

HEART SOUTH WEST



Heart Circle Fair Special



Heart Circle Fair - Blaise Castle, May 1989

**HEART SOUTH WEST IS THE MAGAZINE OF THE
BRISTOL AND SOUTH WEST CHILDRENS HEART CIRCLE.**

**THE CHARITY WHICH SUPPORTS CHILDREN UNDERGOING
HEART SURGERY — THEIR FAMILIES AND THE UNITS IN
WHICH THEY RECEIVE CARE.**

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WELCOME TO HEARTBEAT SOUTH WEST

October 1989

Hello,

This is the first edition of the Bristol and South West Children's Heart Circle Newsletter.

We hope to provide you with news and information about all aspects of the Heart Circle's work. The fund raising, equipment, facilities and the support and advice provided.

It is your magazine. It can include anything you feel it should. What we most need is details of your fund raising efforts, however large or small, a picture of the event or the all important cheque they handed over. We would also appreciate any suggestions on how the already excellent service the Heart Circle provides could be improved. What more could the hospitals do? Perhaps you would like to share the story of your operation, or the experience of being a parent through the difficult time in hospital.

We aim to produce two editions a year. But we cannot have too much material. Please send articles to me at the address below. Remember it is your magazine, I look forward to hearing from you.

David Passmore
91 Station Road
Shirehampton
BRISTOL BS11 9XA



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LOOKING BACK OVER SEVENTEEN YEARSA Message from the Chairman

The last seventeen years have seen great change. There have been advances in heart surgery, new consultant appointments, several N.H.S. reorganisations, many nursing staff coming and going, social workers community rather than hospital based but until May 1989 the officers of the Heart Circle remained constant supported by Dr. Jordan and Dr. Burton on the Committee. In the Bristol Royal Infirmary in 1972 the Cardiac Surgery Unit was a two bedded side ward with children admitted to a children's orthopaedic ward and at the most four children a month were able to have the opportunity of corrective heart surgery. Parents stayed in bed and breakfast accomodation often a long way from the hospital and only on the night of surgery could they stay in a communal room shared by worried relatives from all over the hospital. Communication was poor and there was an obvious need to help families understand the complex problems of their children's hearts and come to terms with the mysteries of open heart surgery.

How fortunate we were, therefore to receive such great support and encouragement from medical staff and administrators when we considered setting up a self-help group for families whose children were to come to Bristol for treatment for heart problems. About forty people attended the inaugural meeting of the Heart Circle on 11th May 1972 when families met for the first time apart from clinics. Immediately they shared experiences and worries and so obviously welcomed the opportunity that was being given to them. After the business the chatter went on late into the evening and many friendships were formed that have lasted through the years. The aims of the Circle were set out and a competition was launched for a logo which we still use today. It was stressed that support would be given to all families to give them the opportunity to meet others and share problems. It was emphasized that there should be no subscription and at the most an annual income of about £200 was anticipated.

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Today we have over 700 families on our mailing list and branches have grown to help them in their own districts. No-one ever contemplated the financial support that we have received over the years from families, local groups and so many people and organisations who have learned about our work that has enabled us to provide amenities and equipment. Perhaps our most



Chairperson: Mrs Jean Pratten

important achievement was to help provide twenty four bedrooms for parents of children in the B.R.I. and B.C.H. As a result people have a private place in Bristol when they are often a long way from home.

We have also been able to provide many extra amenities for the Cardiac Surgery Unit, especially since its reorganisation in July 1988. We shall continue to do all we can to make this Unit as comfortable and pleasant as possible. At B.C.H. we have also enlarged and upgraded the playroom and have helped with many smaller items on the wards as well as parents bedrooms. Many pieces of equipment in both hospitals have a plaque to show they were donated through the Heart Circle.

This newsletter marks another advance for the Heart Circle and provided a much needed means of communication between us all. I hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to express your views.

September 1989

Jean Pratten
19 Coldharbour Road
Redland
Bristol BS6 7JT

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ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL FUN DAY RAISES OVER £10,000
AGAIN THE SUNSHINE BRINGS IN THE CROWDS.

