

Keech Matters

SPRING 2022



Thank You

Dennis Keech, OBE
1931-2022

The end of last year finished on a high. In November, we held the Big Trunk Trail Auction. There is no doubt the trail gave lots of excitement and pleasure to our community, but for the hospice we were excited to see how much would be raised to keep us still caring. Nothing prepared me for the generosity of the bidders. **We raised an amazing £231,500.**

There was also lots of support for our other Christmas events. Smiley Sam and our Christmas Market were very well received, and our 32 shops welcomed lots of excited customers.

Thank you for continuing to support us, we truly are grateful.

Thank you for continuing to support us. We truly are grateful. After all the challenges of last year and the highs of the auction, the new year started with us caring and supporting patients during the Omicron surge. Yet again, our care staff were on the front line, shoulder to shoulder with our NHS colleagues. And again, we asked many staff to work at home. Thankfully, we did not have to close our shops this time.

At the end of January, we also heard the sad news of the death of Dennis Keech OBE, benefactor of the children's service. Without Dennis and Shirley's support the children's service would not be here today. We are eternally grateful. (See page 7.)

Despite this sad start to the year, we're optimistic green shoots are appearing in the pandemic and some normality is returning. I wish you good health as we move towards Springtime. This year, we're excited to be opening our beautiful hospice gardens for you to visit in March and September as part of The National Garden Scheme. And we're looking forward to bringing back our larger-than-life Colour Dash event in Luton in July. (See Page 15.) I hope to see you there!

Stay safe and well!

Liz

Liz Searle, CEO



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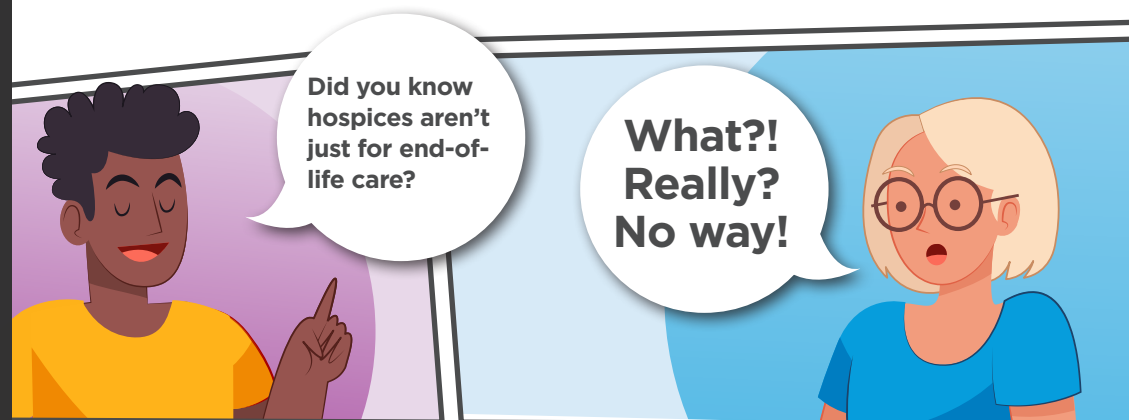
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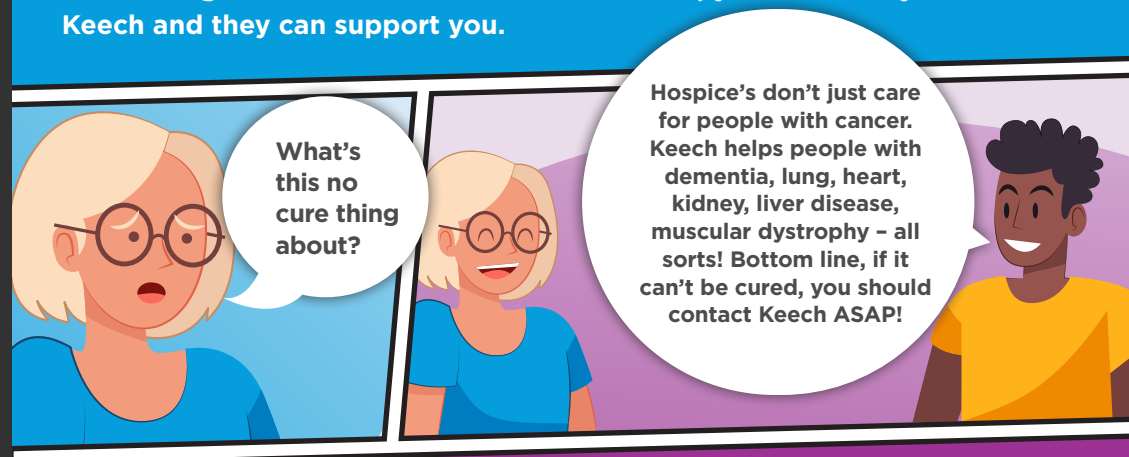
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keech.org.uk/refer



IT'S TRUE! From the moment you or a loved-one are diagnosed with a life-limiting condition for which there's no cure, you can refer yourself to Keech and they can support you.



