

In this latest podcast, we hear from John Milner of Ashby de la Zouch and Coalville Lions. Each year, Ashby Statutes Fair is opened for a pre-arranged morning free of charge due to the generosity of Anthony Harris, the fair owner for the club, especially to bring children and adults with a range of abilities and their carers. We also feature Tim Clark from Yateley Lions whose making a difference by supporting the 'Get Ahead' campaign for a charity, Harry's Hat, through their local May Fayre event.

Be uplifted, be inspired. This is Step Forward and Volunteer.

Welcome to the latest episode of the popular Step Forward and Volunteer podcast brought to you by Lions Clubs British Isles.

My name is Samantha Boffin and I'd like to thank you for tuning in.

If you haven't listened before, our aim is simple. We want to celebrate the positive difference volunteering makes to communities across the British Isles and beyond. To do that, we'll be speaking to those who give up their time to help others, inspiring more people to step forward and volunteer.

This month on the podcast, we hear from John Milner, a member of Ashby de la Zouch and Coalville Lions. Each year, Ashby Statutes Fair is opened for a pre-arranged morning free of charge due to the generosity of Anthony Harris, the fair owner for the club specially to bring children and adults with a range of abilities and their carers.

We also feature Tim Clark from Yateley Lions whose supporting the 'Get ahead' campaign for a local charity. Harry's Hat, as it is known has been set up to support families with children that have hydrocephalus, which is water on the brain.

But first, I have a favour to ask. We'd like your help in getting the word out about Step Forward and Volunteer. Tell your family, tell your friends - and if you're a Lions member, why not let other members of your club know about the podcast - and how easy it is to listen. All you need to do is either go on the website www.lionsclubs.co where you will see a

link to the podcast, or you can search for Step Forward and Volunteer on apps like Spotify, Podbean, Apple podcasts and Google podcasts.

You can listen on-demand or subscribe so that you never miss an episode. We publish a new programme on the second Wednesday of each month, and we're really keen to spread the positivity and get as many people listening as we can.

Now let me introduce our first guest from the John Milner from Ashby de la Zouch and Coalville Lions. Thank you for joining the LION podcast John. Hello there, Samantha. So I would love to know, how did Ashby de la Zouch members first get involved with this event for children and their carers?

Right. I'll tell you. It goes back 43 years when two of our members from Ashby de la Zouch and Coalville Lions asked Anthony Harris, who is the CEO of Pat Collins Fairs, if they could have a tombola stall at the fair, the fair runs for about five days. And he said yes, subject to one condition, that that if you can organise children with special needs, then we will open the fare on the Monday morning for free rides and candy floss for all of them, and that's how it started and has been running ever since.

Wow. That's amazing. That's such a great story. So, so at the fun fair for the children. So is it a traditional fair?

Yes, that's right. The fair arrives on the Thursday night and opens on the Friday morning, but it runs every day. Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, then Tuesday, it finishes Tuesday night. It's all taken up and off they go. But the main street in Ashby Market Street is closed for the fair for the whole five days. So it's a bit chaotic during the fair.

It's a real town event

It is yes, that's right. And the rides well the rides consists of the dodgems, the children's roundabouts, the waltzes, the big wheel, to helter-skelter, the city hopper. And also some stores are open. This is of course on the Monday morning when we have the children.

So is the whole fair is open to them, the whole fair there are some really fast and furious rides, they don't open because it's obviously it's a bit too much for the children, but most of

the rides are and some stores and candy floss. The lady that deals with the candy floss. She's lovely handing candy floss out to everybody.

Oh, how amazing. That was my big thing about when I went to fairs when I was a little girl. Candy Floss was the thing. You could only get it at funfairs, couldn't you?

Yes, that's right. Yes. All have specially wrapped now, with health and safety.

Do they make it in front of you still.

She makes most of it before? And then if she starts to get a bit low then she does make top up, you know, actually at the time.

Yeah, that's very exciting to watch.

Yeah, yeah, that's right.

So when you're at the planning stages of this, John, do you invite a whole range of schools?

We do? Yes. There were 30 schools that actually were present at the fair on the Monday morning. So the 30 schools and they come from five counties, that's Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, and Warwickshire. And this year, we had just under 400 children attend with about 150 carers. The ages were from five years, up to 15 years and there were some adults, mostly from care centres around the area.

So it's not just children. There are, adults with special needs?

Yes, that's right. Yes.

That's amazing. So now I understand. So the Lions Clubs members are involved but also, am I right in thinking the Ashby school sixth formers play a part as well.