The 1989 Family fun day was held on Bank Holiday Monday 27th May at Blaise Castle in Bristol. The Heart Circle stalls were there in strength along with numerous others all organised so well by Claire Casesley.



There was also the six mile fun run which attracted 102 runners. More than half were sponsored and we would like to thank them for taking part on such a hot day and raising so much money. The total amount of money raised on the day has already exceeded the ten thousand pound target figure and money is still coming in. Special thank you also to the Bevan, Moxham and Barwood families who between them raised over £1800. Well done !!! The music for the day was provided by a local band called "Total Control" they performed superbly really helping the good atmosphere of the day. They have very kindly agreed to offer their services again next year. Talking of which next year's event will be on Sunday 27th May 1990. Please make a note in your diaries NOW !



PICTURES FROM BRISTOL EVENING POST

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So finally a big thanks to everyone who gave up their time to make this year's such a success. Don't hesitate to contact me or Claire if you want to help again or have any ideas as to how the day could be even better.

Thank you again - see you next year and bring all your friends with you.

Bye for now,

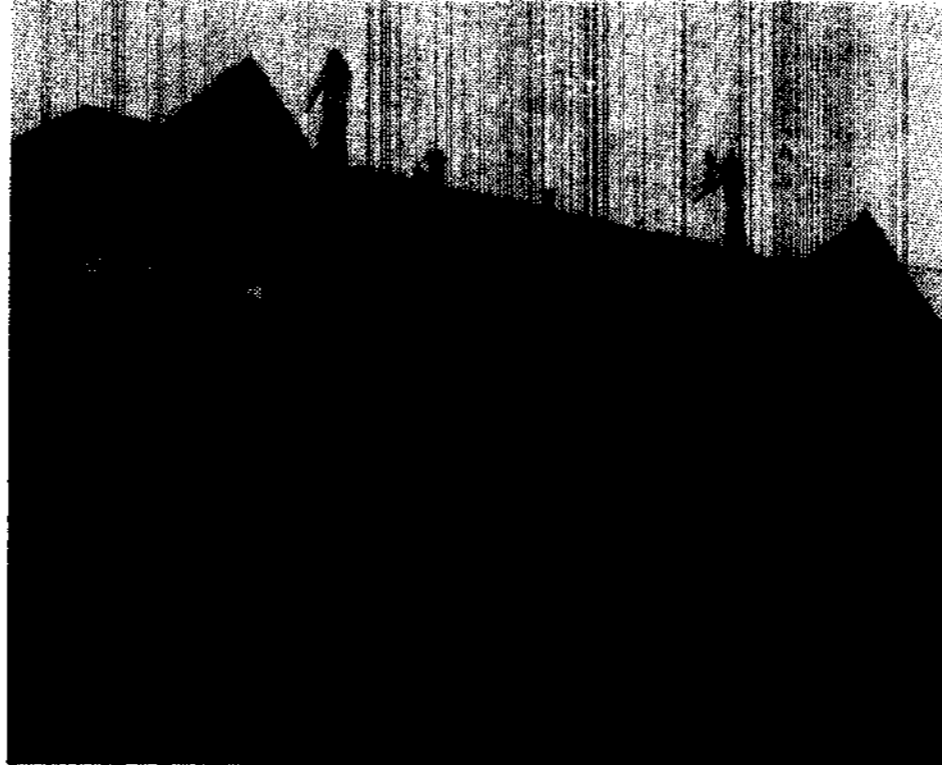
Jan Parsons



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NEW PROJECTS 89/90

The Heart Circle have agreed to upgrade the five bedrooms on the top floor of the Children's Hospital which are in such poor condition at the present time. We are also converting the store room in the detached bedroom block into a laundry for resident families with an outside entrance so that people staying in these rooms are not disturbed and there will be an extra door leading to this and the garden from the corridor before Ward 37. The cost of this project amounts to £20,000.

