



the children's charity

# It's Marathon time!

## Greetings Windsurfers,

I'm sure you don't need me to remind you that last year your Marathon event at Rutland Water raised over £1,500 for NCH, the children's charity, and it was great to have the opportunity to meet and thank you all when I came down to receive the cheque in July. As your 2006 Marathon is fast approaching and you will again be out signing up sponsors, I thought it would be a good opportunity to tell you a bit more about the work of NCH and how the money that you raise can really help make a difference to the lives of some of the country's most vulnerable and excluded children, young people and their families.

### *2005 Cheque presentation*



NCH has been supporting children and young people affected by poverty, disability, abuse or neglect for over 135 years. Today we are the UK's leading children's charity, working with more than 140,000 vulnerable children, young people and their families each year. Our work includes a network of community based family centres supporting families in need; fostering and adoption services; support for disabled children and

their families, young people who are homeless or leaving care, young carers and youngsters who have been in trouble. If you would like to know more about our work then you can visit our website at [www.nch.org.uk](http://www.nch.org.uk)

Fundraising events, such as your Marathon, are vital to NCH's ability to help the children and young people we work with and really do make a difference to the lives of children and young people like Seren, Kelly and Terry.

### *Seren's story*

*Seren was born by emergency caesarean and at 10 days old she was diagnosed with severe cerebral palsy caused by oxygen starvation. At six months old she was referred to her local NCH disability project.*

*At the project Seren plays, paints and sings, has speech therapy and enjoys the sensory room, with its fibre optic curtain, UV lights and bubble tube. Seren's mum, Alison, says: "They've taught us lots of ways to help her. Each room in our house has a colour theme now. It helps her put things in context. This project has given her her life. It's inspired us and inspired Seren – without coming here, she wouldn't be the child she is."*

We run over 50 projects supporting disabled children and their families, including community services that provide specialist play and education opportunities for disabled children and offer advice and support to their families; short breaks projects that allow disabled children to enjoy regular time away from home, while their families have a break from their care responsibilities and shared care services where we recruit volunteer or part-time carers to help look after disabled children with a range of needs, from just a few hours a week.

### *Kelly's story*

*When 16-year-old Kelly's mum suddenly got sicker, Kelly had to stay at home to look after her, and was unable to attend school for nearly a term. The local NCH Young Carers' project found out about Kelly's situation, and helped arrange for someone else to look after Kelly's mum during the day, so that she could go back to school.*

*Kelly has now taken 11 GCSE exams and is studying for her A-levels. Eventually, she hopes to become a nurse. She says: 'I just wouldn't have coped at all if it hadn't been for the project. I don't know where I'd be without them.'*

Our Young Carers projects help children and young people who are caring for a sick or disabled relative, such as a parent who has a long term illness is mentally ill or addicted to alcohol/drugs, to cope with the extra pressures they face

### *Terry's story*

*Terry started playing truant after his parents split up. He began stealing cars at 13 and left home at 14. With no financial support, he continued stealing cars to survive. At 17, he came to an NCH leaving care project.*

*He now lives with a family in approved lodgings, and is learning to live independently. He says: "They teach me to budget, cook and clean – and they've helped me get into college. They're nice people and they treat my well. I know for sure that I'd still be offending if I didn't have the support of NCH. They are helping me to start afresh as a better person."*

NCH works with more young people leaving care than any other UK charity. They are among the most vulnerable people we work with, yet they're expected to cope on their own at an age when most young people are still living with their parents. Often, they struggle to manage. We help them to find and keep accommodation; develop vital independence skills like budgeting and healthy eating, and access college and job opportunities.

My thanks once again to the Association for choosing to support NCH, the children's charity, through this year's Marathon. Good sponsorship hunting, good luck to all of you who are competing and I look forward to meeting you again at the Marathon weekend in May.

Debbie Smith  
NCH Regional Fundraiser  
[debbie.smith@nch.org.uk](mailto:debbie.smith@nch.org.uk)

Some photographs are posed by models