Yes, the sixth formers. We have the Ashby School sixth formers and 20 of them came along to help. And they were absolutely amazing. They were so, so good. We were a bit low on manpower. So you know that they came in just at the right time. The date was changed, so that affected our member on the day due to the Queen's funeral, so the whole fair was put back a week. So, instead of being on the 19th of September, it was on the 26th of September. So, the students because they're sixth formers, they helped escort the children from the car parks to the fair, and then they also help the children on to the rides. And I

think a few of them have free rides themselves with the children. Yes. Which I think they deserved anyway.

Yes. But one exciting thing to be involved in. You must admit, that was quite a turnaround, then to move the whole thing on by a week that must have taken an awful lot of planning.

Yes well, the strange thing was that quite a lot of our members were available on the 19th but they weren't on the 26th. But we had help, from the Ashby School.

So fantastic. Yeah. So it's a real community event. Yes. The whole thing choose.

Yes. Yes, that's right. But the children, I mean, they, they absolutely love it, and it's the highlight of their year. Really, really is.

Do you see the same children coming back year on year?

We do. Yes. Yes.

A big thank you goes to Anthony Harris, and the staff of Pat Collins fairs for making the event happen. Because it's it is a big organisation. And they give their time, freely on the Monday morning. So that's, that's really good of them

That's amazing to kind of presume it's the opening of their fair, it's right at the beginning of their five day stint.

No, it opens on Friday afternoon, Saturday afternoon, Saturday evening, and Sunday afternoon. And then we're having the Monday morning.

That's amazing. Is it just the Ashby de la Zouch and Coalville lions that that get involved in this?

We get help from other Lions Clubs. We had help from Leicester host Lions, also Loughborough Lions, Swadlincote Lions. And then we have the Ashby Castle Rotary Club. Actually, with the Rotary club, we help each other out on events. So it's, it works very well.

Now, they're the best kind of events when everybody's collaborating together. Yes, that's right. Oh, well, thank you so much, John. It was fascinating. And yes, thank you for coming on the podcast.

Thank you for joining us on the podcast John and sharing with us this fun filled fair event.

It's time now for a short break, we'll be back after this ...

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Our next guest, is Tim Clark from Yateley Lions who joins to tell us about the 'Get ahead' campaign for Harry's Hat, supporting those who are affected by hydrocephalus – water on the brain.

So hello, Tim. And thank you so much for joining us on The Lions podcast.

So could you tell us how the club came to know about the work of the local charity? Harry's hydrocephalus awareness trust?

Harry's Hat for short. Just to make it easy for everyone.

We run a May Fayre every year, and on our town green with the help of the town council, we put together 40 to 50 stalls, and people come in have a great time. It's really good to see all of the local community come out and enjoy themselves. I this year as a newly minted lion went around as the PR officer to try and find as many local charities around the May Fayre as I could. And one of the ones I came across was Harry's Hat. And I got talking to them and asking them, you know, like, what do you do? How do you work? How are you funded? Just standard questions, really, to work out if there's anything we could do to help them. And we found out that they had a whole bunch of projects that they were working on. And some of them we could help with. So it was just a conversation at our local May Fayre with one of the many charities that we provide space for.

Can you tell us tell me a little bit more about the charity and what the campaign is that Yateley Lions are supporting?

Okay, so Harry's Hat is a charity set up by Matt and Kaz. Their son Harry was born with hydrocephalus. And they found it quite early on. And for those that don't know, Hydrocephalus is water on the brain. And Harry, within the first few months of his life, bless his heart, had a shunt put into his brain to drain the water out. So he had brain surgery at like less than two months old. And he's had multiple brain surgeries since and then every kid with hydrocephalus, will probably end up having brain surgery to drain the water from their

brains and put a shunt in. So they set up a charity because they found that there was no support for families or not good enough support for families, and not good enough education. So they set up a charity. And it's a full time job for Caroline, who cares for her and a bunch of others. She now has staff. So they're getting big enough to actually go and educate families and support families nationwide, with resources and one to one mentoring about how do you deal with a kid who's got hydrocephalus? It's, you know, how do we support you? How do we educate you, that's what they're trying to do. Now, the campaign they're running at the moment is one called 'Get-ahead'. And 'Get-ahead' is all about measuring your new born baby's head with a paper tape measure. And we'll come on to why that's important in a minute. But they have found that if you measure the baby's head regularly, you'll see if it's growing too fast, and if it's growing too fast, that's an early indicator for hydrocephalus for water in the brain. So the campaign they're running is their educating midwives and community district nurses to go and measure babies heads and give them the tools to do that. And the tool is a paper tape measure. So we've funded 10,000 paper tape measures for the Harry's hat charity to give out to midwives and community nurses and take around nationwide and start measuring new born babies heads to make sure that they're growing at the correct rate. You're probably thinking why are they paper? The reason they're paper and paper doesn't stretch. If you go to your sewing box, if you can grab your tape measure, it's made of fabric or plastic, and that stretches. So if you want a super accurate result, make it something that doesn't stretch. The safe way to do it is with a paper tape measure and they have to be calibrated really, so that you get good measurements. Which is why the tape measures that we've funded. I think they call it NHS type approved tape measures provided by a special company

