

Helping families to a better start in life

This advent our appeal is for Home-Start Winchester and Districts, a local charity which provides friendship, emotional and practical help to parents with at least one child under five-years-old.

It has been organising a successful weekly young family group based in Winnall but the funding has now run out. Home-Start is keen for the group to continue as it has become a lifeline for many families.

It costs £2,730 per annum to run the group and any amount raised will be gratefully received.

Home-Start helps families from all backgrounds by offering home visiting support as well as supportive groups. It aims to improve children's health, well-being and development; reduce family isolation and increase social support networks; encourage parents' physical and emo-

tional well-being; affirm and develop skills in parenting; enrich the home environment; and increase access to health, education and community services.

Families are often referred due to social isolation or concerns regarding the development of their children.

Home-Start families prefer this supportive group where everyone is welcome and no one is judged – for various reasons they find it difficult to access other toddler groups.

The group is run by experienced Home-Start staff and trained volunteers. It enables children to play in a safe and controlled environment and develop skills in readiness for school such as language development and social interaction. It also provides an opportunity for parents to meet similar families.

Jess was struggling with ADHD and depression when she fell pregnant at 17. With her confidence at an all-time low, she was finding life overwhelming, until she was offered help from Home-Start. Her story was featured in a recent edition of the charity's *Family Matters* magazine.

She wrote: "Home-Start gave me the confidence to not only be a great mum, but also to become a mechanic and set up my own business.

"It was lovely to see my article in *Family Matters*. I actually framed it and put it on my wall. It's such a lovely reminder of how far we have come. My daughter was so excited about it



and shows everyone who comes in the house.

"Since I was in the magazine so much has happened. I was in the *Hampshire Chronicle* and my volunteer Kay and I were featured on *Good Morning Britain*, as part of its 1 Million Minutes national volunteer recruitment campaign. It was nerve wracking

but I'm so proud I did it.

"When we filmed, I didn't get to hear what Kay said. It was only when it was on TV at breakfast I heard all the lovely things Kay said about me. It was so heart-warming. I was delighted we could do something like this together. A family member I hadn't been in touch with for a long time saw the broadcast. She contacted me and we've since reconnected.

"Every Thursday I volunteer at the weekly group for young mums. Recently a mum said she'd read about me in *Family Matters* and that she too wanted to be a mechanic. She asked for my advice, I was so touched. Others ask for my suggestions on sleep or weaning.

"No way would I have ever imagined being able to give advice a year ago. The mums and volunteers talk to me about the things I've done to raise awareness of Home-Start. They say that I'm an inspiration. It makes me feel so good."

You can donate by cash, contactless or by bank transfer to:

Account Name: CDP St Peter & The Winchester Martyrs

Account No: 00890996

Sort code: 30-93-04

Please reference 'CWP' with payment.

Contact: Home-Start Winchester and District,

The Carroll Centre, Somers Close, Stanmore, Winchester, SO22 4EF.

Telephone 01962 851177 website www.home-startwinchester.org.uk

Email: info@home-startwinchester.org.uk