

Speech support is Andrew's aim

Thursday 3 February 2011



Andrew Mossman, who wants to set up a support group for people with speech problems

Published on Wed Feb 02 17:36:30 GMT 2011

THERE may soon be more support for people who have speech problems in the upper Calder Valley.

Hebden Bridge resident Andrew Mossman, who has had a stammer since early childhood, is determined to let people who have similar problems know that they are not alone and would like to set up a support group.

The issue of stammering has become topical with the recent success of the film "The King's Speech" and in particular the Golden Globe Award-winning performance of Colin Firth as King George VI.

Andrew hopes that Firth's performance will be an insight for non-stammerers in to how frustrating life can be for stammerers, but, more importantly, it will also encourage sufferers to seek help and stop suffering in silence.

"Colin Firth's performance is superb; he gives an accurate portrayal of a stammerer as he shows the frustration and how hard it is to express yourself when you stammer," he said. "Talking is a drain for stammerers and Colin Firth really portrays that really well."

Andrew's own stammer started when he was four. He saw a woman on fire being carried from her burning home and it shocked him so much that he had nightmares for months. He believes that is what "triggered it off".

All the way through school he was bullied because of his stammer but would always put his hand up, although other sufferers often go into their shells and won't speak.

He had tried all sorts of therapies to help improve his speech, but it wasn't until enrolling on the Starfish Project, which uses similar methods to those of Lionel Logue - the therapist featured in The King's Speech - that he had any great success.

Andrew, who has just turned 49, said: "When I was younger I'd tried everything, including hypnosis, but nothing seemed to work. But then in 2008 I went on the Starfish Programme, run by Anne Blight, and it's been brilliant.

"It teaches you to control your speech through costal breathing. I now run a support group in Preston for people who have attended the programme.

"Since learning to control my speech, things have changed for me radically. I met my now fiancée Angie Guy and feel more confident in myself.

"But I want to help others if I can and if anyone has any questions or is interested in establishing a support group in the Hebden Bridge area, they can contact me by emailing andrewjm00-starfish@yahoo.co.uk or by telephoning 07976 269621."

I HAS your life been affected by speech problems? Email us your comments to todnews@todmodennews.co.uk or hbtimes@hebdenbridgetimes.co.uk