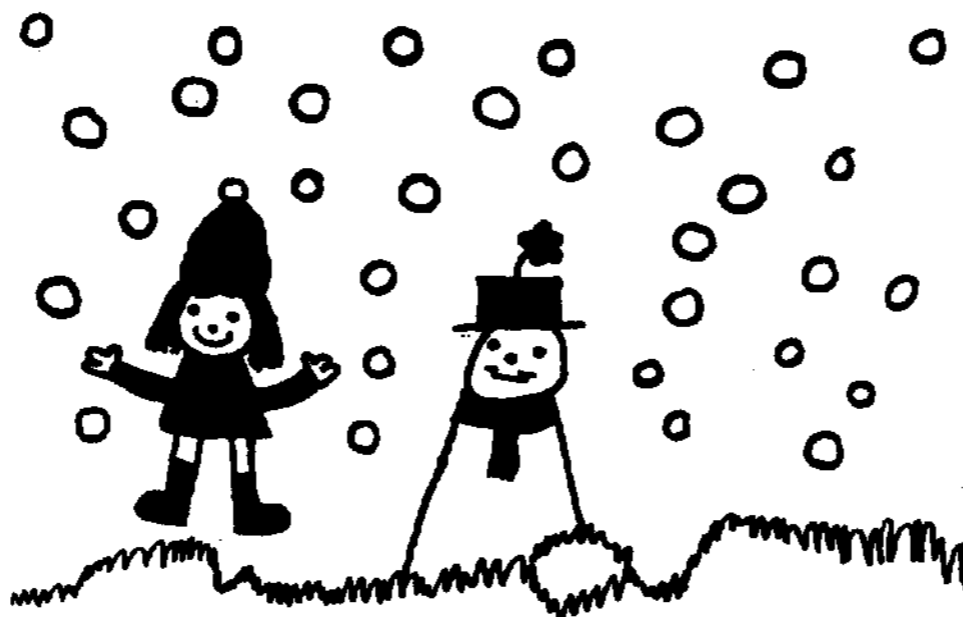


One project which has just been completed is the playroom at the Bristol Children's Hospital. Paid for and equipped by the Heart Circle, thanks to your efforts. And opened here by Nick Davies of the BBC's Really Wild Show - produced in Bristol.

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CHRISTMAS CARDS

Twenty designs were received for our Christmas Card competition and the winning card was designed by Alice Hector of Bridgwater whose sister, Ruth, is awaiting open heart surgery. Her card is proving very popular and 10,000 were printed. They are selling well at 90p for a pack of 5.



We want more designs for our 1990 cards and hope to have a selection next year. Please send in any entries to Jan Parsons, 1 Hillview Road, Bedminster Down, Bristol BS13 7LE.

Next year's cards will be sponsored by Britannia List Services of Swindon and we are most grateful to them for their support.

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THE STORY OF JAMES ATTWOOD
ANOTHER SATISFIED CUSTOMER

My name is James Attwood and I am
10 years old. I live in Clevedon
with my Mum, my Dad and my brother
David. I had a hole in my heart
until October 21st 1985.

Life before my operation was not too good. I had to go home from school
every Tuesday and Thursday. I went into hospital on the Thursday before my
operation. The Hospital was called the Bristol Royal Infirmary. On Monday
the 21st of October 1985 I was given medicine to make me go to sleep
because I did not like injections. I don't know what happened next but
when I woke up I was in the Intensive Care Ward. I stayed there for the
remainder of Monday, Tuesday and part of Wednesday. I then went back to
the ward.

There were lots of doctors and nurses looking after me. Mum and Dad could
spend as much time with me as they wanted.

Seven days later I was well enough to go home. I couldn't go to school for
a couple of months but when I got back everyone was excited to see me.

I now feel like I never had an operation - in fact I sometimes forget about
it !!!

James Attwood

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KIDS CORNER

Hello Kids!

This is the page for you. We'll have jokes, puzzles and competitions as well as stories from those of you who have had heart operations or have helped their brothers or sisters through theirs. It's your page so please write in with details of your fundraising events and don't forget to send in a photo of yourself as well.

Jokes:

Hickory Dickory Dock,
Three mice ran up the clock.
The clock struck one,
And the other two got away
with minor injuries!

Teacher: "Yes Mary, what is it?"

Mary: "I don't want to scare you, teacher, but my daddy said if I didn't bring home better grades, **someone** is due for a spanking!"

