

Summer 2017

Thank you so much Emma

Emma Morris is part of Andrew Davies' circle and was so inspired by the work of Equal Futures that she decided to run the Edinburgh half marathon to raise funds for our organisation. Here's what she had to say about her day...

Here are some tired and sweaty photos from the end of the half marathon!! I completed it in 2 hours and 20 minutes (and 10 seconds to be precise!) and am just so happy to have finished it! It was a beautiful day and I really enjoyed the run all the way out to Musselburgh and it was so sunny I even got a bit sunburnt... My friends were running for Mary's Meals and Railway Children so we are all so happy to have run for three great charities.



Having my name on the front of my t-shirt along with the Equal Futures logo was amazing as so many supporters were shouting for me and cheering me on from the side-lines which really helped to keep me going! The design looks really fab.

I have raised more than £1000 so far from online sponsorship on my "Sponsorme" page which is fantastic - I have kept my page open for another couple of weeks as the sponsors are still coming in. Thanks for all your help; it was so motivating knowing I was running for such a wonderful charity! **Emma Morris**

Fiona Scoops National Sport Award



Fiona Dawson of Ayr was absolutely thrilled to be chosen as the overall winner of the award for Sporting Achievement in Scotland's first National Learning Disability Awards. The prestigious awards were launched by the Scottish Commission for Learning Disability at a glittering ceremony which was hosted by Sally Magnusson in the Central Hotel, Glasgow, on Friday the 19th May.

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Fiona Dawson Celebrates Sporting Success

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Fiona, who is 36, is an inspirational member of the South Ayrshire Para Squad. Her success in the sport of swimming has been longstanding but Fiona is so much more than just a successful competitive swimmer. She is an inspiration to everyone who knows her!

Sally Magnusson said “I wish the whole of Scotland could have been at the awards to see what people can do when other folk believe in them.”



Fiona has competed in 4 Special Olympics and will compete in her 5th Special Olympics in August 2017. She has also competed in 3 Downs Syndrome World Championships which has seen her swim all over the world. Fiona is a multiple gold medallist in both Special Olympics and in European Downs Syndrome Championships as well as being a silver and bronze medallist at DS World Championships. Her latest World Championships in Florence in 2016 saw her gain an amazing two world records for her classification.

Fiona’s burning desire to help others saw her recently successfully complete her level 1 UK Teaching Aquatics Coaching Course which was organised by South Ayrshire Council and held at The Citadel in Ayr. Fiona received great support from South Ayrshire Council, her own coaches and her fellow swimmers and is already assisting on the poolside with School Swimming classes and the Council Learn 2 Swim Programme.

Katie Campbell, Assistant Swimming Development Officer at South Ayrshire Council said “Fiona is doing exceptionally well working with the children in the swimming programmes. She showed huge commitment during the coaching course to successfully complete each and every assessment that she was tasked with. I look forward to watching Fiona go from strength to strength and to helping many children learn to swim.”

Fiona’s regular swimming training fits into an exceptionally busy life which includes art classes, gym sessions, theatre and dance classes along with voluntary work. Fiona is also now enjoying independent living in her new home!

Fiona said “I started swimming at a young age and grew up to love the water. I have a real goal to help others and am getting the opportunity to do that now.”

South Ayrshire Para Squad coach Gary Craig said “Fiona is a terrific role model and she has shown absolute determination to succeed and to help others to be the very best that they can be. Her motto is simple – if you believe in yourself you can achieve it! These awards highlighted the extraordinary and

amazing achievements of people with learning disabilities and our challenge is to match their ambitions! Inclusion should be at the heart of everything that we do. I am so very proud of Fiona and of all our Para Squad swimmers who are an absolute inspiration and a real pleasure to work with." Well done Fiona – very well deserved!



Gary is also Fiona's Community Connector and celebrated Fiona's success along with some circle members a few days after the presentation ceremony. You can watch an inspirational interview with Fiona on our website <http://www.equalfutures.org.uk/news>

Kirsten's Birthday Afternoon Tea



Kirsten celebrated her birthday with her Circle, friends and Staff enjoying an afternoon tea at The Secret Herb Garden in Old Pentland in the conservatory surrounded by gorgeous plants. It was a fantastic warm sunny Sunday afternoon, Kirsten was so excited to have everyone celebrating with her and the

afternoon tea was absolutely delicious!