We offer so much more than just end of life care. The earlier you contact us, the more we can help. We support people for free from the day they get their diagnosis.

Refer today

keech.org.uk/refer

Our wide range of services are all free and include:

Free emotional, physical and practical support in a place of your choice | Signposting you to other services who can help | Support to manage your symptoms | Support to talk to family and friends about your diagnosis | Help to plan ahead



CARE NEWS IN BRIEF

Despite the challenges COVID-19 continues to provide, we're continuing to deliver our services and making moments which matter for our patients and their families," Elaine Tolliday, Clinical Director and Deputy CEO.



Since the last edition of Keech Matters, we've sadly learned of the death of Dr Justin Amery, our dear friend and colleague. Dr Justin, as he was fondly called at the hospice, was a key part of our children's team since 2011 and a true inspiration to us all. Dr Justin will be deeply missed by the whole hospice team and the families he cared for.

We celebrated 30 years of care with our 30th Anniversary Conference. It featured three inspirational speakers from the field of palliative care who discussed some really thought-provoking topics.



We're delighted to say, Dr Ella has joined our Children's care team. She already has strong links to Keech as part of her London hospital roles, so when the opportunity to work with our team came up, she jumped at the chance!

Our Adult care team went above and beyond to create an early Christmas for a patient and her family by creating a home-from-home Christmas lunch in our Wellbeing Centre at Keech, followed by a visit from Father Christmas and carols.

In November, our outstanding care team shared their ground-breaking work at the national Hospice UK conference with our fellow hospice colleagues. One such piece was our Liver clinics (see page 14). We were very proud to represent our leading hospice.



[keech.org.uk/refer](https://www.keech.org.uk/refer)

Did you know, from the moment you or a loved-one receives a diagnosis for which there's no cure, you can now refer yourself to Keech? We offer so much more than just end of life care. The earlier you contact us, the more we can help. We support people for free from the day they get their diagnosis.

www.keech.org.uk/refer. (See page 14 for more.)

Santa at Keech

Our Children's care team once again created wonderful memories throughout the festive season. Jennie and Rosey, (AKA the Christmas elves,) turned the summer house in our beautiful Alan Titchmarsh Wildlife Garden (see page 15,) into Santa's Grotto. They also carried out doorstep visits to deliver goodies to the children we care for.



A special bus

We attended a very special occasion at Arriva Luton where a bus dedicated to avid Luton Town Football Club fan, Rob Figgins, who we cared for, was unveiled. "Luton Town was his life and at the end of his life Keech was everything to him. Rob loved going to Keech. It was the place that in his words 'helps my living to happen'." Sara, Rob's sister.



A Year like No Other

Our latest impact report, "A year like no other" – captured the pandemic year. Have a read at www.keech.org.uk/ouryear. To say it was a rollercoaster of a year is an understatement but, thanks to our lines of communications with the NHS, the East of England hospices and our wider community, we're able to keep in step with this emergency – and sometimes even get a step ahead.



**A YEAR
LIKE NO
OTHER**
2020/21

FUNDRAISING AND RETAIL NEWS IN BRIEF

Our retail shops are lucky to have a talented workforce of dedicated volunteers who bring a wealth of knowledge covering all areas of charity retailing. Recently, our wonderful volunteer Heather, who regularly supports our Harpenden shops by sorting through jewellery donations for us, uncovered a particularly unusual but grubby looking brooch.

For some reason, the brooch caught her eye and, having spent time cleaning it, she uncovered rather precious 1920s diamonds set in a beautiful platinum casing! The brooch was valued before going to auction at Bonhams in London. It sold for a spectacular **£2,800** on auction day so a very special find indeed. Heather's treasure hunting doesn't stop there though, as she's also uncovered a 18ct gold necklace which sold for a fabulous **£1,000!**
Well done, Heather!



Heather and her find.

Are you our next Heather? If you have an eye for antiques, jewellery, vinyl, designer clothing or perhaps you'd just love to spend time talking to our customers, then we have a volunteer vacancy for you!

If you're interested in joining the team, visit www.keech.org.uk/joinme or pop in to your local Keech shop and have a chat. We'd love to meet you!

WE NEED YOUR GREAT CLUTTER!

