



# Maidstone & Malling Carers Project

## Newsletter Mental Health August 2011



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Hi and welcome to my latest newsletter. Hope you are enjoying the longer evenings, and the sunshine (as and when it pops out from behind the clouds!).

Talking about the warmer months now is the time to approach Maidstone and Malling Carers to see if you are eligible to apply for up to £350.00 to enjoy something that appeals to you. It could be a yearly gym membership, horse riding lessons, or even a new pair of walking boots if you like a bit of hiking. The fund is there to allow you to have that break that fits around your life and your schedule. Some carers have used it for a holiday abroad or in this country. Others have used it to pursue hobbies e.g. golf and cricket. Please note that you can apply to the fund even if the person you care for is under the care of GP only, they do not have to necessarily be under the care of a mental health team. If you would like more information please give me a ring on 01622 685276 or email [maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk](mailto:maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk)

As we didn't manage to get away on a trip during Carers Week I have booked the bus for Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> October for a group outing. Carers have identified that they would like to go to Chartwell (former home of Winston Churchill) – if this appeals to you please let me know. Seats on the bus are limited so it will be on a first come first served basis.

Terry Last (Care Manager Assistant (CMA) for Carers – now retired) has asked me to pass on his thanks for the lovely retirement card and gift card – he said that working with the carers is something he will miss but intends to keep in touch and “no doubt will ‘bump’ into people in the town”. There is a temporary CMA for carers based at the Pagoda (Michelle Page). Referral for assessment is via the Care Co-ordinator of the cared for person, so you could approach them to request an assessment. Alternatively please contact me and I can approach Social Services direct, by letter, to request a carers assessment for you.

Another reminder that if you have an email address and would like to receive the newsletter electronically please let me know, (it does cut down our costs). Also if any of your details have changed, or you are no longer caring and would like to come off the database as above contact us on 01622 685276 or email [carers@vam-online.org.uk](mailto:carers@vam-online.org.uk) - thanks.

Hope you all manage to get a little bit of sunshine over the coming weeks.

*Maureen*

## Summer is here and it is time to apply to the Carers Break Fund for that well earned rest or activity holiday whatever takes your fancy

The Fund is now rapidly being used up so come forward as soon as possible. The maximum amount in any one financial year (1.4.11 – 31.3.12) per carer is £350.00.

We will be getting another payment towards the middle of October, 2011, but if you would like to apply for something sooner waste no time!!

Life has been very hectic organising all sorts of breaks and activities for carers, and from the feedback I have got this Fund is a 'lifeline' to all.

Below are some examples of breaks accessed

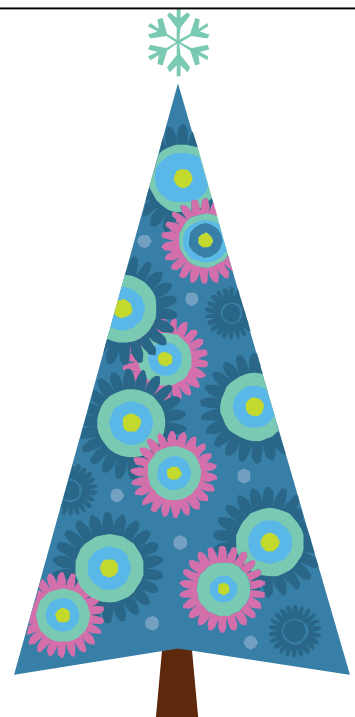
- A one night stay in London and a show
- Contribution towards a yearly membership for cricket
- Site fees for a caravan in the South of France and The New Forest in Hampshire
- Contribution towards flight fares to Italy to see family
- A days sightseeing in London and snack
- A weeks stay at Butlins Bogner Regis
- A weeks stay at Newquay
- A two night stay in a Windmill hotel in Rye
- Coach holiday to Great Yarmouth
- Carer to have a round of golf when time allows
- Day trip to London Zoo
- Return Flights to Madrid in Spain
- Accommodation and a golf tournament in The Wirrall
- 3 night stay at Premier Inn, Poole
- 3 night stay in hotel in Isle of Wight



And so the list goes on and on ..... as always, don't be shy email [maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk](mailto:maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk) or ring 01622 685276. Talk to you soon!