Kirsten was also joined by her friends Rachel and Ali had a great time, I also heard Rachel quickly discarded her sandwich on spying the melting moments (they were so tasty!). It was great to catch up with Kirsten and each other, seeing Kirsten enjoying opening her birthday presents and loving being the Birthday Girl!

Clodagh Harris

Lauren's Circle - A Year On Since She Turned 16

Lauren's role in her Circle has changed so much since she turned 16 last April, she plans more of her evening and one of her Circle hosts her Special Night in their home. Her Mum Monica does not usually attend Lauren's Special Night as it is Lauren's time with her Circle, but she always working very hard in the background planning and organising for Lauren!



Also Lauren has enjoyed spending more time with her Circle between meetings: lunch out at the Rosehip in Rose Street, Lauren has had many fab nights out seeing Musicals with Liz, Tracy, Megan and Kathleen. She also had an amazing day out seeing Hibs play at Hampden with Uncle Andrew, Tracey, Cousin Joseph and his girlfriend Michaela. Lauren's Circle have supported her by going to see her perform recently at the Jazz Night at The Queen's Hall with Drake Music, it was a great evening and Lauren performed her solo beautifully. Next month Lauren is starring with her school friends in The Awfey Huge Variety Show 2 at the Festival Theatre

<http://www.edtheatres.com/awfeyhuge>, it was a brilliant show last year, Lauren loved every minute and we can't wait to see her again up on stage!



Join our Focus Groups

We want to have conversations with people who are involved with Equal Futures. We will have two Focus Groups. One will cover Ayrshire and Glasgow. The other will be for Edinburgh and the Lothians, Perth and Kinross and the Borders. The aim is to learn what works well in Circles, and what could be done differently. We are asking people to join us who have experience of Circles; whose insight and ideas will help us to shape Equal Futures into a better organisation.

The Focus Groups are open to anyone who is part of Equal Futures: families, Focus People, Community Connectors and Circle members.

To find out more contact Alison Roy at alison@equalfutures.org.uk or Kenny Walker at kenny@equalfutures.org.uk



On the Move

Equal Futures is moving to the office of the Scottish Consortium of Voluntary Organisations. It's a bright modern building which is fully accessible. There is a disabled parking bay in front of the building. Lots of other Third Sector organisations are based there, which will provide opportunities to share ideas and to learn from each other. We move on 3 July.

Our new address is 23 Lauriston Street, Edinburgh EH3 9DQ. Telephone number will change, not yet confirmed what it will be. All email addresses and mobiles will stay the same so that you can reach us easily.

Julie's Malawi Trip

I have recently had the privilege of leading a team from Ayr Presbytery to the "Warm heart of Africa". I have been lucky enough to go on two previous occasions, so had an idea of what I might see and do there. However, I was not prepared for the effects of climate change on this beautiful country. Roads have been devastated by recent floods, and crops, and therefore harvests, have failed over the last three years. Many families are experiencing starvation and extreme poverty. This hardship does nothing to dampen the spirits of these wonderful people. Their love and welcome is overwhelming. They have so little, and yet what they have they want to share.

Children are so happy. They have little to concern themselves with – you don't need to worry that you don't have the latest computer games, if you don't even have electricity in your home; doesn't matter that you don't have the latest designer trainers, when actually you have nothing on your feet! And so children simply play. People are what matter; possessions hold little or no importance. Food and health are priority. These vital things are thought about first, then comes everything else. I often say to folks, that when you visit Malawi, a little of them comes home with you in your heart, and a little of you stays there as it becomes your second home. Everyone tells us "Feel at home!" I promise you I do.



Julie Griffiths - Community Connector

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Equal Futures is a family led organisation that helps families who have a relative with a disability plan for the future by building lifelong circles of support. For more information phone 0131 226 5454 or visit www.equalfutures.org.uk Registered as a Charity in Scotland SC033799