**Turn your great clutter
into great care!**



keech.org.uk/shops

#DeclutterforKeech

Celebrity Open Garden

A real treat for the green fingered amongst us, or those who would just like to be! With incredible help from our gardening volunteers, our celebrity gardens: The Alan Titchmarsh Wildlife Garden and Adam Frost Courtyard Garden, are springing back to life. As part of the National Garden Scheme, we're opening the gardens to you twice this year. Please, do join us on **Sunday 27 March**, on what is Mother's Day, to explore the gardens, get your questions answered by our expert gardeners and enjoy tea and cake. Book your ticket at www.keech.org.uk/opengarden. (See page 15 for more.) In the meantime, if you'd would like to get involved with the garden and its brilliant team of volunteers, please visit www.keech.org.uk/volunteer and register to volunteer.



The Big Trunk Trail was Amazing!

Did you hear about The Big Trunk Trail Auction? What a night! The 38 life-size elephant sculptures which featured in our spectacular, free, outdoor public art exhibit in Luton last summer, sold for a staggering **£231,500**. Bidders battled it out for the colourful creatures at a gala event led by TV celebrity auctioneer, Charles Hanson. The highest price on the night was an astonishing **£25,000** bid by Dunstable businessman, Alan Corkhill, who amongst other trail elephants, bought Unity, the first elephant to be decorated for the Trail. We we're also delighted The Big Trunk Trail won the Community Project of the Year Award at the Luton Community Interest Awards. If you visit the hospice gardens (see page 15) look out for some of the beautiful elephants we're lucky enough to have been gifted back to us.



It's wonderful to be able to hold some of our face-to-face events again. Our Santa Run saw 465 Santas sign-up to run around Bedford's beautiful Embankment, raising over £11,500 to date. This will help so many patients and their families.

The infamous Smiley Sam and BobSleigh also took to the streets throughout December and were warmly welcomed in Luton and parts of Bedford. Thank-you to so many of you for your support over the festive period, with donations, festive lights, community and faith activities.

If you play our weekly Lottery, we've recently updated our Terms and Conditions to reflect a change in the responsible person (the person responsible for our gambling regulatory compliance). To see an updated copy, visit keech.org.uk/lottery and click on the Legal Compliance tab.

We owe you a great
debt of gratitude
Mr Keech.



DENNIS KEECH, OBE



It was with great sadness we heard the news on the 19 January 2022 that Dennis Keech OBE had died.

Dennis, age 90, was the largest benefactor of Keech Hospice Care's children's service and, along with his wife Shirley, generously donated £1 million in 1997 to begin the appeal to build a children's hospice.

At its opening in 2000, Dennis described the occasion as 'absolutely marvellous' and even laid the last roof tile himself. A fantastic moment and one we felt fitting to place on the front cover of this edition of *Keech Matters* as a tribute and thank you to all Dennis and his wife have done.

Since its beginnings, Keech Hospice Care's children's service has cared for **1,487** children and supported **2,841** of their family and

friends across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Milton Keynes.

Without Dennis' incredible generosity and lifetime of support, Keech Hospice Care would not today be able to care for seriously ill children or support their families, making the difference when it matters the most. Our children's service is Dennis' legacy and he has left the community a remarkable gift.

Thank you, Mr Keech.

"Mr Keech was a remarkable man, a very clever businessman and a passionate supporter of Keech Hospice Care. In November, he joined us at The Big Trunk Trail auction night we held, and we spoke of how far the hospice has come and how much he had enjoyed being involved in the Trail. We met regularly and he always had advice and ideas. He will be very much missed by all the staff and volunteers here at the hospice. He is irreplaceable."

Liz Searle, CEO, Keech Hospice Care.

“

Keech were a constant support when I arrived home with Macie-Ann. ”

WE SUPPORT BABIES BEFORE THEY'RE EVEN BORN.

I found out I was pregnant in April 2019 at the age of 23. There were no signs at the early scans anything was wrong.

I'll never forget the words from the nurse at my 20-week scan: "I'm just going to get a second opinion." Within 48 hours, I was being told my baby had a genetic heart condition called Unbalanced AVSD, hyperplastic left heart syndrome. It means my baby had practically no heart on the left-hand side. I was devastated.

Trying to understand

The hospital team started talking, I zoned out. The whole conversation was muffled because it's news you don't want to hear. They gave me three options: surgery after

birth, palliative care or a termination. I was nearly 24 weeks gone. I'd named my baby, why would I choose to end her life? Even if I'd found out earlier, I wouldn't have changed my decision.