I hate to mention this in August when you probably haven't even had your summer break but I need to know if you would be interested in joining me and other carers for our Christmas lunch which will again be held at The Grangemoor Hotel just off the Tonbridge Road in Maidstone. Following discussion with other carers it was generally agreed that a lunchtime meal was preferred as the weather may deteriorate in the evening, and some of the carers did not want to come out in the dark evenings. When I contacted the Grangemoor believe it or not they are well booked up already, but I have managed to do a party booking for 12.30 on Friday 2nd December. Please let me know if you would like to come along, I do not have the cost or menu at the present time, but if you would like to put your name down provisionally I will forward these details onto you at a later date. Don't forget if you are eligible the Carers Break Fund can cover the cost of your Christmas dinner. Please note The Grangemoor can cater for special dietary needs.

Email [maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk](mailto:maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk) or telephone 01622 685276.



### [Would you like to do a presentation for the Trust Board Meeting?](#)

On your experiences of Mental Health Services in Kent or Medway? If so contact me on 01622 685276 or email [maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk](mailto:maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk) I will let you have the paperwork to apply.

### [Do you care for somebody with a Personality Disorder/Borderline Personality Disorder](#)

There is now a web site exclusively devoted to this area of mental health.

Login on [www.emergenceplus.org.uk](http://www.emergenceplus.org.uk) there is a specific page for carers. If you do not have access to a computer you are welcomed to access it via Maidstone & Malling Carers Project.

### [NHS Stressline](#)

This service provides support and advice if you are struggling at the hands of the recession— the Stressline is staffed by trained health advisors

**Call on 0300 123 2000. The service is open daily between 8 a.m and 10 p.m**

### [Carers Direct](#)

Carers Direct (NHS) is a practical and comprehensive information, advice and support service for carers. You can call free on 0808 802 0202 7 days a week 8 a.m until 9 p.m Monday to Friday 11 a.m until 4 p.m weekends and bank holidays. Please note the costs from a mobile phone may vary. This helpline is for all unpaid carers and not exclusively for those carers caring for someone with a mental health problem. You can visit their website on [www.nhs.uk/carersdirect](http://www.nhs.uk/carersdirect) for more details.

## SUPPORT GROUP DATES 2011

**30th August    27th Sept    25th Oct    29th Nov**  
**No meeting in December due to Christmas break**

Many thanks to Katie Bell who spoke to the carers on the 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2011. Katie's expertise is in personal budgets and brokerage. There is provisional date for Katie to return for an update on the above subjects on the 27<sup>th</sup> September. I do have a guide that Katie left with me on Personal Budgets and Support Brokers, if anyone who like to borrow it email [maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk](mailto:maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk) or telephone 01622 685276.

At the meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> July we welcomed Claire Trumper, from Maidstone Library, who spoke about the exciting new facility which is being due to be opened in James Whatman Way, Maidstone. Claire is happy to take a group of carers round and 'show off' the new library and give details of all the services it can offer the community. As there is still some time to go before completion I will give a gentle reminder in the next newsletter if this interests you. Thanks to Claire.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> October Glen Miles from ASB Law will be attending the group to talk about various aspects of the law in regard to finance, if there is a specific area you would like more clarification on e.g. Will making/Power of Attorney, please let me know.

**Please note the group meetings run from 11.00 through to 12.30. It is an informal group where you can meet other carers and catch up on all the news. It is held in the lounge area in Kingswood Mental Health Centre Union Street Maidstone. Email [maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk](mailto:maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk) or telephone 01622 685276.**





# Maidstone Bipolar (Manic Depression) Self Help Group

The illness involves major emotional 'highs' (mania) and 'lows' (depression).

The monthly meetings of the group aim to be safe and confidential, offering the chance to meet with others, share experiences, find out more about bipolar, and aim to increase coping strategies for living with bipolar.

**Location: Kingswood Community Health Centre, Union Street, ME14 1EY**

**When: We usually meet on the second Monday of every month from 7pm – 9.30pm.**

The group is for anyone with Bipolar Disorder (Manic Depression), and their informal carers, family-members, partners and friends. Donations for tea & coffee welcomed.

**For more information about the group**

**telephone: 0845 434 9833 or email:**

**[groupdevelopment@mdf.org.uk](mailto:groupdevelopment@mdf.org.uk)**

For information on the various services of *MDF The Bipolar Organisation* please call 01270 230260 or visit [www.mdf.org.uk](http://www.mdf.org.uk)



## Local Planning and Monitoring Group (LPMG)

The Local Planning and Monitoring Group is a group for your concerns to be heard and attendance by carers at the Joint Commissioning Board (JCB) is also welcomed if there is a pressing issue. The JCB 'buy' in the mental health services so it is an opportunity for you to share with them any areas of where you feel mental health services are inadequate.

The last meeting was on the 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2011. It was chaired by Neil Bunker of Platform. The meeting was lively and informative, subjects covered included the service redesign, (Pagoda is now the Access Team and Kingswood the Recovery Team). The redesign began on the 1<sup>st</sup> June and is experiencing some problems, the main problem identified by the Team Leader at The Pagoda was the actual volume of work in conjunction with poor staffing levels. However optimism was good and the attendees at the Group agreed it was early days. With the service redesign taking place and emphasis on the Recovery Model many service users had been assessed and then agreed discharged took place from the mental health teams back into Primary Care (i.e. the G.P). A large majority of service users expressed their concerns over the lack of support in this transitional period from secondary care (the mental health teams) back to primary care (their GP). Neil spoke of this issue and has produced an interesting piece of work of the thoughts/feelings of the service users who took part in this exercise. This issue remains an ongoing area of concern at the Local Planning & Monitoring Group. Neil also spent time with service users listening to their ideas of how the LPMG could be more 'user and carer friendly'. Neil produced a resume of the service users suggestions. If you would like to see any of the minutes of the meeting, or Neil's document let me know and I will forward to you.

**The next meeting is on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September at Kingswood Mental Health Centre between 10.15 (starting at 10.30) until 12.30.** I am planning to attend and always welcome your company. If there are any pressing issues you have at the moment and you cannot attend please let me know and I will raise them for you.

Some time ago a few carers identified the lack of service for adults with Aspergers/mental health problems. This led to an **Aspergers Day on the 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2011** which was well attended. The following is the thoughts on the day from one of the carers who attended

*'today I attended Aspergers Day in Maidstone .... it was arranged by Sevenoaks MIND. It was well attended by over 50 people, there were carers/professionals and aspergers people themselves present.*

*We were welcomed by Jill Roberts of MIND then a wonderful talk was given by Francis Harvey Clinical Psychologist for Kent and Medway Partnership Trust .. he was clear and concise ... it was so nice to hear from a psychologist who understands ...we then heard from Jo Blamire, Family Support Worker from Kent Autistic Trust (KAT)..her talk was called A Carers Perspective ... we then heard from Des Walker another Family Support Worker from KAT .. Des works with over 16years old aspergers people and their carers or partners, his talk was called What help and support is there for Carers and people with Aspergers (Adults) ...he talked about the groups he runs all over Kent for carers and young people, also discussed benefits and sheltered housing, also the emotional support his and other groups supply after the diagnosis, as at present these services are not supplied by mental health services in Kent, unless the person is mentally ill too.*

*After lunch we were asked to Brainstorm and come up with some questions that we could put to experts, if we had a magic wand and a wish what it would be granted would make our or our loved ones life better... here are some of the questions*

*Continued on next page*

*When will the Trust be able to offer couple counselling where one has Aspergers? ..at present you only have relate offering this valuable service at a great cost to the couple ...it was pointed out by a Carer that the Trust would save money in long run, divorce often lead to Asperger person having complete breakdown...another issue raised was why can't the Trust arrange assessment and diagnosis or CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) locally for Aspergers people at present its at The Maudsley in London or privately ... one group wanted more info on what is available locally after diagnosis, i.e. support groups/ counselling, it was felt people are not given anything by doctors, all people should be referred onto groups.....another wanted more education for main stream teachers.....lots of people raised issue of diagnosis on NHS they complained they were not interviewed separately from their child or loved one, also took weeks and several agencies to get diagnosis and all you got at the end was one word diagnosis, no follow up, no advice, should follow private route ...then the question was raised is Aspergers under Adult Services/Learning Disability or Mental Health SEEMED THE PROFESSIONALS WERE IN A MUDDLE OVER THAT ONE???? ..... Francis Harvey and Des Walker tried to answer each question as best as they could .....Well it was a long meeting and a first, in over 10 years as a carer for an aspergers family that I have seen a whole day devoted to aspergers and first time ever we have had sensible input from local trust about aspergers syndrome.....so thank you to MIND and Kent Autistic Trust (Jo and Des) and a very big thank you to Francis Harvey ....at last we have someone who is on our side and who cares.'*

Thank you to Mrs. X for sharing the above with us. All carers mentioned that felt the Day was a success and await a follow up meeting to discuss the issues raised and if there were any plans to provide more services for those people with aspergers/mental health problems and their carers. Just a thought to bear in mind this could be taken to the Joint Commissioning Board by a Carer as an agenda item – let me have your thoughts.

### **Patient Consultative Committee (PCC)**

The last meeting was on the 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2011. There were two speakers - Sara Hitchinson, Rethink Community Development Worker, talking about the Trust's new Community Engagement Strategy and Roger Davies, Consultant Psychotherapist, Head of Psychotherapy at the Brenchley Unit talking about this service for people with Personality Disorders. If any other the above subjects are of interest let me know and I will forward the minutes to you.

The PCC is an opportunity for you, the carer, to come along to the meeting and work in partnership with the Trust – the next meeting is planned for Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September at Kingswood Mental Health Centre starting at 11.00 a.m. If you would like to go contact Lois Derham on 0800 587 6757 or give me a ring as I plan to attend - I can meet you there or here at the Support Centre in Marsham Street.

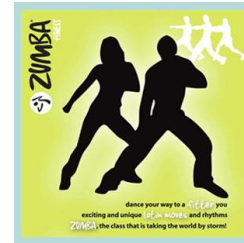
### **Kent Carers Emergency Card**

If you have changed address, phone number or your nominated emergency contacts need to be changed please let Jane know straight away just in case that emergency actually happens!

If you haven't joined the emergency card scheme yet, ring Jane for a form or to find out more. It's easy to do and will give you peace of mind that should anything happen to you while you are away from the person you care for, that a pre-arranged emergency plan can be put into action.



**Ring Jane Thomas on 01622 685276**



### [The Zumba group has moved to an exciting new venue!](#)

Thanks to the generosity of the Liquid Nightclub in Lockmeadow we can now enjoy dancing in luxury with a great atmosphere and sound system. Zumba incorporates various Latin American dances with additional exercise movements. It's fast, it's fun and will tone up those muscles as well as lifting the spirits!  
Every Thursday afternoon from 3-4pm Call 01622 685276

### [Walking Group](#)

Would you like to take some exercise, meet friendly people and see more of the countryside? Have a picnic, lunch in a pub or café and a chat and some laughter?

If so then come and join Maidstone and Malling Carers Project Walking Group. The group meets on the last Monday of the month in the morning and goes on different walks around the countryside of Maidstone, after the walk there is the opportunity to have a picnic together if the weather is fine or lunch in a pub or café. This year so far we have walked around Loose, Vinters Valley Nature Reserve, Mote Park and Bearsted. Please don't worry if you don't know anybody else you will be made very welcome.

Please contact **Jane Thomas on 01622 685276** or by email at [jane.thomas@vam-online.org.uk](mailto:jane.thomas@vam-online.org.uk) for further information, I will be very pleased to hear from you.

