

MEERKAT MAIL

HELLO MARVELLOUS
MEERKATS!

Issue 13

Hi
everyone.....

Kate and Debs

Kate, Helen, Sarah, Sophie, Carly and Debs

WELCOME TO ...

...the THIRTEENTH issue of Meerkat Mail, which as always contains lots of your brilliantness as well as a few exciting updates from Meerkat Central HQ!

In the last issue of MM, we told you about the huge plans to refurbish all of Rowans Hospice, including a brand new home for Rowans Meerkat Service. We've always said how this space belongs to the children it supports so your views and ideas are crucial to informing the design of the new Meerkat Central. During February half-term, a group of children and two of our Mentors met with the Hospice's interior designer, Hedley Finn to start this process. It was a really creative afternoon as you will see from the photos!

Inside, Molly tells us about her wonderful Nan and the very special relationship they shared. There's also a Starlit Walk update and a beautiful thank you letter from Abigail. Rowan catches up with Karen Brickell, our new Ward Manager and finds out what it's like working at the Hospice at night. On the back page to test your observational skills, there's a 'spot the difference' puzzle

and some information about our work with children in answering one of your important questions.

You will be able to see from this photograph that our little team is getting bigger! In October last year, Kate joined our crew. Kate works 3 days with us each week in Meerkats and then spends 2 days in the Hospice's adult service. You may also have noticed that Sophie's stomach has drastically grown! Sophie is expecting a baby boy in April so will be taking a year's break from the world of Meerkats but covering her role whilst she is away will be Debs! Debs has been working with our Service since January, we're really excited to welcome her into the Meerkat Team.

Remember, if you have any suggestions or stories for future Meerkat Mails, we definitely want to hear from you! Email us:
meerkats@rowanshospice.co.uk.

Rowans
Meerkat Team x

Meerkat Central Design Group

In our last issue of Meerkat Mail, we told you about the exciting plans for a new Meerkat Central. During February half term, some of our Meerkat gang came into the Hospice to chat about what they think should be included in the design of our new home. Hedley, the Interior Designer who works for the Hospice, talked to the group about how colours and different objects make us feel. Then the group were able to let their imaginations run wild and create some funky, colourful and fun mood boards to show what they would like to see in the new Meerkat space.



There were some amazing ideas, from a bathtub full of feathers to cosy cubby holes in the walls where children can curl up and chill out. The group even suggested we think about having a pet! The main thing that everyone agreed on was that it needs to be a space where visitors can feel welcomed, safe and comfortable. Although we won't be able to use all of the group's amazing ideas, they have given Hedley lots to think about and, hopefully, we will be able to show you how plans are progressing soon. If you think you have a brilliant idea that you want to share, please email us!



Molly's Story

My name is Molly I am 11 years old and I am going to talk about my Nan who was in the Hospice. It all started when we found out she had peritoneal cancer in July 2016. She went in the Hospice on the 23rd of October 2017, she had her own room and it looked out on the lovely garden outside. I can remember when I went to feed the fish with Sophie who has helped me a lot through the tough days. One place that me and my Mum liked to go to was the chapel where we lit a candle for my Nan after she had passed away on the 6th November 2017. Another place I went was to the Meerkat group who has helped me to realise that I'm not the only person who is going through a bad year/years. I have made new friends and I have done lots of arts and crafts.

One of my favourite memories of my Nan was going on holiday to Cornwall and buying necklaces from the shell shop in Padstow.

Rowans Hospice has helped me through so much so I wanted to say thank you to everyone.

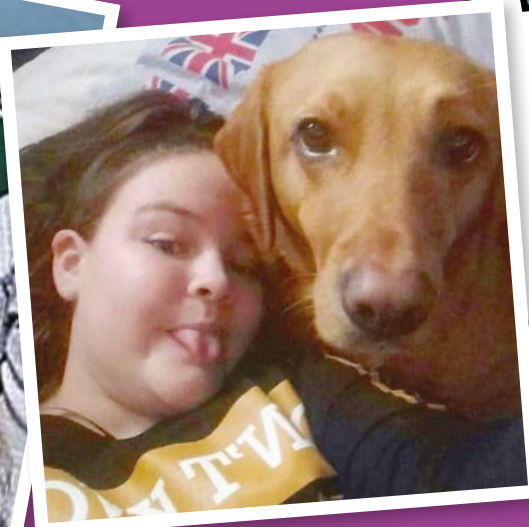
Love Molly



Starlit Walk U

In October last year, our Historic Dockyard. Some a pirate or princess and look after people at the sponsorship money a An incredible **£32,000** and young people w and to everyone els

The 2019 Starlit V
keep an eye on o



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Rowan catches up with...

...Karen Brickell,

Job Title: Ward Manager

What does your role as Ward Manager involve?

This is a new role for me in the Hospice. Being the Ward Manager means I am responsible for making sure that our patients continue to receive an outstanding standard of care. To do this, I check that our team is following the correct practices, rules and ways of caring for people. I also make sure that all the nursing staff have attended the latest training courses, so everyone's knowledge and skills are kept up-to-date and the nurses feel confident in their roles.

That sounds a big job, are you a bit nervous?