Meeting Keech

I knew of Keech Hospice Care, but I just thought it was somewhere you receive "in-house" care. I couldn't have been more wrong! My baby was technically on palliative care before she was even born. Meeting Keech's specialist care team for the first time while pregnant, I knew I had everything I needed with them. They were always available over the phone or in person and they still are. Keech helped me understand exactly what was happening.



She's arrived!

Macie-Ann was born on the 7 January 2020, and, amazingly, she only needed a little bit of help when born. Her heart surgery would be in London, and we now had two weeks to make the difficult decision of whether to go or not.

Macie-Ann's father walked away when she was three days old. He couldn't deal with her diagnosis and didn't want the heartbreak. I thought "that's fine for you but I still have to be here and pick up the pieces. What am I going to do now?" I hadn't even come home. I was still in hospital.

Having the best specialist care at home

Keech was a constant support when I arrived home with Macie-Ann. The charity's amazing specialist care team visited us each week. They came to appointments with me and explained things in normal terms. It was such a comfort as I still really didn't understand what was happening.

More than that, they were someone to talk to, especially when the pandemic hit. It was amazing to have my mum and dad at home, but Keech were literally the only other people I saw. COVID-19 hit at the wrong time. If only we'd been able to visit Keech too as well as being supported in our home. We'd loved to have visited the hospice's gardens and used the hydrotherapy pool with Macie-Ann. The team would have been there to help me, and I know we'd have felt totally comfortable.

A difficult decision

The operation I had been told about couldn't go ahead. Macie-Ann's tests showed she had the same condition in her lung bronchioles as she had in the left-hand side of her heart, plus a heart murmur too. It was strange because as soon as the doctors said, "no, we can't do it," I felt a moment of relief. I wasn't going to have to make the decision. At that point, we came to terms with what was going to happen. We knew Macie-Ann would die.

Keech was there when I needed it the most.

Every day I woke up to hear Macie-Ann crying, I thought "I'm blessed. This is one more day I have with her."

One morning, I didn't wake until 8am and instantly knew something was wrong, as Macie-Ann had normally woken by then for a feed. I went straight over to her and found she wasn't breathing but she was still warm. I left Dad upstairs to get my thoughts together: who did I need to phone? My mum was so shocked with how calm I was. I had to stay calm, calm enough to make that phone call.

The Keech team were the first people I phoned. As soon as I ended the call and started to go back upstairs, that is when I broke. I lifted Macie-Ann out of the Moses basket and just sat with her on the floor with her in my arms and cried. Keech came over straight away and we gave Macie-Ann a bath together. To have Keech's specialist nurses there was a huge support as we'd built such a strong relationship over the weeks.

Reflecting 18 months on

It's been so difficult; I'm slowly getting there but our lives will never go back to normal. Macie-Ann was a miracle. She proved everyone wrong by living to 15 weeks and I'm so glad we had that time.

Keech's specialist care team has had a huge effect on me. I literally don't know where I'd be without them, and I will fundraise for Keech until the day I die. I urge anybody, if you can support them in anyway, please do. I never knew I would need them.

If you would like to help us care for more families like Katy-Ann and her daughter, Macie-Ann, we would be grateful for your support: www.keech.org.uk/donate.

Or why not sign up to one of our fantastic events? www.keech.org.uk/whatson.



“Keech's specialist care team has had a huge effect on me.”

What a difference a play makes!

Here at Keech, we're all about making memories through play for the children we care for.

We're firm believers play should be in every child's life, no matter what their diagnosis or health needs. The pandemic has seen us adapt our play, activities and events service both in the community and at the hospice for now but also the future.

When the pandemic hit, our play service team adapted and evolved our traditional ways to play. After a bit of creative thinking, along came everything from garden visits, Zoom cooking, and our very own Santa's grotto in the hospice gardens!



“

If we go to public play areas, we're always stared at. Play and activity time with Keech is a real comfort blanket as everyone is in the same situation as us and completely understands. These events are a real highlight for our family. We love seeing the joy that Rhys gets from learning whilst he plays and his sister Cerys, gets to join in too and do normal things with her brother. The fact we now have a choice between visiting the hospice or going to sessions in the community, like the farm we went to recently, is great as it gives us more opportunities to play in the safe environment Keech create.

Stacey, Rhys' mum.

”

“

We absolutely love working with children and seeing them have fun just being a child. Our play programmes help the children we care for develop, find coping mechanisms for their feelings, and above, all make memories. In addition, parents can have a safe space to see their child just be a child and be with other families who are in a similar situation. We're so proud that our new ways to play have helped us reach more families and created greater choice of activities for our children.

”

Jennie, Hannah and Rosey, Children's Services Team.

