

Spring 2023

Newsletter

The Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum



FANDF

Giving a voice to Forces families with additional needs and disabilities

Facilitated by

ssafa | the
Armed Forces
charity

ssafa.org.uk/fandf



Hello and welcome to the FANDF Spring 2023 newsletter

It isn't long now until the 12 June conference in MoD Main Building. We are currently in the planning process and hope to see many of you there. Plans are coming together well, with stallholders signing up and speakers starting to confirm. Please keep an eye out for further information on the conference, including how to register.

The theme this year is "Transitions" and we will focus on the various transitions that Serving families with disabilities face, including post-16 education, moving to a new location, becoming a carer or leaving the Armed Forces.

Similar to previous conferences, there will be a number of guest speakers and subject matter experts (SMEs). Most of the speakers and SMEs will be available throughout the day and there will also be a networking session over lunch. If you wish to express an interest in attending, please email SSAFA on ANDA@ssafa.org.uk

Following on from last year's outreach visits to Catterick and the Cotswolds, I joined the CanDiD team for a visit to Cornwall recently. It was great seeing how the two organisations work together to inform and support families, but I was struck by how few of the professionals we met knew about FANDF. We have been going for over thirty years but still need to work hard to increase awareness of what we do. Everyone reading this newsletter clearly knows about FANDF, but I need you to spread the word and make sure that professionals as well as potential service users know about us in order to make sure that people get the support they need.

See you all in June.

Alan Bowie,
FANDF Chair



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Short breaks support

During SSAFA's August Family Break in 2022, the team met the Coultas family. They attended the break as their youngest daughter, Thalia, is a Congenital Amputee to her lower left arm. During the break the family were able to enjoy spending quality time together, participating in adventure activities and meeting other families in similar situations.

Once the family returned from the break, they got in touch with the team informing us that they were raising funds for Thalia to be fitted with a bionic arm. The team put the family in touch with the North-East Regional Office who were able to raise over £6000 to go towards Thalia getting her bionic arm.

We have recently been informed that Thalia has now been fitted with her new arm and as you can see, thoroughly enjoying the freedom this brings. A perfect example of how working together can improve the lives of families, giving them independence and enabling them to thrive.



Edd is speaking up for us!

Lt Col Brian 'Edd' Gordon has been appointed the Army Carers Advocate, and with his own personal lived experience, he is in the best position to speak on behalf of carers within military families. Edd and his wife Jo, a FANDF committee member, are parents of Harry who is 22 years old and is disabled. They have recently made the move from Wiltshire to Fife, for Edd's posting, and have found the move from England to Scotland stressful and frustrating. They have faced challenges with legal proceedings, due to Scotland not recognising the deputyship put in place in England, issues with transition of care packages between social services and with the allocation and adaption of their quarter.

Edd works with families, the chain of command and other organisations to support carers by highlighting the needs of military families and ensuring that we see positive change moving forward.

If you are an unpaid carer and would like to share your experience, please use the following link or QR code to complete a short survey. This feedback will help Edd to shape future policy challenges and help invest in the correct support that we need.

<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=7WB3vINZS0iuldChbfoJ5Vcd2dDKIHZKh-heTEfIBAp1UREgzT1Y1N1JWQUoyVINKNOVMNEX-ENOROWC4u>



Committee member Steph to take on her 'Ride to Freedom'

In June this year, FANDF committee member Steph will take on an incredible challenge alongside 7 team mates, when she will ride on horseback for 5 days across the Pyrenees mountains. Steph works with not for profit organisation 'Forces Wives Challenge' who provide adventures and challenges for female spouses and partners of Serving and veteran military personnel, and until now has been 'behind the scenes'.

"Working with FWC has opened my eyes to the power of adventure and has reminded me of what can be achieved if we want it enough. When I became unwell and subsequently disabled, I felt I had lost so much of me, but with the FWC ladies alongside me, I really do feel like I can take on the world."

The R2F team will support Steph in all aspects of her care and medical needs, as they cross 130km of challenging mountain terrain, to recreate the mountain crossing most widely known as the WW2 'Freedom trail (Le Chemin de la Liberté)' The team will follow remote mountain passes that were used as escape routes into Spain by around 33,000 allied servicemen and women, and Jewish refugees fleeing to safety, avoiding checkpoints and surveillance.



Can you help?

Forces Wives Challenge (FWC) is a social enterprise which aims to unite women who have partners in the Armed Forces, through adventure and challenge. FWC believes passionately in the power of physical activity and the outdoors to help deal with the many challenges life throws our way.

