

Odd socks, bracelets and a ski challenge for Gresham's pupils supporting WSDS



The Gresham's community has been raising awareness of Down Syndrome with renewed vigour, joining people around the world in wearing #LotsOfSocks as part of Down Syndrome International's global campaign, and doing much more besides, including raising an estimated £3,000 for the charity.



Wednesday 21 March was World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) and the Gresham's community raised awareness of Down Syndrome with renewed vigour, joining people around the world in wearing #LotsOfSocks as part of Down Syndrome International's global campaign, and doing much more besides, including raising an estimated £3,000 for the charity.

Dr Eva Edwards, mother of Year 4 pupil Lucas who has Down Syndrome, decided in the autumn (when Lucas turned 10) to do something slightly different to celebrate Lucas and raise awareness of Down Syndrome. Having decided to make and sell bracelets to raise funds, Dr Edwards came across Year 10 pupil Iria C. selling bracelets that she had been making for a few years at the school's Christmas Fair. Iria and her mother Clare met with Dr Edwards to determine the design of a new range of bracelets, each one unique, yet unified by a common element – a small tag featuring on one side the numbers 47 and 46, to highlight the number of chromosomes that people with and without Down Syndrome have. The words 'I am' would feature on the other side.

Dr Edwards explained: "Lucas answers many questions with the simple words 'I am' (as he thinks that this, along with 'I can' and 'yes of course', covers most situations well enough) and says 'I am who I am and just love being me'. To us, these words really sum up our celebration of Lucas's positive outlook on life, and so our #amLucas47 campaign and the bracelets with the words 'I am' are about encouraging everyone to take their unique place in the world, to accept everyone's differences, to always look for the very best in themselves and others, and let all that is especially special surface and shine brightly."

Pupils were invited over a series of consecutive Saturdays during 'hobby time' to meet Dr Edwards and Lucas and, with the support of Iria, Clare and Diane – Lucas' oldest sister and Year 10 pupil at Gresham's – to make the bracelets. With an overwhelming 60 pupils aged 14 to 18 keen to participate on each occasion, 600 unique bracelets were made. 600 bracelets have already sold, to pupils at the school and their families, the Edwards' friends and family, local members of the community who have seen the bracelets on sale in Holt, and as far afield as Brazil, New Zealand and the United States, as well as a number of European countries, and approximately £3,000 has been raised for Down Syndrome International.

Dr Edwards said: "We wanted to do even more to celebrate all of Lucas's achievements to date. When he was born we didn't know what to expect but, as he is half Swedish, he has been skiing since he was two and, for the past five years, has been taught by Aurelien, a wonderful instructor at the École du Ski Français. With the support of Aurelien and ESF, which closed a run in the Three Valleys resort for the occasion, Lucas took on a personal ski challenge on Wednesday 21 March, with slalom, off-piste and speed skiing. Lucas and all of the ESF team wore odd socks as gloves to raise awareness on the slopes too, and the bracelets are on sale in the resort. One of the highlights of the day was, quite coincidentally, when Lucas saw five Dutch adult skiers, who also have Down Syndrome. Lucas doesn't often see other people who have Down Syndrome and he quite happily recognised something about them and said 'Mama, they are like me!'"



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