The healing power of talking

The death of a loved-one is painful and difficult, but did you know support is only a phone call away?

Be it due to COVID, an illness or maybe an accident, whatever the circumstance, Keech's Bereavement Outreach Service, run by our friendly bereavement team, supports people from Luton and Bedfordshire from the day they're bereaved for as long as they need us by simply talking.

“It is an absolute honour to support people through their grief through the power of conversation. Many people find it easier to talk to a stranger, and our conversations are driven by whatever each person wants to discuss.

Whether people prefer to talk on the phone or over Zoom, I help people whose loved-one has died understand what to expect, know that how they're feeling is completely normal, find their coping mechanisms and, above all, let them know that this will pass.” Julie, Talking Therapist at Keech Hospice Care.



Call. Don't hesitate:

0800 0353 011

Jade *did* give us a ring.

“I came to Keech after losing my dad suddenly to cancer. I was lost on how to feel and really struggled to cope with his passing. Working with Julie at Keech has really helped me. Every session was at my own pace, and I felt I was in a safe place to talk through my emotions. I'll soon be coming to the end of my sessions and feel in a much better place about my dad's passing, which would not have been the case without Keech's support. I can't recommend the service enough. I miss my dad terribly, but I can now focus on all the loving memories I have of him rather than the pain of his passing.”

Write your Will for FREE

Did you know, it was a gift in a Will which provided some of the first funding to establish Keech Hospice Care? Fast-forward to today, and 1 in 7 of our patients are cared for thanks to thoughtful people who remember the hospice in this way.

Writing your Will is easier than you might think.
It's FREE and just a click of a mouse away!

We've teamed up with Bequeathed to help you make your Will for Good, online from the comfort of your own home - and often in less time than you think. Plus, you'll also get up to 30-minutes expertise from an accredited legal firm.

Get started today!

Getting started is easy. Type www.bequeathed.org/p/keech into your browser and you'll be guided step by step through the process.

It's a free service and there's no obligation to include a gift to support our care. However, by leaving a gift in your Will today to Keech, you'll be ensuring we're here to provide free, specialist care and support to seriously ill adults and children, and their families and helping to ensure we can continue making the difference when it matters the most.

We hope it's something you might consider.

If you would like to know more about leaving a gift in your Will to Keech Hospice Care, please contact us on **01582 707940**, email letmehelp@keech.org.uk or visit our website at keech.org.uk/giftsinwills.

It's much more than cancer and end of life.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Hospices are only for cancer patients and the final few days of life?

FALSE!

Not true! It's a myth!
FAKE NEWS ALERT!

At Keech, from the day a person's told they've got a life-limiting illness for which there's no cure, we can be there for free - and you can even refer yourself!

keech.org.uk/refer



Liver disease is more common than you might think. We noticed patients with the illness had very limited access to palliative care services and support, so our teams worked with local hospitals to create 'thinking ahead clinics' to support patients with liver disease.



Patients like Foziya, whose daughter Houda says the clinics are taking away the stress.

“When my mum was diagnosed with liver disease, we were made to feel that was it: nothing could be done. We were nervous about coming to the hospice, but we had no need to be. The nurses explained that Mum would now have continued support from a specialist nurse and helped me understand mum's condition and what care was needed.

Hospital visits with mum were very stressful as she was often very upset. Visiting Keech, she is comfortable and happy. There is

always someone there to look after her, which is very reassuring when Mum doesn't speak English.

It's not just about our appointments and Mum's condition at Keech's liver clinic - the team look after her entire wellbeing. She has had access to all the charity's Wellbeing Centre services, so as well as routine blood tests, she's had physiotherapy sessions in Keech's air-conditioned gym and is checked over by the doctor if she isn't feeling well. It's more than a clinic, it's like having our own extended family.”

Keech's liver clinics provide care and support which is individual to patients needs.
For support, get in touch at www.keech.org.uk/refer or call **0808 180 7788**.

EVENTS 2022

**COLOUR
DASH**
FAMILY FUN 5K

SUNDAY 17 JULY

[keech.org.uk/colouredash](https://www.keech.org.uk/colouredash)

Enter discount code **COLOUR** at checkout and get **25% off all Colour Dash tickets.**

CELEBRITY OPEN GARDEN

SUNDAY 27 MARCH at Keech Hospice Care

Explore our Alan Titchmarsh Wildlife Garden and Adam Frost Courtyard Garden

BOOK NOW: [keech.org.uk/opengarden](https://www.keech.org.uk/opengarden)

TAKE ON THE CHALLENGE

Fundraise for Keech Hospice Care

www.keech.org.uk/whatson