

OASIS AGM 8 January 2008 **Held at Cheney Community Hall, Cheney School**

The AGM was opened by Voirrey Carr, Chair of OASIS, who introduced herself. The minutes of last year's AGM were approved.

Voirrey gave a summary of a successful year for OASIS, and thanked the three departing members of the Committee for their hard work. The full text of her speech can be found by clicking on the link below:

<http://www.oasonline.org.uk/AGM%20January%208th%202008%20Chair's%20report.pdf>

Rachel Dennett, Treasurer, reported that OASIS was now in an extremely healthy financial position, thanks to some marvellous fundraising and donations. The year started with an opening balance of £9198.37, income was £10319, outgoings were £4750.20, giving a closing balance of £14767 (the accounts have been verified by an independent accountant).

Election of the new Committee

Two new members were elected: Rachel Williamson and Becky Mason. The following members were re-elected: Voirrey Carr (Chair), Rachel Dennett (Treasurer), Carolyn Kendrick (Secretary), Josey Wilkins, Verity Loughman, Yoko Myers, Pam Parsons

Voirrey thanked the new committee and looked forward to working together.

Our speaker, Elizabeth Attfield, a training officer from Autism West Midlands, was introduced. She spoke about ways to help create a positive self image for people with ASD who are often socially isolated, don't know how to fit in and experience an overwhelming anxiety in social situations. They often have a sense of worthlessness and low self esteem, and all this often leads to depression and other mental health issues.

She stressed the importance of self awareness in coming to terms with who we are, and the need to identify strengths as well as areas for development (for example teach strategies to overcome difficulties and teach social rules). It is important to build self esteem, and special interests have a role too.

Elizabeth quoted from several books (see the recommended reading list). People with ASD need help to understand non-verbal communication, so that they can 'fit in' socially. A Personal Profile is useful to explain your personality, your likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, as well as feelings, emotions and relationships. This will promote good learning and home environments, help with social activities and prevent or manage meltdowns.

Most importantly of all, people with ASD need to understand their autism; their ways of thinking and seeing the world, their sensory experience and how they deal and communicate with people. Diversity should be celebrated. Self esteem is the foundation for learning (self knowledge, self and others, self acceptance, self reliance, self expression, self confidence, self awareness and self worth). We all should understand and accept ourselves "It's OK to be me!"

Recommended reading:

- I Am Special by Peter Vermeulen
- Freaks, Geeks And Asperger Syndrome by Luke Jackson
- Martian In The Playground by Clare Sainsbury
- Helping Children Build Self Esteem by Deborah Plummer
- Asperger's ... What Does It Mean To Me? By Catherin Faherty
- Helping The Child Who Doesn't Fit In by Nowicki and Duke
- Asperger Syndrome – An Owner's Manual by Ellen Heller Korin

(Some of these titles are in the OASIS Library, the others will be added shortly.)

The meeting concluded with a question and answer session.