Presumably where you measure on the baby's head and then, presuming it's quite a small amount, is it in fact that that the head might be able to grow? Certainly to be really accurate?

Yeah, absolutely. So the tape actually has a piece on it, where you write the baby's name. And then there's a slot where you can actually put the piece of paper through. So as you pull it through, you can then read off the measurement against the piece, you know, you get the idea. On there, we've got information about the charity, space for them to write the name and the date of birth for the child. And also, we've managed to squeeze in there, the lions

logo, but all of that means that any measurements are taken with these tape measures that are going to be official.

It's amazing, actually, I mean, that that seems like such an enormous job to be going around to basically spread the word right across the country.

Absolutely. And that's what Harry's hat, the charity are doing, they kicked off the programme over in Cardiff at the midwifery conference over there earlier in the year. And they've also been up to Liverpool, and I believe they're going to other conferences around the country, and educating midwives and community district nurses to go and measure. And here's the tool to do it with.

Wow, that's amazing. So you donated funds for 10,000 of these.

When they first said to me, oh, it's gonna be 10,000 paper tapes. I'm sorry. Well, that's like, how many, but then yeah, so they're giving out bundles to each person that's interested. So if they're student midwives or district nurses that come up to the booth, they'll give them a bundle of tapes to take out and leave with each child one tape so that they can be measured and put in the babies redbook.

Wow, that's Oh, yes, that's the famous red. But this is where it all goes. That's amazing. So So these, these 10,000 tape measures, these paper tape measures, your funding of those, What difference do Harry's Hat hope that will make overall.

Now, I don't know what that stats like in the UK, I can only go by what I found on Harry's Hats website, actually, because they've got a fantastic set of resources for people to go take a look at. But it's such a simple thing, that a piece of paper can potentially save a child a lifetime of misery. If out of those 10,000 tapes, just one kid has a better life, because they've had a tape available to measure it and found it early, and getting the treatment they need. That's a win for us. I suspect there will be more kids that are positively affected by those measurements in the future.

Yeah, I mean, it's amazing. I've had four children. And I don't remember one of them being measured, not ever. How terrible I was aware of I know when you think of it, yeah.

Extraordinary. And so because it's such a simple idea. Yes. Absolutely. Just amazing. Yeah.

You talked about the website. So is that how any listeners here could find out more about it?

Yeah, absolutely. If you want to find out more about Harry's Hat. It's www.harrys-hat.org. In fact, on the website on the front page, there's a fantastic video, the ITV News Crew came to see them and did a news report on them recently. They are getting funding from all sorts of places and they're making a great difference to making people aware of this. It's just we were able to help in a small way. But that small way is going to make a huge difference.

Absolutely. I mean, you know, 10,000 tape measures, a huge amount. So that I mean, that's incredible. So, as well as the supports with the funding that you've offered. Yateley Lions, have you got involved in any other ways with Harry's Hat?

Ideally, what we do is we try and fund a charity to do what the charity does, because we're not experts in their field. Clearly, Hydrocephalus is something that's quite new to us as a group at Yateley Lions. So we leave Harry's Hat to get on with the great work they're doing around that. So that we can then go on and help other charities. So ideally, you know, we're great at fundraising, and running events. So that means also, we can then move on and help another charity. Around our local area.

It's amazing. I mean, that's the sort of thing that's exactly what lions are, therefore we serve, right. That's our motto. And that's what we tried to do as much as we can.

Yeah. It's brilliant. Thank you so much, Tim. Thank you for sharing. That's so interesting, and wonderful, wonderful, important work.

Well, thank you for letting me talk about it. It's been a pleasure.

That is all we have time for on this month's podcast. Don't forget you can also listen to past editions of the Step Forward and Volunteer podcast any time via www.lionsclubs.co or on Spotify, Podbean, Apple podcasts or Google podcasts.

Thanks once again to our special guests John and Tim whilst working in partnership on two very different fair events and a big thank you to you our listeners as well. Take care and goodbye.