The participants are contributing to the costs of the expedition, but FWC are also looking for supporters to help us make this happen. The team are keen to partner with organisations and

This act of remembrance touches the hearts of the FWC community, and the aptly named 'Ride to Freedom' expedition will be significant for all the team, who will be well and truly pushed out of their comfort zones! Each team member has their own personal reasons for taking part, but the resounding message throughout is that 'together we can achieve anything' and that includes overcoming life's obstacles, such as disability, infertility, anxiety and depression.

"In 2019 I became suddenly unwell and was diagnosed with a neurological condition. This has left me totally dependant on a wheelchair, with limited use in one of my hands and many other debilitating symptoms to manage. I went from being a full time working Mum of a 2 year old, who rode my horse in my free time, and was fiercely independent, to my world being turned upside down. After a period of time out of the saddle, whilst we learned to manage my complex health needs and I adjusted to my new way of life, I got back in the saddle again after 18 months. Being on my horse again gave me my spark back, it gave me a sort of independence, and I haven't looked back since. I hope to inspire at least one person to not give up hope, there is life the other side of illness and disability"

With help from Heather, FWC founder and CEO, and expedition lead Ronnie, Steph created the Ride to Freedom challenge. Through this expedition Steph is aiming to prove that with determination, passion, hard work and the right support, disability does not have to prevent us from adventuring. Steph and the rest of the team will start their trek in France, and ride until they cross the border to Spain, with mountain trekking up to 2200m. The most important aspect of this expedition, is the team working together to support Steph to achieve what she once believed to be impossible - freedom from her wheelchair, and ultimately, freedom from disability.

brands that are passionate about supporting the military community and who are committed to actively working towards a more diverse and inclusive future.

The FWC team will be fundraising for The Armed Forces Equine Charity during the challenge.

To find out more go to <https://www.forceswiveschallenge.org/ride-to-freedom> or email Steph at info@forceswiveschallenge.org

Things of interest

From books to movies, here are some recommended items for viewing.

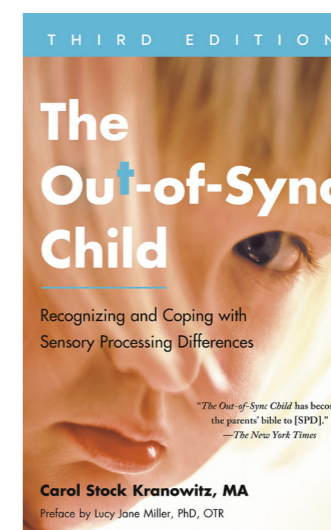
BLOG Facebook Page inspired by Fraser, who is a disabled wheelchair user living with DMD, a dinosaur expert and all-round awesome dude!
<https://en-gb.facebook.com/fraserandfriends/>

BOOK 'The Reason I Jump' by Naoki Higashida. This No. 1 Sunday Times is an internationally bestselling account of life as a child with autism. Can be purchased on Amazon.
<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Reason-Jump-voice-silence-autism/dp/1444776770>

BOOK 'The Out of Sync Child' by Carol Stock Kranowitz. In her books, Carol explains to parents, educators and other early childhood professionals how sensory challenges affect children and provides fun and functional sensory-motor activities that can improve life at home and school.
<https://out-of-sync-child.com>

APP 'Squeebles' is a Children's Educational App for iOS and Android
<https://keystagefun.co.uk/connect/>

SHORT FILM 'Float' Directed and written by Bobby Rubio is inspired by his son, who is autistic.



Useful links

Wembley Stadium has two dedicated sensory and inclusion rooms for use on event days. Each Sensory Room has the space for 12 guests, which include two wheelchair users per room if required. Each sensory room is divided into a lounge style area with seating, and an immersive space which contains equipment designed to assist guests with a wide range of access requirements. To avoid disappointment, please ensure you contact the stadium to check availability of the sensory rooms before booking tickets.

<https://help.wembleystadium.com/support/solutions/articles/7000072630-sensory-and-inclusion-rooms>

NESSY is a subscription based online tool to help those living with dyslexia with different aspects of learning.
<https://www.nessy.com>

AUTOTRADER Giving information on electric vehicles for drivers with disabilities.
<https://www.autotrader.co.uk/cars/electric/ev-drivers-with-disabilities/>

SPECTRUM GAMING is an online community for autistic young people which has three main intended outcomes: Building Friendships, Increasing Self-Acceptance and Advocacy.
<https://www.spectrumgaming.net/about-us>

SUMDOG is an online learning service to help children to enjoy maths and spelling.
<https://www.sumdog.com/en/>

Feedback

Do you have feedback for the FANDF committee?

What would you like to see in the next newsletter?

Do you have a story to share with other FANDF members?

Please get in touch by email, we would love to hear from you!

Contact: CS.ANDA@ssafa.org.uk

