

FURTHER, FASTER, FOR ALL.

Autumn 2021
Issue 1

Virtual Visitors

A dog's tale
Peer support
for patients
Fundraising
feats

News and Updates from the Royal Free Charity

TAKE 5...FUNDED PROJECTS



The Pears Building

The Pears Building is home to UCL's Institute of Immunity and Transplantation, a world-class research centre dedicated to the study of the human immune system. The charity led the £60m project to construct the building in the grounds of the Royal Free Hospital. The charity secured funding from a number of philanthropic foundations and trusts, including the Pears Foundation, after which the building gets its name.



Memory trees

A grant of £5,000 will help those who have lost loved ones to process their grief thanks to the purchase of two memory trees for Barnet and the Royal Free hospitals. They can be found in the chapels where they are used by staff, patients and relatives irrespective of any faith or belief, religious or none religious.



Babies and COVID research

The Starlight neonatal team at Barnet Hospital is using just under £4,000 from its special purpose fund to study the the impact on babies in neonatal care and their parents of being separated for long periods of time as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. The two-year research project will focus particularly on prolonged separation on the babies' development and the bonding process between the babies.



Calming mural to support staff wellbeing

The charity has funded the creation of a number of rest areas known as wobble rooms in Barnet, Chase Farm and the Royal Free hospitals. These spaces are set aside for front-line staff to give them some respite from the intense pressure and strain of responding to the global pandemic. To further support the staff at Chase Farm Hospital, a £2,000 grant was given for a calming mural in the surgical ward.



The Charles Wolfson Centre

The Charles Wolfson Centre for Reconstructive Surgery develops innovative therapies and technology to improve the quality of life of people affected by injuries and disease that require reconstructive surgery. It is a joint project between the Royal Free Hospital and UCL. The charity delivered a £3.7m fundraising campaign to secure the set-up and initial five-year work of the centre. The centre's name pays tribute to the generous £1.25m donation from the Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust; donations from charitable trusts and foundations and individual donors covered the remaining costs.

**ROYAL FREE
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KEEPING FAMILIES CONNECTED



Before the pandemic, Daniel was working as a personal injury solicitor. He enjoyed working with clients, but other aspects of the job left him feeling dissatisfied. In early 2020, life dealt him a hard set of circumstances that led him to follow a different direction.

Both his mother and father were admitted to the Royal Free Hospital within days of each other. His father had suffered a stroke and his mother had been admitted to hospital with COVID-19. Sadly, Daniel's father died shortly afterwards.

"It was while sitting next to my mother's bed that I first watched a nurse stand over other patients, monitor in hands, connecting them to their loved ones via video. She was like an angel before my eyes, and I will never forget her," Daniel said. "After a week, we were told we could no longer visit our mother at the hospital, and we benefitted from the virtual visiting service until she was discharged.

"She died one day later at the care home. I was so touched by the nursing care towards my mother, particularly their virtual visiting, that I felt I had to 'give back'."

Daniel had been so inspired by the virtual visiting that he decided to become a volunteer himself, helping to connect patients with their loved ones.

Daniel's experience in the hospital has since sparked a change of career, and he is now looking forward to starting a degree in occupational therapy.

“

Families often tell me what a difference I have made, and it is clear in a patient's smile when they see their loved ones, or when they settle back contentedly on their pillow after a call, that I have made their stay in hospital just a bit more tolerable.

”

THE BEAUTY OF VOLUNTEERING

Royal Free Charity volunteers come into the role for different reasons and at different times in their lives. Many join as young volunteers while in school and university or at the start of their careers.

Adam initially joined the young volunteer team as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme. His role was to ensure that patients had bedside supplies and to make refreshments for them.

The pandemic meant that Adam was no longer able to continue. At the same time, the maternity team at Chase Farm Hospital were adapting the way they worked, switching to virtual appointments with patients coming in only for blood tests and to collect their information packs. A new volunteering role opened up to support this new way of working and Adam snapped up the opportunity.

"Adam was a godsend," said Marie Creighton, midwifery team leader. "These simple actions meant that we were able to provide an updated seamless service to women who were anxious about coming into the hospital at that time."

After a few months working in his volunteer role, a job as a staff bank administrator became available in the team. Adam jumped at the chance to transfer the skills he had learnt into a paid role over summer.

"The reason I have the job I have now is thanks to Marie. I got the contacts and the experience I needed to get the role through volunteering," said Adam.



Sarah's second marathon for epilepsy research

Funding the development of two new epilepsy apps is the motivation for fundraiser Sarah Jones to run the London marathon for a second time, after completing the virtual event in 2020.

Sarah was inspired to fundraise for the Royal Free Hospital following her own experiences with epilepsy: "Research is key to a more detailed understanding of the causes of the condition and to provide more effective treatment. This is vital to ensuring that those diagnosed can have a better quality of life moving forward."

With a target of £10,000, Sarah has an ambitious programme of fundraising events including the Serpentine Swim and the London-to-Brighton Cycle race.

A year of fundraising in a father's memory

Tough Mudder, a half marathon, and a Thai food stall are just some of the events Amy Elstow has been taking part in throughout the year to raise money in memory of her father, Kevin.

"My dad was in the Royal Free Hospital for a very long time. At one point I went in every day for about 100 days. My dad was so thankful for the many professionals who took care of him."

Having already reached her fundraising target, Amy wants to keep going to raise as much money as possible. Next up is a triathlon, followed by the Windsor half marathon on her dad's birthday: "Obviously, that is going to be a tough day anyway, so I wanted to take on the challenge then."