Are you coming out to play?

No, I have to help Dad with my homework.

More Best Sellers:

Parachute Jumping by Willie Maykit

Everybody Out by Rufus Falling

What has a bowler hat, a broolly, and crawls?

A civil serpant

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CARAVANS

The Heart Circle have two caravans available for the use of Heart Circle families. They are based at Burnham on Sea. One is a six berth, the other a four berth. One was provided by the Caravan Club the other by Colonel Dudley Smith. And they are maintained by the Heart Circle. Anyone wishing to book a holiday in either of the caravans at low cost should contact Ron Parsons c/o 1 Hillview Road, Bedminster Down, Bristol BS13 7LE.

HEARTY HINTS

My son, Robert, has recently been in hospital after having heart surgery and it occurred to me, during this time, that a lot of families who have children with heart problems experience similar difficulties, yet all have different ways of coping. As the membership of the Heart Circle is so diverse, it is difficult to meet together and discuss our problems, so I thought it may be a good idea to produce a leaflet of hints and tips from families that others may find useful.

This could consist of anything from how you persuaded your child to eat, to how you managed to settle them into hospital or even where you managed to park when visiting hospital. In fact, anything you feel may help another family would be most welcome.

Please send your tips to me - Jenny Purnell, 41 Hillyfield Road, Headley Park, Bristol BS13 7QG.

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GIVE AS YOU EARN**A NEW SIMPLE WAY TO HELP THE HEART CIRCLE**

People in workplaces all over the country are using Give As You Earn to support their favourite charities. They can give direct from their pay to provide a regular income for the causes they care about. And the tax person gives too! You can give any amount you like, up to £480 a year. By completing a simple form, or even by making one phone call you can arrange to have your donation deducted from your salary or wages.

You can give anything from £2 a week to £40 a month. If you choose to give £10 a month it will only cost you £7.50 because the tax person won't take the £2.50 tax due (at basic rate), it will go to the charity you're supporting. Anyone can join if they are receiving pay or a pension taxed through PAYE. And you can stop anytime you want to.

Send off for a form and given it to your employer or Give As You Earn contact person. The most difficult question you have to answer is your employee number and you can find that on your pay slip. The address is:-

CAF Give As You Earn
Foundation House,
Coach & Horses Passage,
The Pantiles,
Tunbridge Wells,
Kent TN2 5TZ
Tel: (0892) 512244
Fax: (0892) 512300

If you're allergic to forms, why not phone Charityline? This is a service for Give As You Earn enquiries. Just tell us which charity you want to give to, give us your details, and Give As You Earn will do the rest. Phone 0898 888000 (38p peak and 25p standard rate).

"Give As You Earn" is operated by the Charities Aid Foundation, a registered charity which asks for 5% of the money donated to cover the cost of directing many thousands of donations to a wide range of charities.

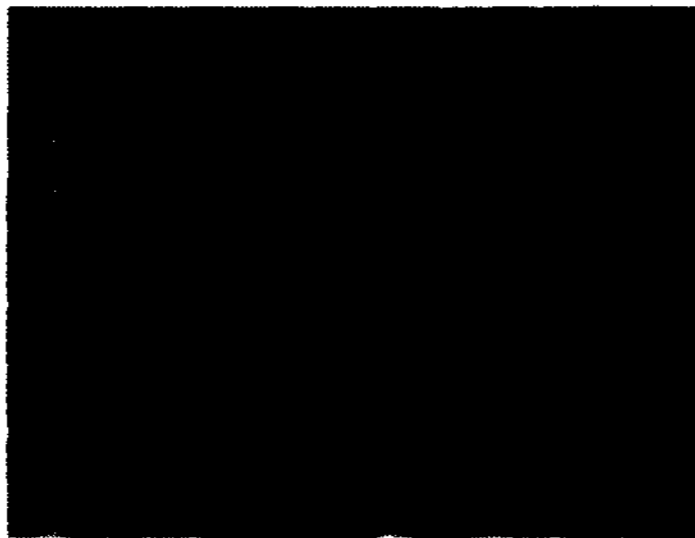
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THE INTENSIVE CARE UNIT AT THE BRISTOL CHILDRENS' HOSPITAL**A Progress Report by Joyce Woodcraft**

For those of you who haven't visited the unit for some time you wouldn't recognise the place. When your child was here the unit was very cramped. The equipment was very large. Ventilators for example were as big as twin-tub washing machines! Relatives had to wear gowns - including brothers and sisters - and too often felt they were in the way.

