

Ronnie Corbett steps in to help Norwood raise £2.7 million

17 November 2009

Norwood's Annual Dinner proved to be a truly a life-changing event for all involved, raising an amazing £2.7 million. Comedy legend **Ronnie Corbett**, who gallantly stepped in to fill **Bruce Forsyth's** shoes after he was taken ill with flu, headlined the entertainment bill for the 1,200 guests at what was the Charity's largest ever fundraising event. The money raised from the Dinner, which was held on Monday 16 November, will help Norwood to change the lives of thousands of people with learning disabilities and children and families in need.

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The Annual Dinner was also the perfect platform for the Charity to launch its new **Change a life** campaign. Change a life was the theme which ran through the evening and celebrities gave their support both in person and on camera.

Guests were shown a film featuring messages from singers **Chaka Khan**, **Anastacia** and **Lulu**, ballerina **Darcey Bussell** and dance act, **Diversity**, before the Britain's Got Talent 2009 winners took to the stage to and kicked-off the evening with an incredible live gravity-defying performance.

Carol Sopher, Chair of the Annual Dinner Committee, who has recently become an Honorary Life President of Norwood in recognition of her enormous commitment and ambassadorial role for the Charity, then welcomed the guests to the Dinner. These included TV presenter and model **Myleene Klass** and X-factor judge **Simon Cowell**, who is also a Norwood Patron.

Later, Myleene, together with Norwood President **Richard Desmond**, introduced the diminutive Two Ronnies star.

Ronnie said: "I'm delighted to help out for such a wonderful cause, and to help Bruce out while he's in the condition he's in."

He then launched into a hilarious quick-fire stand-up routine which charmed the audience. "Victoria Beckham met The Queen for the first time last week," he quipped during one of his jokes. "There was an awkward moment when it came to the curtsy. We'll, she's over 80-years-old now."

After dinner **Cherie Blair** addressed the audience before introducing the fundraising film. She said, "I am proud to be Norwood's Patron of Children's Services and particularly proud that we have a new campaign, Change a life. When I think of Norwood, that's exactly what I think of."

"At Norwood, we understand that every single person, whatever their ability, is valuable as a human being," she added. "I can only guess at what it's like to support a disabled child day by day, year by year. I can only guess the heartache and worry about what will happen to my child as I get older. But Norwood knows exactly what it's like. They are there day by day to support people who want to keep their family together, for people who want their children, whatever their ability, to fulfil their full potential."

The film centred on the experiences of mum-of-four Erica Marks and her family, who have been given vital support by Norwood since her 17-year-old son Benjamin was born with a severe disability. After the film, Erica made a moving appeal for guests to pledge generously. "Norwood has been a life line to our family since Benjamin was young and I wouldn't be able to tell my story today if it hadn't been for Norwood's incredible support," she said.

Speaking earlier in the evening about the launch of the new Change a life campaign, Bernie Myers, Chair of Norwood, explained, "Norwood's services will be even more personalised to help to change lives, one by one."

"Our new strap-line, Change a life, and our strategic approach involve a greater emphasis on personalisation. This means giving every child and adult using our services an individually tailored service so that we empower them to become more independent and achieve their aspirations in life, whatever their age, whatever their disability."

He added: "To be able to **change a life, one by one**, day by day, means changing ourselves too. Norwood provides life changing opportunities to everyone associated with its work."

After the Dinner, Richard Desmond said: "This is Norwood's flagship fundraising event of the year and I want to thank our donors who have risen to the occasion, by showing great generosity."

"To have raised £2.7 million is a real achievement but is indicative of the difficult financial climate we find ourselves in. This will help us to reach the £9 million in voluntary income that we need this year to meet our £35 million annual budget. Every contribution is vital to Norwood so that we can continue to help change the lives of thousands of people with learning disabilities and children and families in need each year, one by one."

Click below to view the Annual Dinner interactive brochure