

2 Years and Counting!

You know the saying “Where did the time go?” Well, it couldn’t be truer for Pauline Mitchelmore who has seen the past 2 years fly by in her role as community fundraiser for North Bedfordshire at Keech Cottage Children’s Hospice.

“Getting to know the area and the community has been hard work, but so rewarding!” says Pauline. “I’ve met many wonderful individuals, societies, clubs and businesses, all with one common aim... to help increase awareness of the children’s hospice and raise the charity’s yearly running costs of £1.9 million!”

Through its bright comfortable in-house facilities and a community nursing team, Keech Cottage currently supports over 150 families who have a child with a terminal illness in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, 24 of which are from the North Bedfordshire area alone. In simple terms, these are children who are unlikely to survive into adulthood.

“I consider myself extremely privileged to work with such a dedicated team of doctors, nurses, family support workers, play therapists and volunteers. When I’m asked about the children in our care, I like to quote one of our nurses who I heard say *‘I think you’ll be surprised how much living is done here’*. For me this sums up our philosophy. Their short lives are extremely precious and we do our utmost to fill them.”

As a full-time fundraiser, Pauline’s role is to raise awareness and find ways of encouraging the communities in North Bedfordshire to support their local children’s hospice. People are often surprised to hear that, like most children’s hospices across the UK, Keech Cottage receives just a fraction of its funding from the Heath Service and so relies on the generosity of our community to raise 86% of its costs.

“It never ceases to amaze me how compassionate people are when I speak about the care and support we provide. During the last 2 years, I have attended large events in Bedford, such as the River and Kite Festival, and I’ve spoken and presented at golf clubs, Women Institutes and local schools. I’ve delivered banners, buckets and balloons to a whole host of supported events, accompanied Santa at the firework festival, ridden pillion in a convoy of twenty motorbikes and even accepted a donation at 3000 feet in a micro light! It’s been challenging, but to watch the community take Keech Cottage to their hearts has been worth every minute.”

Raising money is naturally a fundamental part of Pauline’s work, but she has also found making contacts can be just as valuable and so is now looking for more people to help widen the net. One group of local people, the ‘Friends of Keech’, have already come together to help with this task. Coming from a variety of backgrounds the ‘friends’ help out with a range of activities across North and Mid Bedfordshire – giving talks to community groups, attending cheque presentations, fundraising in their places of work and organising events such as Chinese banquet nights. Pauline would love to hear from anyone who would like to get involved – whether they want to join the ‘friends’, organise a fundraising or awareness raising activity of their own or just find out more about the work of their local children’s hospice. Pauline is also happy to arrange visits where people can see the facilities at Keech Cottage for themselves.

To find out more contact Pauline Mitchelmore on 01582 497867, email pmitchelmore@pasque.org or go to www.pasque.org.