Now things are different. Five years ago the new unit was built. And with the help of the Heart Circle we have bought new equipment. The walls have been painted to make it more cheerful. There is now a room on the unit which has just been redecorated and refurnished. The gowns have gone, and there are toys for the brothers and sisters. They can also use the playroom downstairs so that they do not get bored, and you can spend more time on the unit. Parents are encouraged to help look after their child. You can wash them, help with tube feeds and choose their special clothes, until they are able to wear their own.

We have seven beds on the unit, and have children with all sorts of problems. Not everyone has a heart defect, and that is why you see so many different doctors. That can make it confusing so if you are ever worried about anything that's going on, please don't hesitate to ask your doctor or any of the nurses. We hope that we can help you to feel relaxed, and "at home" during the worrying time have to spend on the care unit. Afterwards we like you to send a photograph for our 'rogues gallery' and always like to see you again when you are visiting Bristol. Joyce Woodcraft -Sister.



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WARD 5 AT THE BRISTOL ROYAL INFIRMARYTHE CARDIAL SURGERY UNIT

A report by Julia Thomas - Senior Sister

Like the Intensive Care Unit at the Children's Hospital, Ward 5 has changed beyond recognition over the last few years. When I first started working on the unit, in 1976, it had 12 beds in total, with 2 ITV beds only. We then performed 4 open heart surgery ops per week and thought ourselves a very busy unit! Today we have 36 beds in all, with a large, very modern 8 bedded intensive care unit. Each week we perform 15 cardiac surgery cases, of which 4 are children or babies.

In 1976, there were no facilities at all for parents. They were not even allowed to stay overnight with their children, being thrown out of the nursery by 9 pm at the latest! Now, thanks to the generosity of the Heart Circle, we have 2 fully equipped bedrooms for parents on the Unit, a house adjacent to the hospital with 6 bedrooms for Ward 5 parents only. Parents are now encouraged to sleep overnight in the nursery and the Heart Circle have provided 2 beds and sleeping chairs for this purpose. Other facilities include our brand new relatives quiet room furnished by the Heart Circle. This room provides a peaceful escape from the stresses of the ITV for parents. Tea and coffee making facilities have also been provided for parents on the unit.

The Heart Circle has also given us equipment for the intensive care unit, the nursery and the play room. This includes the end tidal carbon dioxide monitor, syringes, pumps, a computer for the older children and mobiles and musical toys for the babies. One of the best used gifts has been the video for the nursery. Postman Pat and Thomas The Tank Engine videos being very well used!!

So thanks to all the members of the Heart Circle for your hard work and generosity to Ward 5. Without you, I believe, we would still be in the situation we were in in 1976.

Julia Thomas

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ECHOCARDIOGRAPHY

An explanation by Dr. Jordan

Another Area Where You Can Help

About 25 years ago doctors and scientists began to develop the technique known as sonar, used to show up underwater objects, to study the heart. Since that time there has been a rapid improvement in the sort of pictures which can be obtained.

For this application we use waves of much higher frequency than normal sound waves, known as ultrasound. These are produced by a small crystal in an instrument held over the chest and are reflected back from the structures of the heart. The same crystal also responds to sound waves which are reflected by the heart structures. As with sound echoes, the further the object which reflects the waves is away, the longer the waves take to come back, and this enables the electronic circuits attached to the crystal to calculate where the different parts of the heart are and display them as a picture.

Firstly we can show up pictures of the structure of the various parts of the heart, that is the two pumping chambers (ventricles), the two collecting chambers (atria), the four heart valves, the veins bringing blood into the heart and the great arteries taking the blood to the lungs and to the body. We can see the size of the chambers and detect whether they are larger or smaller than they should be. We can also look for holes between the heart chambers which should not be there and we can look at the valves and see whether they are opening and closing as they should. We can also see if the various parts of the heart are connected together as they should be.

