

Falcon news

Volume 1, Issue 1
Summer 2006

What is Falcon Academy?

Hi,

We are a new not-for-profit organisation that has been created to provide educational (including social) opportunities for those whose lives have been affected by CFS/ME.

We will start to provide education during the 2006/2007 academic year. We are seeking funding now so that the education we offer you is free. In order to obtain funding we need to know:

- what our prospective students would like,
- how many of you there are that would like to start with us during either the 2006/7 or the 2007/8 academic year.

So, we are sending you *Falcon News* (Summer 2006 edition) the first of our Falcon newsletters. It tells you all about our programmes. As you can see from this newsletter you can dip your toe in the water by joining *The Great Link* and then gradually (or swiftly if your health is up to it) add on bits of the programme by moving along its 7 steps.

Steps 1 and 2

Your social well-being (and that of your carer) is very important to us. We know how isolating CFS/ME can be. This is why the first two steps of our programme (*The Great Link* and *How about U?*) focus on these areas.

Step 3

We know that managing the CFS/ME

and gaining the right support are essential if your body is to have the opportunity to start to heal. So, that's why the next step is **How about ME.?**

Steps 4 and 5

A further frustration is not being able to study the subjects you enjoy, or have the opportunities to widen your knowledge and interests. This occurs because your energy is so low and because the CFS/ME is affecting you so badly. That's why we've designed our unique **Magellen** programmes.

Steps 6 and 7

Finally, the brain fog lifts enough for you to start courses that will enable you gain the qualifications that you need. Again, we advise not rushing it, take the course over a longer period of time. Take a small number of courses (even just take one if you like) at the start so that you do not do too much.

If you like what you see in this newsletter then please can you, or your carer, fill in our Falcon Academy ME/CFS Educational survey (see page 4) and contact us for an Expression of Interest form. This will enable us to work out the amount of funding that we need to obtain for our first year.

You'll see that the form also has spaces for you to say what you would like Falcon to offer. Falcon Academy is being designed for you and so we want you to have a say in what we offer.

Best wishes

Jan Poustie (Principal)

Kate Slade (Financial Director)

Serenity House,
68 Hamilton Road, Taunton,
Somerset TA1 2ES
Phone: 01823 289559
Fax: 01823 289559
www.falconacademy.org.uk
Email:
info@falconacademy.org.uk

Our 7 steps to a better life - how many steps do you want to take today?

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Start to have a better life by making a group of friends that understand how you feel.

Interested in *The Great Link*?

Have you been isolated for far too long or do you just want to make a group of friends? Join *The Great Link* and have some fun. It has been created to help you make new friends and learn various ICT skills along the way.

We video conference you to other people of the same age and enable/support you so that you can make some friends. For those of you who have been isolated a long time we help you develop the social and ICT skills needed to make and keep friends. You can rush along *The Great Link* or you can take it one small step at a time—whichever suits you.

Want to join our *How2* Programme

What is it?

Our *How2* programme provides our students with opportunities to meet and network with other students of similar age. Its also about giving you some fun, making life worth living and helping you to manage your CFS/ME.

When is it?

On Mondays and Wednesdays each week we will have half hour video conference sessions. If you don't have much energy why don't you just join us for the part of the night that you are interested in?

How About U? : This is on Mondays. Its all about you, what you're doing, your hobbies, your interests. We'd like you to share your life with the other learners, e.g.:

- talking about your hobbies,
- give a tip about how you make life easier for you or your carer

25th September 2006:

How about U? looks at:

1. Card Making
2. Why I collect crystals

How about ME? : this is on Wednesdays—it is all about helping you to live with CFS/ME. It gives you the knowledge you need to help you manage the condition and gain the support you need to move along the road to recovery; e.g.:

1. Dealing with forms

e.g. how to fill in the forms for Disability Living Allowance.

2. Dealing with the agencies

e.g. county and town councils, social workers etc., Connexions, Learning Skills Council.

3. Management of CFS/ME

e.g. pacing, diet, alternative therapies and how to choose them.

27th September 2006

How About ME looks at:

1. Pacing made simple
2. Diet

Are you ready for the challenge?

If you are interested in joining Falcon then please fill in the expression of interest form enclosed with this newsletter.

