

RSBC

Royal Society for Blind Children

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Life without limits

Your supporter newsletter

**Life
Without
Limits**
For Blind
Children



friendship on online group sessions during lockdown and now they're friends in person on **page four!** And on **page six**, Bryony tells us how support from an RSBC Family Practitioner has helped her daughter Aggie's coping skills to bloom.

Spring sometimes calls for fresh approaches and we've found the perfect mix is working with people in person (sometimes at our fab new centre), as well as via online sessions. That way we can reach even more blind children and their families.

Thank you so much for giving blind and partially sighted children the chance to spring forward into exciting, fulfilling lives! We couldn't support them without you!

Alan, Supporter Care

Welcome

Hello! Welcome to your spring edition of our supporter newsletter **Life without limits**. What better time to take a fresh look at the incredible impact your support is having on the lives of blind and partially sighted children?

Check in with budding actor Jenson who has lots of new shoots popping up in the form of a BBC series and a book he's helping his parents to write (**page three**). Eva and Emma forged a blossoming

Recycle your stamps to support blind children

We got together with Recycling for Good Causes so that every used stamp you send us can be recycled to raise more funds! Please send all your used stamps to:

Royal Society for Blind Children
PO Box 16992
Sutton Coldfield B73 9YA



Jenson the sequel!

You'll remember Jenson the superstar actor from our autumn issue? Well our very own nine-year-old celebrity has lots to update us on! We spoke to mum Romanii and dad Jamie...

Romanii tells us Jenson has joined a marching drumming group, which he goes to every week to learn songs and routines. They have performances booked at Easter, and it's really boosting his confidence.

Jenson also filmed the latest Halifax Building Society advert back in November and will appear as an extra in two episodes of an upcoming BBC TV show, *Everything I Know About Love*.

He's also busy working on a very special project with his mum and dad – a book about a vision impaired child overcoming his daily struggles. Jenson's input is crucial – what he can see and what he struggles with. He's also helping with things like the size of the text, spacing and the illustrations.

Jamie says, "We hope to make it into a series, aimed at educating parents of vision impaired children." Much of the content is based on real-life situations – for example the main character has the Snellen test, finds out why the doctor checks behind your eyes and picks his glasses. At school, the other football players wear brightly coloured bibs so he can see them, which happens at Jenson's school too.

Romanii adds, "It's a story to give other children hope."

We look forward to reading it!



“It’s brilliant being together again.”

Emma and Eva met and bonded through our online Sisterhood sessions during the lockdowns. But the best bit was when they could finally bring their friendship into the real world and meet regularly in person.

Emma, 15, and Eva, 14, both struggled with loneliness and isolation at the start of the restrictions. But, thanks to support like yours, the girls had plenty of RSBC online sessions to choose from to stay connected over the period.

Emma says, “Being involved in Sisterhood made me feel less isolated through lockdown.”

This included their favourite, **Sisterhood – a support and mentoring group for girls and young women** aged 11 to 25. Sisterhood meant Emma and Eva could maintain that sense of community with other young people in the same situation.

The girls also benefitted from seeing what the older girls in the Sisterhood group have achieved, whether going to college or getting a job. Emma and Eva’s mums report that both girls have grown in confidence.

Of course, when the time was right, last year, the Sisterhood group moved into a face-to-face setting – in the form of a pampering haircare session with a professional stylist. Now, that was definitely something they couldn’t do on Zoom!

Emma and Eva say they were both over the moon to meet each other in person, as **they’d built up a close friendship over the months online.** They were also



delighted to meet the others face to face for the first time.

Eva says, “These girls practically got me through the lockdowns.”

Now of course, at RSBC, we’re providing support online and in person, offering a mix of approaches to connect blind and partially sighted children and young people to the world around them.

Eva adds, “Without RSBC, life would be a lot lonelier, that’s for sure.”



You’re the reason vision impaired children and young people like Emma and Eva can build friendships and support each other. The girls think you’re awesome – and we do too. Thank you!



Amazing Aggie

Aggie was just seven when she was registered partially sighted. Her mum Bryony tells us about the family's experience.

Bryony says, "Aggie started reading smaller-print books at school and we noticed she was pulling them really close to her nose." When the consultant said they'd found symmetrical scarring on Aggie's eyes and diagnosed Stargardt disease, Bryony was stunned.



"Aggie had developed so many coping strategies we just didn't realise," Bryony says. "And it was her normal – she didn't know she saw things differently to others."

It was then the eye clinic put the family in touch with RSBC. Aggie, and also her sister Emily, were struggling to come to terms with the diagnosis.

"Emily was older with more foresight," Bryony explains. "She worried Aggie was never going to be able to drive or wouldn't see a baby of her own. The RSBC Family Practitioner was brilliant with both girls in helping them come to terms with Aggie's diagnosis."

The Family Practitioner did a lot of work with Aggie at the start, then stepped away. But when Aggie went through a difficult patch and wasn't sleeping, the Family Practitioner came back. They did a few more sessions and worked through the issues.

Bryony says, "Aggie feels comfortable speaking to her, so it's given her confidence and

somebody to talk to about stuff she wouldn't know how to verbalise to a parent. Aggie gets on with things in a way that's really inspiring but, if she has a down day, she can use the coping strategies the Family Practitioner's given her. And it's reassuring to know she's there in the background should we need her."

Aggie has also taken advantage of other RSBC activities, especially during the lockdowns. She wrote poems, sang on a video of 'Stand By Me' and joined the homework club which offered her the chance to solve maths problems in breakout rooms on video calls.

Despite her passion for maths, Aggie says she'd like to be a restaurant reviewer – but with a twist! She wants to say **"I can't see that menu, I tripped over that step and how do I know where the toilet is?"**



Aggie's already a keen vlogger with her own YouTube channel featuring videos on outdoor sports and using a white cane at pedestrian crossings. She's also reviewed the Optelec magnifier after the CEO saw one of her videos on YouTube.

The family couldn't be more grateful for your support. **Bryony says, "Aggie's got to try and find her way in this world without seeing her way. Having support from the Family Practitioner, and being able to network with other kids who are the same as her, is invaluable."**

Your fantastic support is the reason children like Aggie can thrive. Thank you!

Fantastic fitness fundraisers

Back in November, a team of military fitness instructors took on a fierce and furious fitness challenge to raise funds for RSBC.

Jack and five colleagues completed four marathons over 24 hours – skiing, cycling, rowing and running a total of just over 628 miles between them.

Jack says, “We chose RSBC to raise awareness and support for blind and partially sighted children, so they can grow up in a normal and happy environment.”

And to show even more support, each team member completed one of the marathons blindfolded. “We wanted to experience what



vision impaired children go through on a daily basis,” Jack says.

This team of super-fit fundraisers raised a fabulous £2,700 for blind and vision impaired children and their families.

Way to go, guys! We simply cannot thank you enough!

If you want to carry out your own challenge to raise funds for blind and vision impaired children and their families, get in touch at supporter.care@rsbc.org.uk

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