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Secondly we can show the way the blood is flowing in the heart. For this we make use of something called the Doppler principle. If an object which is producing a sound is moving, the pitch of the sound alters. If a fire engine with its siren is coming towards you the siren sounds a higher note than if it is going away. If we "bounce" sound or ultrasound waves from an object the same thing occurs and this applies to the blood cells within the heart. This enables us to see which way the blood is travelling in different parts of the heart and also how quickly and roughly how much at any one part, such as through a hole or through a valve.

The latest technique allows us to demonstrate the flow of blood in the heart with different colours, for example red for flow upwards and blue for flow downwards. This produces a spectacular map of the flow, but more importantly shows where there are holes or leaking valves producing abnormal flow.

The most sophisticated echo machines cost between £120 and £160. They weigh about 400 lb, and although they have wheels to allow them to be moved about they can only really be used in one part of the hospital. There are portable machines, but even these weigh about 100 lb. They can be dismantled however to allow us to put them in the boot of a car and take them to other hospitals which do not have any suitable ultrasound machines. At the beginning of 1988 the Devon branches of the Heart Circle purchased such a machine for us, and a donation from Clifton College Preparatory School enabled us to buy a Doppler unit for it. Boys from Minehead Comprehensive School bought us a video recorder and frame recorder to go with it, so that now Dr. Martin, Dr. Joffe and Dr. Jordan take this equipment to the clinics in the South West and South Wales. In an average clinic about two-thirds of the children will have echos which formerly they would have had to travel to Bristol for.

Overall, echocardiography has become the most frequent investigation which we carry out in children with heart problems. It is quite painless and harmless so that we can repeat it as often as necessary.

Dr. S. C. Jordan

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**IF YOU NEED SUPPORT DURING A WORRYING TIME WHEN YOUR CHILD IS HAVING HEART
SURGERY - HELP IS NEVER FAR AWAY.**

Doctors and Nurses are always on hand - but there are other people too.

I am delighted to have this chance to introduce myself. I am Helen Vegoda. Although I am officially called the Cardiac Counsellor, I prefer to introduce myself as a Heart Family Support Worker.

Many of you live quite some distance from Bristol and may not know the Bristol Childrens' Hospital or Ward 5 at the Bristol Royal Infirmary or Bristol itself. Bringing your child to a strange hospital in an unfamiliar city can be a rather daunting experience. If I can help in any way before you arrive just get in touch with me through the Heart Circle, or your Health Visitor. I can give you information on where to stay, places to eat in the hospital, parking and how to get travel and other expenses. If you are coming for a catheter test or an operation, there may be particular questions that you would like to ask. Sometimes just having a chat can help so don't hesitate to give me a call.

If you or your family live near enough and would like to have a tour around either the Children's Hospital or BRI, I can easily arrange this. Most children thoroughly enjoy their pre-admission visit with a chance to meet the playleaders, see the playroom and meet other staff. If distance makes such a visit impossible, then I will introduce myself as soon as I can, or please come and find me in my room. I am based in the Children's Hospital, up the stairs on the way to the first floor and in the first door on the right marked "Helen's room - along the corridor".

During your stay even though you will find nursing and medical staff helpful and friendly there are times when I may be able to help just by being there, I am happy to spend time with you when you would like some support, or just provide a place of refuge off the ward. Also I feel my support should continue after discharge from the hospital. I can also help even if you are coming to Bristol for an outpatient appointment. Just let me know if you want to see me, we can always have a cup of tea together after your appointment or if you would like me to I can even sit in with you.

To finish off, together with the Heart Circle, the medical, nursing and other staff, I am here to give whatever help and support I can whilst you are at the hospital or before or after you come.

With very best wishes,
Helen Vegoda.