It is a huge job so I am really excited and nervous too! It is essential that we continue to provide the best possible care to patients and their families. There are so many amazing fundraisers in our community doing all sorts of activities to support the Hospice so it's important they know that their hard work and commitment is making a difference to the people we care for.

Before becoming Ward Manager, what did you do?

I have been working for Rowans for 20 years! Before becoming the Ward Manager, my role was a nurse, covering night shifts. I loved working at night as I was part of a brilliant team who all share with me a slightly odd sense of humour!

Does the Hospice feel different at night?

The Hospice is a very different place at night; it is much quieter and peaceful. It also feels really tiny at night because all of the offices in the Hospice like Meerkat Central are empty and locked; it is just the ward which is open. It is a lovely atmosphere and I feel really privileged to have worked on nights here for so many years.

Will you miss anything about working at night?

I have done some of my best nursing at night, just sitting and listening to patients while they talk about anything that is important to them. Sometimes, when the focus of their day is people asking how they are and how they feel, it is really satisfying to have the time to just sit and chat about normal, everyday things like 'The Great British Bake Off' or randomly discussing 'Why does that newsreader on TV style his hair in that way'?!

However, as Ward Manager, I am really enjoying being here during the day and getting to know new people and becoming part of the whole Hospice team, although I may have to sneak back at night sometimes, just to enjoy the peacefulness.

You have been at Rowans for a long time, you must really love it here?

Yes, I absolutely love it! I love the work. I love the people I get to meet. Here, we all have time to really focus on our patients and what they need. We can spend time giving our patients physical care or just sitting and talking with them, listening to what they have to say or enjoying a laugh, as that is every bit as important.

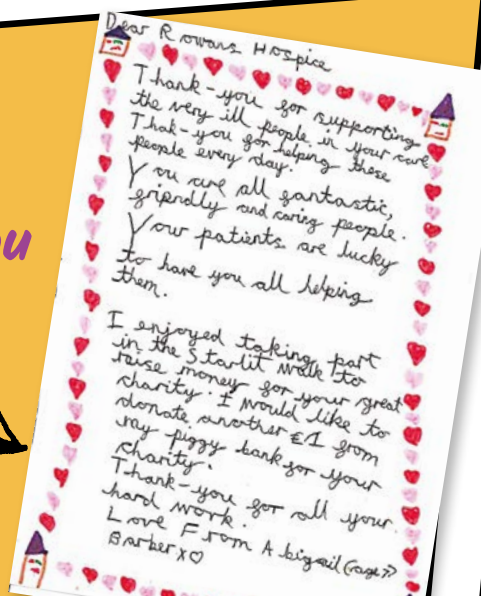


update

Our annual Starlit Walk took place around Portsmouth and one of you might have taken part, dressing up as a superhero and raising lots of money to make sure we can still provide the best care at the Hospice. We have received nearly everyone's support and this has all been counted – and we are amazed. Over £10,000 has been raised by the 500 superstar children who took part. Thank you to all our Starlit Walkers and their families who have fundraised for Rowans Hospice.

The next Starlit Walk will take place on Wednesday 30 October. Visit our events page on our website for details.

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Your Questions:

All of the children and teenagers we meet are going through a really, really tough time. Watching someone you love become more unwell and then dying can leave you with all sorts of confusing feelings like sadness, anger, guilt, loneliness and worry. This rollercoaster of emotions is called grief and although it's probably exhausting and sometimes maybe scary too, it's also a really normal reaction to losing someone you love.

At Rowans Meerkat Service, we can't take away these feelings or fix everything that is happening to you and your family. So, it makes sense that people often ask us **what we do and how we think we can help children?**

Below are three of the main differences we try to make for each child referred to our Service but please remember that all children and families are different, which means their experiences will be different too. We always take the time to get to know each child we meet so we can understand what support they need from us.

Building children's resilience

Resilience is all about how you cope when difficult things happen. It's not always easy to feel resilient when it seems like everything in your world is going wrong at the same time; it can be hard to believe you and your family are going to get through it all. Most of the time, people are more resilient than they realise but they might need a bit of input from someone like us to work out what helps them on those extra tough days.

An important message children often tell us they've learnt is holding onto knowing that no matter how hard things feel, they will get better, it won't always feel like this.



*Helen and Sarah at the back.
Sophie, Carly, Kate and Debs at the front*

Helping families to talk about the difficult stuff

When families are grieving and everyone is worried about each other, this can sometimes become a barrier for families talking honestly about how they're feeling. It is common for adults and children within a family to think they have to stay 'strong' and not get upset in front of each other or talk about what has happened. But actually, being brave and strong is all about people being honest with each other, including the good stuff and the bits that feel more painful too. It can be hard for families to know how best to support each other and how to start these conversations so we try to help as much as we can.

Making bereavement feel less lonely

At Rowans Meerkat Service, we meet lots of children and teenagers who tell us how lonely life has suddenly become since their family member died; they feel like they are the only ones going through this. We run a variety of groups throughout the year for children and teenagers to provide an opportunity for children to meet others who really get what it's like to lose someone you love. The groups are a lot of fun too!



Spot the Difference

A messy day in Meerkat Central HQ, but can you spot the differences? There are 10 to find!



We'd love to hear your thoughts on Meerkat Mail!

Was there anything you liked or didn't like?
What would you like to see in future Meerkat Mail issues?

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