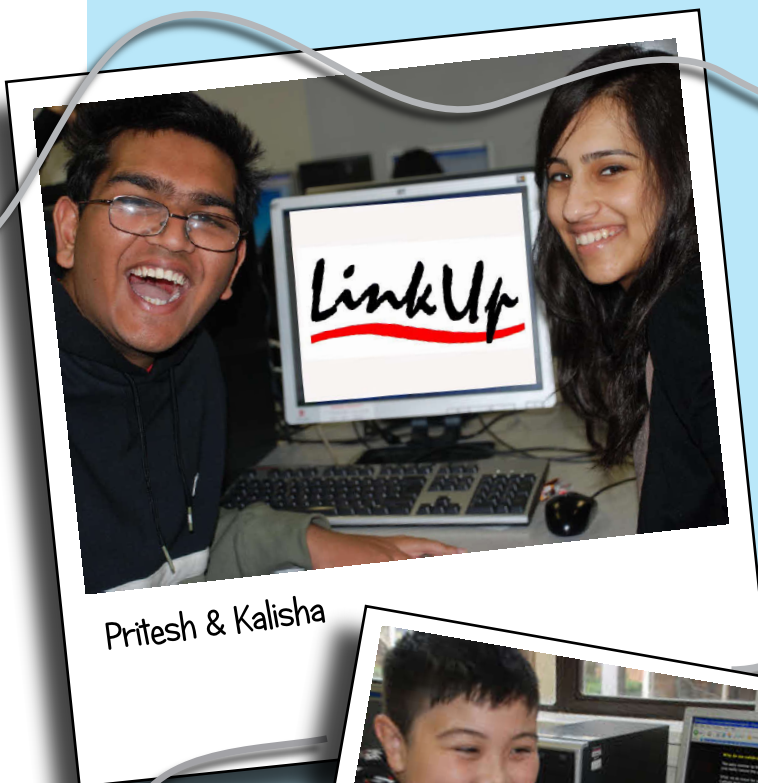


Amanda gets behind the camera

Follow Link Up Online!

Link Up recently set up a Facebook and Twitter account, to help keep people better informed about what we're up to as an organisation, as well as highlighting events you might like to be involved in. The beauty of Twitter, in particular, is that new posts can be sent straight to your mobile phone, so you don't even need to be near a computer to receive our updates.

So if you are a regular on either of these sites, feel free to become a fan or a follower of Link Up. Any feedback on how we could better use these platforms is also more than welcome.



Pritesh & Kalisha



'Link Up is just a couple of clicks away - every day!'

Callum

How to find us:



You can get onto our **Twitter** page by going to:

<http://twitter.com/communitylinkup>

If you have a Twitter account yourself, feel free to follow us. Once you're logged in, type the link above into your web browser and you will be sent to our page. Click the **Follow** button under our name. If you don't have an account, you can still see all our updates by going to the link above.

A sticker of the Facebook logo, featuring the word 'facebook' in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background. The sticker is pinned to a corkboard with a blue pushpin.

facebook

To access our **Facebook** profile, you will need to have your own personal Facebook account.

<http://www.facebook.com>

Once you're logged in, type **Community Link Up** in the Facebook search bar. The first entry that comes up is Community Link Up. Click on either our name or our logo, which will then take you to our page. At this point you can click on **Become a Fan** at the top of the page.

Link Up Go For Gold!

On 20th June 2009 the Olympic and Paralympic games arrived at **Stanmore College** where eight Link Up friends took part in an energetic media workshop.

This workshop was a joint initiative between Link Up and **Championing Harrow** and was aimed at supporting people with learning disabilities to raise their awareness and interest in the forthcoming Games and to improve their understanding of what the 2012 Olympics actually means to London.