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EASTINGTON BAZAAR

Mrs. Aldridge is once again organising her Annual Bazaar in the Village Hall at Eastington on Saturday 4th November at 2.00 p.m. Mrs. Aldridge is the Grandmother of Hannah Jones who underwent heart surgery in 1979 and in gratitude for the care that Hannah received has had a Bazaar every year since 1980 and has raised £2,697. She and her friends work throughout the year making handicrafts to sell and we are so grateful to her for her wonderful commitment. We hope that she will be able to be with us this year but she is waiting to hear from Standish Hospital to undergo a knee operation at any time. In the past ten years she has undergone a number of orthopaedic operations to relieve pain from arthritis but never missed arranging her special Bazaar.

THE MAIN AIM OF THE HEART CIRCLE IS TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES - TO THIS END A SPECIALIST GROUP HAS BEEN SETUP FOR FAMILIES WITH DOWNS SYNDROME BABIES.

Over half the babies born in this country with Downs Syndrome also have a serious heart condition; some are inoperable and others require major heart surgery. The Downs Heart Group has been set up to help the parents of these children by providing support and information. A national register of families is being compiled so that parents can be put in touch with others who are facing, or have faced a similar problem and there are straightforward publications available for those needing information. Hospital visits can be arranged locally for those families who may need support while their child is under-going surgery and there is help and advice available on day to day problems.

The recently formed Bristol and South-West branch of the group would like to hear from any parents of Downs children who have a heart condition and have not already contacted them or from anyone else interested in the group who could perhaps offer help with administration or fund-raising.

Please contact any one of the following parents: Ann Bailey (Weston-Super-Mare) 627058, Sheila Forsythe (Thornbury) 413237 or Mary Thorn (Bristol) 508162.

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The following section contains reports from the various branches from throughout the south west region. If your branch is not included please send me a report for our next issue. We begin in Cornwall and move eastwards to Bristol.

Cornwall

An excellent meeting was held at the Royal Cornwall Hospital (Treliske) on 20th September when seventy members came along to hear Dr. S. Eades, Consultant Paediatrician at Treliske talk about children's heart disorders and their affect on the family.

A new committee was formed and Mrs. Betty Raymer of 3 Barbeton Cottages, Lethlean Towans, Phillack, Hayle, Cornwall agreed to be the Heart Circle contact in Cornwall. Mr. Fogg, the Paediatric Social Worker at Treliske, attended and gave the group help and support.

South Devon Branch

The South Devon branch of the Circle was formed in October 1983 with the joint aims of providing help and support locally for families with heart defect children and to raise funds to provide equipment and facilities both at the local hospitals and in Bristol. A year later Dr. Allen Lewtas became branch chairperson and has given tremendous support to the activities of the branch. Through being at Torbay Hospital himself he has helped the branch by fostering contact between the branch and the appropriate consultants both at Torbay Hospital and the Exeter Hospitals.

Help for families has been provided by "away-from-home" grants given when children need In Patient treatment in Bristol. This has recently been extended to include attendance at other hospitals. Many families from the Plymouth area attend Southampton, and visits to London are also necessary sometimes.

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South Devon Branch - cont ...

Families are supported by their belonging to the Circle where there is always someone to chat to about problems which occur. Social events and Open Evenings with guest speakers are held where parents can meet others and share experiences. A childrens Xmas Party has been held every year and a summer social event for children. The branch has been highly successful in its fundriaising. Besides the grants previously mentioned it has already:-

- a) Contributed £2,000 to the mothers bedrooms on the Special Care Baby Unit at the Bristol Childrens' Hospital.
- b) Provided entertainment equipment for children at four defferent hospitals.
- c) Provided a cardiac monitor for the baby unit at Torbay Hospital and another for the childrens unit at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Wonford).
- d) Contributed half the £15,000 needed to purchase a portable ultra sound scanner for use by Drs. Joffer and Jordan.
- e) Purchased paediatric ECG equipment for Torbay Hospital - £2,000.
- f) Promised to buy a defibrillator for the John Parkes Unit at Torbay Hospital.

Events planned by the branch are an Xmas Bazaar on November 11th and a Children's Xmas Party on December 10th.

North Devon Branch

We started as a satilite branch under Bristol on June 5th 1979. At early meetings we discussed the group's formation and its aims. Emergency packs were put together consisting of a map, hospital and general information to help parents with a child going to Bristol.

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North Devon Branch - cont ...

