

Mid Staffordshire Edition

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Council service scoops award

Staffordshire County Council has been presented with an award for an innovative environmentally friendly project.

It received the Green Heroes 2008 Wall Shield in recognition of its information technology service because of its commitment to energy saving, efficiency and for disposing of equipment in a responsible way.

The Green Heroes Shields are awarded to councils, companies and communities which carry out projects which enhance the environment and also demonstrate a commitment to sharing their expertise.

As a result of receiving the award, the project will now be featured in the Green

FBLG

Throat therapy helps ex-teacher

A Staffordshire woman has helped to transform the life of a retired teacher by helping her to eat normally again.

Glens Watkins, 64, who lives near Rhyl, in North Wales, was treated with Vital Stim therapy after a brain injury left her unable to swallow.

She said that as a result of the treatment she had got her life back again, as she can now eat and drink independently instead of being fed through a nasal gastric tube.

Mrs Watkins received treatment from speech and language therapist Sumathi Sinnappan, who operates out of the Gateways practice near her home in Wildwood, Stafford.

The treatment started in August 2007 and after just 17 one-hour ses-



Therapist Sumathi Sinnappan treating pensioner Glens Watkins with Vital Stim to help her swallow

Report by Chris Gorman
sions, given over ten days, the mother-of-one was able to eat and drink normally again.

The former history and special needs teacher had a crippling fall at home, and faced being fed through a tube for the rest of her life.

Mrs Watkins is now able to enjoy her favourite foods like spaghetti Bolognese and chips as well as cake and biscuits after regaining her ability to swallow.

"It's brought my life back again, I feel normal again," she said. "I don't go out a lot but now I can go out for a meal, eat and drink in company, and it's made family life so much better."

Miss Sinnappan says Vital Stim could also offer a breakthrough for up to 1.6 million people in the UK who have problems swallowing and it could save the NHS millions of pounds a year in care costs.

The technique treats the loss of swallowing function, called dysphagia, which is common in brain conditions including stroke, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's and cerebral palsy. It uses small electrical pulses to stimulate the swallowing muscles and retrain them.

The treatment is not currently available to NHS patients but has been a standard treatment for the disorder in the US for more than 10 years.

Miss Sinnappan said: "This treatment could be a life-saver."

Developers' money well received

Schemes

Park is given spring clean



Express & Star, Friday, Mar

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