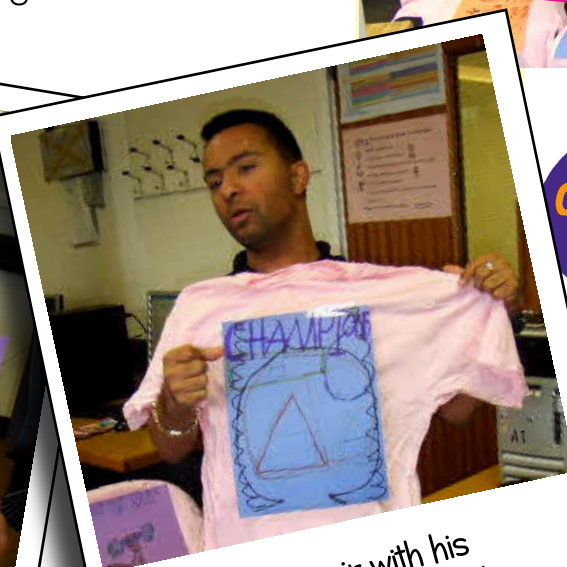
Our friends learnt about the origins of the Olympics, how it has grown to an international event, who the major sponsors are and the importance of the Olympic and Paralympic brand. This was then followed by a series of fun activities which included a game where the participants had to match a photograph of an Olympic sporting event with the correct name, and an exciting competition where each participant had to design their own version of the 2012 logo and create a matching slogan.

The gold medal for best logo and slogan 'Freedom' went to Emeca Uzoh and Shamir Hirani took silver with his 'Champion' artwork.

If your organisation wishes to host a similar workshop, please contact Ranu at Link Up or email Kirsty Adams from Championing Harrow at championingharrow@harrow.gov.uk



Emeca with his winning slogan 'Freedom'



Shamir with his 'Champion' artwork

Championing
Harrow

edf
ENERGY

stanmore
college

Active Friends

In 2008, Link Up put together a Fitness Project to provide our friends with access to integrated training resources to help them get fit and be part of the wider community. Thanks to a small pot of funding from **Attend**, 12 of our clients had the opportunity to access health and leisure facilities at **Fitz Club** in central Harrow. This groundbreaking project has made a remarkable difference to their lives in so many ways.



We are now delighted to announce that Attend have agreed to extend our Keep Fit project for a further two years! Many of our friends are now accessing popular gyms across Harrow where they receive support and advice from personal trainers who guide them on their fitness schedules and teach them how to increase their fitness levels in the activities they enjoy.

Let's face the music and dance!

The new pot of funding has also enabled us to set up a **Contemporary Dance Project** which runs from Harrow Arts Centre on Thursday evenings led by Dance Teacher Galina Kalichin. With Galina's expert tuition, our dance enthusiasts had the opportunity to perform at Harrow's **Under One Sky** and the **Brent Respect Festival** where they got standing ovations at the end of their performances. The classes that commenced in September 2009 will prepare new dances which will be performed at the forthcoming **Harrow Festival of Disability Arts**. If you are interested in taking part in our Keep Fit Activities then contact Ranu at the Link Up office.

Charles



Keeping Fit !



Christine



Shaïda



Alexandra

Karaoke Fun at

Karaoke fever struck the dancefloor for the first time at **Changes Nightclub** on 10th June 2009 in celebration of their 6th Birthday!!

More than a hundred people turned up with their glad rags and dancing shoes to sing along to the good old tunes from the 70s and 80s as well as the latest hits from the charts, all of which echoed through Zoom Leisure Sports Hall, thanks to the generosity of the Kodak Management Team.

A fully licensed bar was also available to quench those thirsts after a strut of funky moves on the dance floor!! Special thanks to all the Changes DJ s for entertaining the crowd with a great line up of music.

A big thank you also goes to the **SF Group** for their most generous donation of **£4,427** towards the cost of our new disco sound and lighting equipment as well as photographic equipment.

www.changesnightclub.org

CHANGES NIGHTCLUB



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This newsletter was designed in-house by Archie Shah and is sponsored by our local business partner:

