

In brief

School invites you to see Santa in its own Narnia

LINGFIELD: St Piers School and College students would like to invite everyone in East Grinstead to visit their Christmas Fayre at Young Epilepsy on Saturday, December 12, from 10am to 1pm. Visitors will be able to visit Father Christmas in St Piers School's very own Narnia – a set of rooms designed to recreate the journey of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

■ For more details email Carol Jones at cjones@youngepilepsy.org.uk.

Messy church with carols

LINGFIELD: A Christmas-themed Messy Church with music, crafts and refreshments for school-age children is coming to St Peter and St Paul Church on December 14, at 3.30pm. Children must be accompanied by an adult. A traditional carol service with mince pies and mulled wine will then take place on Sunday, December 20, at 6.30pm.

Thanks for Poppy Appeal

LINGFIELD AND FELBRIDGE: The British Legion raised a total of £6,063 in its 2015 Poppy Appeal. The British Legion would like to thank everyone who donated and helped with collections.

■ If anyone would like to join the team to help in 2016, call Deborah Major on 07775 888758.

Restaurant plan agreed

LINGFIELD: A change of use of application to convert a ground floor shop (Class A1) to restaurant (Class A3) at 18 High Street has been approved.

■ More information is available at www.tandridge.gov.uk using reference number 2015/1672.

Santa Fun Run sets off

LINGFIELD: Get Your Own Back presenter, Dave Benson Phillips will be opening the Santa Fun Run at Lingfield Park Racecourse on Sunday. The festive family fun run is in aid of Young Epilepsy on St Piers Lane. Entrants can run or walk a 2km or 5km course. Registration costs £10 for adults, £7 for under 16s and under 5s go free. You will receive a free Santa suit to wear during your run and a special medal to celebrate your finish. The race begins at 10.30am.

Centre treats elderly residents to meal and dressage show

A LINGFIELD equestrian centre threw a special festive gathering for a group of elderly residents – to make sure they had a Christmas celebration.

Oldencraig Equestrian Centre in Tandridge Lane invited older residents along to the event held on December 1. Transport was arranged for the guests of honour and when they arrived they were greeted with a champagne and sherry reception.

Following a three course meal, the guests were treated to a show from wife of owner Ian Winfield, Vicky Thompson, who is an Olympic dressage rider, trainer and 19 time National Champion.

Mr Winfield said: "I don't come into contact with older people a lot but I do feel for them. It's sad to think of them sitting there alone.

"A lot of people are surrounded by family and friends at Christmas and it's easy to forget there are people sitting there on their own. We should do a lot more for older people. They've done a lot in their life and a lot of them get forgotten about. It does make me sad."



SANTA HAMPER: Each of the visitors were presented with a festive hamper
Photo by David Cook

Ian and his wife hailed the events as a big success.

He added: "It was a brilliant afternoon and there were a lot of smiling faces at the end of it. I just



PERFECT POISE: onlookers watch dressage champion Vicky Thompson
Photo by David Cook

wanted them to have a reason to get dressed up and to have a nice lunch out. When they left, everyone got a hamper so they can have something nice to eat and drink to take home with them. It was super."

Tickets on sale for charity ball to help toddler

Family urges others to join fundraiser

Jo Gilbert

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ONE of the greatest joys of being new parents is bringing your little ones home from the hospital.

But Felbridge mum and dad Emma and Andrew Maxwell were forced to leave their little boy Henry in hospital when they took his twin sister Sophie home.

Shortly after his birth Henry suffered "complications". He was placed into intensive care at just

nine days old, given medicine to help his pancreas function properly. He was subsequently diagnosed with quadriplegic cerebral palsy.

This was to prove to be the start of a long journey for the family, who are being supported with a Spring Ball in March when The Dame Vera Lynn Children's Charity, which supports babies and children under five who have Cerebral Palsy, is throwing a bash at the Felbridge Hotel.

Mrs Maxwell explained: "In December 2011 my husband and I found out that we were having twins,



LITTLE FIGHTER: Henry, now 3, is making huge strides after being diagnosed with quadriplegic cerebral palsy

at the time we thought that this would be the biggest challenge we would face – having two babies to look after at the same time. How wrong we were.

"Sophie came home from hospital at two days old but it would be another six long weeks and a few emergency ambulance journeys later before Henry was well enough and strong enough to make our family complete.

"After a few months Sophie could hold her cup but Henry just didn't seem interested in even trying. In the early days we thought he was being lazy but as he grew older we realised that there was something wrong."

Cerebral palsy is a group of movement disorders and may include problems with sensation, vision, hearing, swallowing and speaking.

Quadriplegia means that it affects all four limbs. But three years on, the family have made huge strides towards health and happiness with the help of The Dame Vera Lynn Children's Charity.

Mr and Mrs Maxwell are asking people to buy tickets to the ball for a loved one this Christmas in order to support the charity and its life-changing work.

Bewildered

And despite feeling "bewildered, scared and unsure" about her family's future, Mrs Maxwell is now confident.

She added: "When Henry first joined the service, he couldn't sit independently, let alone play with toys by himself. Now, he will sit and wheel his toy cars backwards and forwards, he loves playing with bubbles and doing painting and colouring.

"He is learning to crawl and to kneel supporting himself with his arms and to push himself off the sofa independently. All things that we would not have thought were possible without the charity's support.

"The charity receives no statutory funding and has to raise £480,000 each year to survive. Andrew and I truly hope our story may inspire you to donate to such a fantastic and local cause and help Henry to reach his full potential."

The Spring Ball will take place on March 19, and the night will start off with a drinks reception followed by a three-course meal.

■ Entertainment will be provided by the band Fever, the Swingtime Sweethearts and Katherine Samuelson. There will also be a raffle and auction. Tickets are £75 per person. Book by visiting www.dvllcc.org.uk, calling 01403 780444 or emailing Catherine.bristow@dvllcc.org.uk

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