### [The Book Club](#)

This group meets once a month at Maidstone Community Support Centre from 10 - 11.30am and would welcome new members. Last month's book review: **Inheritance by Nicholas Shakespeare**

*"Andy Larkham is late. He is due at the funeral of his favourite school teacher, who once told him: "its hard work being anyone". Its especially hard for Andy – stuck in a dead-end job, terminally short of cash and with a fiancé who is about to ditch him. When the funeral leads to unexpected consequences Andy has to ask himself: how far will he go to change his life."*

This author was new to all of us as a writer of fiction. One member described it as fantastic; so much so that she read it in one go and paid the price with a sore back! Others found it boring or far-fetched. We all agreed that there was a heck of a lot going on with several stories layered through the book and while that appealed to some, I made it hard work for others. As usual we had really helpful insights from our members – an understanding of the potential and practicalities of mining iron ore in Australia, an explanation of where Armenia was in the world and a knowledge of the real-life philosophers whose works were 'discussed' by one of the characters who was a publisher of self-help books. We each gave the book a score out of 10. There were 2 x 9s and one 10. The average comes to 7.66! Bridget Overton 10 May 2011



Check out their extensive book list on our website  
[www.vam-online.org.uk/carersproject.asp](http://www.vam-online.org.uk/carersproject.asp)

### Carers and returning to paid work

Are you wishing to return to work after being a full time carer, or would you like to find out what opportunities there are to balance your caring role alongside some paid work?

If the answer is yes then let us know. If there is enough interest we could host a special 'Work Preparation Event' presented by Jobcentre Plus and Pinnacle Training. It would provide you with an opportunity to find out about what training and support is on offer at Jobcentre Plus; explore the skills you have developed as a carer and how these transfer to the workplace, and learn about what in-work benefits are available to support you back to work.



Please get in touch if interested. Call us on **01622 685276**

### New Computer Club for carers

Beginning Wednesday 7th September 11am—12.30pm

The club will meet once a month here at MCSC on the first Wednesday of each month. Open to all abilities and those totally new to computers who want to learn and gain confidence. You can bring your own laptop if you have one.

Topics to include:

- Emailing
- Internet
- Desktop publishing (making cards etc)
- Facebook
- Troubleshooting



If you are interested please call 01622 685276 and speak to any of the team or if you can (and want to) email Christine [smiffies.galatea@googlemail.com](mailto:smiffies.galatea@googlemail.com)

### Support Group for Carers/Significant others of people who misuse Drugs and Alcohol

**Is someone else's Drug or Alcohol use affecting your life?**

**Would you like some support?**

Maidstone and Malling Carers Project now hold a Support Group for people who are affected by someone else's drug or alcohol misuse. The group meets twice a month from 6pm—8pm and provides support, guidance and information with input from professionals who work with people who misuse substances (KCA, Kenward Trust and Turning Point)

The support group is confidential and held at Maidstone Community Support Centre, 39-48 Marsham St, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1HH. Please contact Jane Thomas at Maidstone and Malling Carers Project on **01622 685276** or by email [jane.thomas@vam-online.org.uk](mailto:jane.thomas@vam-online.org.uk) for further details.



### Elayne Oxley, Carer Support Worker

Some of you will already be aware that there has been a Pilot Project running for a year providing better NHS Support to Carers. This is now continuing as a Carer Service across West Kent. My work is around the GP side of the NHS, with surgeries throughout Maidstone and Malling, and I am now part of Maidstone & Malling Carers Project. My colleague Jane Pantony, some of you may have also come across, is assigned to Maidstone Hospital, and will be there to support you if someone you care for has been admitted, and you would like to access her part of the service.



If you are providing help and support to a relative, partner, friend or neighbour who cannot manage because of disability, addiction, illness or frailty then it will probably be of benefit to you to register with your GP as a carer.

Many Carers have their own health problems, sometimes caused or added to by the physical and emotional demands of their caring role.

Possible benefits and services for you at your Practice include:

- Health and welfare checks
- Recognition and validation as a carer
- Staff awareness of your caring role, enabling them to be more sympathetic to your situation and they maybe able to offer more flexible/convenient appointments or home visits.
- Flu vaccinations
- Support group

When registering as a Carer at the Practice they will be more aware of your needs and can offer you a more personalised service.