The inaugural meeting itself was held on September 18th. The need for North Devon to have its own branch was because an increasing number of children were being sent from the area.

Various fund raising parents have been organised. One big achievement was a Fun Run from Bristol to Barnstaple in 1980. We have also held dances, carnivals, coffee mornings, jumble sales over the years - and also received several donations.

On the social side we hold beach parties, barbecues, day trips out for the children and parents and Christmas parties.

Some of the money raised has gone to Bristol to help with the hostels and equipment. Between 1979 and 1984 we bought a colour television, Baby Scales and cots for them. We also bought a resuscitator for the North Devon Ambulance Service. In 1984/5 we furnished and equipped a room for parents at the Intensive Care Unit. This event was filmed for television and several of our families were interviewed. In 1986/7 we opened another room on the childrens ward of the North Devon District Hospital. In 1988 we joined forces with the South Devon Branch and bought a Portable Echo Scanner. This is used by Consultants when visiting clinics.

Our latest project is to buy a pulse oximeter and equipment for the childrens ward of our local hospital.

Over the ten years we have helped many parents and children from the area, and will continue to do so. A big thank you to all the tireless helpers past and present. Martin Petherick.

Somerset Branch

The first A.G.M. of the Somerset Branch was held on April 12th, at Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton.

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Somerset Branch - cont ...

During the first year we have provided opportunities for parents to meet each other and receive some professional information through a series of evening meetings with guest speakers from the medical, social services and education professions. A future meeting will be addressed by Dr. J. Sanderson, Cardiologist, Musgrove Park Hospital (Nov. 15th).

All meetings are held at the Children's Centre, Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton. The guest speakers start at 8.00 p.m., but we always ensure that plenty of time is available both after the talk and before (we gather for coffee from 7.30 p.m.) for parents to informally swap news, problems and experiences amongst themselves.

We have also arranged social events usually in the form of picnics, to enable parents and their children to meet. Our next events are a beach picnic at Lyme Regis on September 17th, meeting at the Cobb end beach car park from 2.00 p.m., and at 3.00 p.m. on December 9th, at the Holway Day Nursery in Taunton, we will be holding our Christmas Party (if our courage does not fail us!).

The philosophy of the group is to provide a comprehensive network of support for parents, and our future plans are to improve communications between our group and the Bristol Hospitals, and other interested parties, so that all parents facing the trauma of having heart children are aware of our existence and what we can do to ease their difficulties.

There has been a marvellous background effort going on throughout the year to raise funds to enable us to provide finance for various projects during the year. Thanks to all for their magnificent work and indeed to the Committee who have got the Somerset group off on such an even keel. There is no doubt that such groups as ours can play a worthwhile complimentary role in helping parents come to terms with all the difficulties that arise from having a heart child. Surely 'a problem shared, is a problem halved' has never been so applicable.

MALCOLM HECTOR (Chairperson)

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Wiltshire Branch Success

The Wiltshire Branch of the Heart Circle was formed in October 1987, covering the Swindon and North Wiltshire area, and like other branches aimed to give moral and practical support to parents of children with heart complaints. We also wanted to raise money for essential equipment for the Bristol Royal Infirmary and Bristol Royal Hospital S.C.

Since February 1988 bi-monthly support meetings have been held at the Swindon Health Centre, which have proved to be a huge success.

We have also organised numerous Car Boot Sales, A Barbecue, Cheese and Wine evenings, Childrens' Christmas Parties, A Zoo Trip and many other events.

The main project undertaken by the Branch over the last year was to furnish a Families Room on the Heart Surgery Ward of the B.R.I. where families could stay whilst their children underwent Heart Surgery. This was completed and officially opened last November.

Our Annual Barbecue was on Sunday 3rd September 1989 at Lydiard Park Swindon and another Bi-Monthly Support Meeting was held on Tuesday 10th October at Swindon Health Centre. A schoolday fancy dress party plus dancing to 'Sounds Familiar' Disco was held on Saturday 14th October. The Children's Christmas Party will be on Sunday 10th December at 3.00 p.m. at The Central Community Centre, Emlyn Square, Swindon.