A LASTING LEGACY

Funding for cancer treatment, training for nurses, and research into liver disease are just some of the ways people leaving gifts in their will have chosen to say thank you to the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust. Legacies make a very important contribution to charitable fundraising and even a small amount can make the biggest difference.

Nicola Whitehill was diagnosed with diffuse systemic sclerosis (scleroderma) and Raynaud's in 1997. Twenty-three years on from her diagnosis, Nicola campaigns tirelessly to raise awareness of scleroderma. She's also chosen to leave a legacy to the Royal Free Charity to support research into this currently

incurable condition. She explained why: "As a passionate supporter and patient, I considered how I can best support the Royal Free Hospital's scleroderma unit and help it when I am no longer here. I decided to write my will and include the Royal Free Charity in supporting the work of the unit.

"I know that my gift will make a real difference in supporting world-class and much-needed medical research. I feel a huge sense of relief and peace of mind from knowing that my wishes will be honoured. And, maybe one day, a #SclerodermaFreeWorld."

PAW-SOME THERAPY

for Royal Free Hospital patients



Lower blood pressure, increased feel-good hormones and reduced stress are just some of benefits for staff and patients who spend time with therapy dog Mistral.

The nine-year-old chocolate Labrador is a much-loved visitor to the wards and on-site school of the Royal Free Hospital.

Mistral started her life as a therapy dog at the age of three when she underwent a suitability assessment to make sure she had what it takes to make the grade as a hospital visitor.

That she passed with flying colours was no surprise to her owner, Mary Cooper, who says that even as a puppy Mistral had obvious potential: "I knew straight away that she would take it to. She loves being the centre of attention, but she instinctively knows that she needs to tone down her bounciness when she's visiting patients."

There's a two-stage process in coming a Royal Free therapy dog. The dogs must be registered with the national charity Pets as Therapy and undergo an assessment to make sure they are suited to the role. Meanwhile, their owners apply to become Royal Free

Charity volunteers and undertake a training programme.

There are 10 therapy dogs supported by the Royal Free London but due to the pandemic, only three dogs are currently visiting.



About Mistral

At nine years of age, Mistral loves her naps and she's always got her favourite toy, a floppy-legged reindeer, to snuggle up to.

She's named after the strong north-westerly wind that blows through southern France in winter. The name is a nod to Mary's childhood years living in Marseille

Mistral is bilingual. She obeys commands in English and French (most of the time!)

JULIE'S STORY

how a peer support group helps amputees



The Royal Free Charity's support hub offers many services to help patients living with long-term conditions, including help with welfare benefits and housing issues. They also support several peer groups, one of which was set up to help patients who have experienced limb loss to start a new life as an amputee.

Just over two years ago, Julie Gage became dangerously ill when she developed septicaemia, or blood poisoning, as a result of a cut on her

leg. She had a life-threatening reaction whereby her immune system began to attack her body's own tissue.

An amputation of Julie's leg below the knee was recommended to save her life. "I thought I had flu," she said. "In the space of 10 days, I went from leaving work early because I felt unwell to losing my leg, which in turn meant losing my home."

Julie began attending the charity's support hub at the Royal Free Hospital and it was here she first met the amputee support group.

"Although everyone's story is different, we've all faced the same challenges. Coping with limb loss means going through a grieving process for the life that you expected to live. There's a loss of identity and the life you know," Julie explained.

For people who have experienced the loss of a limb, the group provides a safe and supportive environment. The amputee peer support group is supported by the Royal Free Charity and the Limbless Association.

“

Life does go on but it takes a very long time to adjust. I'm just over two years into being an amputee and I'm still learning now to live independently. Going to the Support Hub gave me hope that life would continue, but in a different way.

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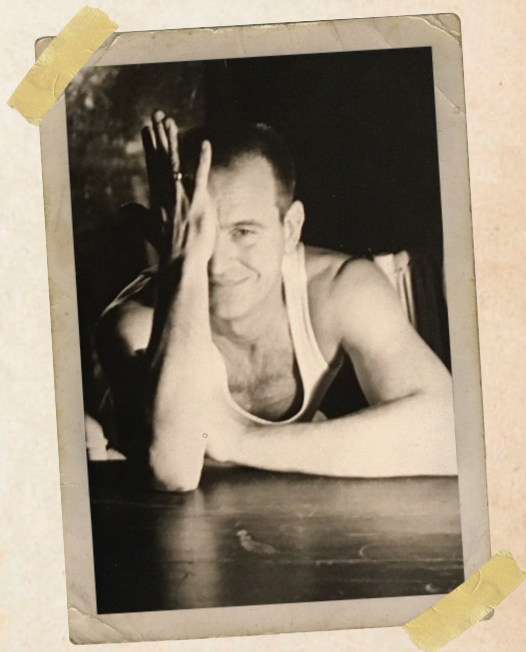
A MONSTER OF A CHALLENGE FOR HIV FUNDRAISERS



The hilly Loch Ness Marathon might not be everyone's choice for their first fundraising marathon, but for partners Finlay and Rowan, a family connection to the Ian Charleson Day Centre inspired the Highlands challenge.

Rowan's second cousin was Ian Charleson, the acclaimed Scottish film and stage actor best known for his screen roles in *Chariots of Fire* and *Gandhi*. Ian died aged 40, one of the first deaths in the UK openly attributed to complications from AIDS. The day centre was named in his memory and is a leading HIV clinic based at the Royal Free Hospital.

Finlay suggested fundraising for the centre because he was so impressed with the care given to patients. Rowan agreed, feeling that it was really fitting. "When I signed up to the marathon officially, we knew we wanted to fundraise for charities of our own choice that meant something to us personally."



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