If you would like more information, a home visit or to pop in and talk to me at Marsham Street or your GP practice, then please contact me on:

**Telephone: 01622 230729 or my work mobile number 07581 548911**

### Fond Farewells to



Tony Peploe (NHS Patient Advisory Liaison Service) who was based in Maidstone Hospital retired in June 2011

Marion Saumtally (Community Mental Health Nurse) based at Kingswood Mental Health Recovery Team retires on the 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2011.

And our very own Christine Smith who retired on the 29<sup>th</sup> July, but Chris is planning to return on a voluntary basis to run computer classes (see previous page).

We wish them all a very long, happy and healthy retirement, their input and knowledge will be greatly missed by the staff at the Project and I am sure by many of the carers who have received a service from them in the past.

**Please note my last working day in the office this month will be Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> August I will not be back until the 30<sup>th</sup> August. Please still feel free to contact us, if you need support, as one of my colleagues, Barbara, Jane Thomas, Jane Pantony or Elayne will be able to assist you.**

## USEFUL NUMBERS

Apologies for the incorrect information given on my last newsletter reference the Hearing Voices Network. Thank you to the carer who informed me of this error. The details below were given to me by Hearing Voices network very recently.

### HEARING VOICES NETWORK

10.00pm – 3.00pm Monday—Wednesday

**Telephone Helpline 0114 271 8210**

If voicemail, leave your details and someone will get back to you ASAP.  
 Www.hearing-voices.org nhvn@hotmail.co.uk

**If you require immediate emotional support please contact;  
 The Samaritans on 08457 909090 or Saneline on 08457 678000**



### Need confidential emotional support?

People feeling distressed, anxious, or down, are able to call the Mental Health Matters helpline

**24 hours a day, 365 days a year**

or chat with a counsellor by email at  
[timeonline@mentalhealthmatters.co.uk](mailto:timeonline@mentalhealthmatters.co.uk)

**Help us raise funds for our carers**

**Maidstone  
& Malling  
Carers Project**

Simply by visiting

**easyfundraising**

[.org.uk /causes/carersproject](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/carersproject)

**FIRST**— before buying goods, booking a holiday, doing your on-line supermarket shopping or ordering your Wiltshire Farm foods. You can even bid on Ebay and earn us money without it costing you a penny. Over 2000 retailers listed

**You can also raise money for us while you search the internet  
 Remember: every penny raised will go towards supporting carers**

Sign up at: [www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/carersproject](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/carersproject)

**And start making a difference..simply by shopping!**

**Change your home page or search the internet using: [carersproject.easysearch.org.uk](http://carersproject.easysearch.org.uk)  
 and we will earn money every time you use it and start making a difference..  
 simply by shopping!**

## OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS

**Pagoda Mental Health Team  
(Now the Access Team) 01622 724200**

**Kingswood Mental Health Team  
(Now the Recovery Team) 01622 766900**

**The above teams are available during office hours on a Monday to Friday basis.**

**In the case of an emergency contact**

<b>Priority House</b>	<b>01622 725000</b>
<b>Or Kent &amp; Medway Social Services</b>	
<b>Out of Hours Service</b>	<b>0845 762 6777</b>
<b>Or Emergency Services</b>	<b>(999)</b>
<b>Or The Police if the situation is threatening/or deteriorating rapidly</b>	<b>(999)</b>

**Other useful numbers if you would like somebody to talk to**

<b>SAMARITANS</b>	<b>08457 90 91 02</b>
<b>(24 hours a day 365 days a year)</b>	

<b>SANELINE—</b>	<b>0845 767 8000</b>
<b>(1pm—11pm daily)</b>	
<b>MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS</b>	<b>0800 107 0160</b>
<b>Maureen Belcher—Carer Support Worker</b>	<b>01622 685276</b>



# FAMILY FUN DAY

**SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 3RD**



**BBQ**  
**PRIZES**  
**LUCKY  
DIP**

**FREE  
ENTRY**

**DOG  
AGILITY**  
**BOUNCY  
CASTLE**  
**KENT FIRE  
DISPLAYS**  
**FACE  
PAINTING**

**1PM - 4PM**  
**KENWARD TRUST, KENWARD ROAD,  
YALDING, KENT, ME18 6AH**

**KENWARD TRUST**



**ALCOHOL  
FREE  
SITE**