Our *Magellan* programme

Do you want an easy way of learning? Start your own journey of discovery with our *Magellan* programme — the innovative and unique low-energy programme especially designed for you.

Magellan Voyager

We make it easy for you to learn and have some fun while you're doing it. There is no writing and no reading. All you need to do is one, or more, of the following:

- Watch some TV,
- Listen to some CD's,
- Watch a movie.

Examples of how you do that

History

Watch/listen:

- TV; e.g. Time Team, Meet the ancestors,
- A movie that is based in a period of history; e.g. Gosforth Park or Gladiator,
- CD; listen to some medieval music

English literature

Watch/listen to TV programmes/videos/CDs/audio tapes that are based on a book such as:

- The videos/CD's or film of *Pride and Prejudice* (based on the Jane Austen novel).
- A movie; e.g. *Murder on the Orient Express* (based on the Agatha Christie novel)
- CD/audio tape; e.g. any book

Are you up to the challenge?

If so then choose one or more of the following areas of study:

1. science and mathematics
2. land based provision
3. construction
4. engineering, technology and manufacturing (this includes design)
5. business administration, management and professional
6. ICT
7. retailing, customer services and transportation
8. hospitality, sports, leisure and travel
9. hairdressing and beauty therapy
10. health, social care and public services (this includes psychology, sociology and alternative therapies)
11. visual and performing arts and media
12. humanities (geography, history, religion)
13. English, languages and communication
14. Current affairs (politics, issues of social importance)

Okay so what's the catch?

Well, there isn't one. You:

1. video conference with other learners who are studying the same subjects. (If you aren't ready for that yet then you'll video conference with your *Magellan Mentor* for just a few minutes).
2. gain a *Falcon Academy* certificate for each subject studied.
3. gain awards (Book/CD tokens, Argos vouchers etc.) when you reach each goal.



Magellan Explorer

*This is for when the mental fog is starting to reduce. Now you start to explore the subjects that interest you on a computer alongside your *Magellan Voyager* programme. We supply the software and the computer too if you don't have one. Your *Magellan Mentor* will guide you through your chosen subjects.*

You choose your own programme with some help from us. So, if you wanted to study medieval history we would advise you as to which programmes and movies you could watch and which CD's to listen to.

**URGENT - FOR
YOUR ATTENTION!**

Falcon Academy ME/CFS Educational survey

Do you want to help us find out what is really happening in the UK?

Please can you, or your carer, spend just 5 minutes filling in our Educational Survey? You can find it on our website - www.falconacademy.org.uk If you don't have internet then just give us a ring and we will conduct the survey on the phone.

Launch Pad

Has the mental fog lifted enough so that you can move on to the *Launch Pad* and lift off in preparation for the next stage of your life? We help you to work out the best schedule so that you pace yourself. You don't have to rush this programme, you take it at your own speed. The *Extension* programme gives you externally accredited certificates.

Extension programme

You study for one or more exams (in the subjects of your choice) at GCSE, A level and Key skills.

Lift Off programme

This includes:

- careers advice,
- advice on moving into other types of education; e.g. further or higher education if that is the route that you choose.

Notes:

1. Anything above GCSE gives you points towards university entrance.
2. Study one or more of Key skills Communication, ICT and Numeracy. You don't need to take them all at once. Instead, take one to start off with and then add the other two as you feel able to do so. Key skills level 2 is GCSE level.
2. Key skills Level 3 Communication combined with Level 2 Numeracy and ICT gives you an AS in Key skills and goes towards university entrance.
3. The *Extension* programme teaching is conducted via distance learning (e.g. video conferencing,, use of ICT) and home tuition. Any online learning will be supported by our tutors.
3. The *Extension* and *Lift Off* programmes will be available as from 2007.

Which term do you use?

Some people use CFS/ME, others use one of these: ME/CFS, ME, CFS or PVFS.

PVFS (Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome) is usually used to describe the condition in its earliest stages. In the past, if the condition remained, then the diagnosis was usually changed to ME (nowadays the term ME/CFS or CFS/ME is more commonly used).

4U

This will be a regular feature of Falcon News. In this section we welcome contributions from you—just send them by letter, fax or email (contact details are in the box above). It could be a riddle, a crossword, a cartoon, a short story, a poem etc. Do you have a good ideas as to what should be in Falcon News? It could be a quote for our **GI** and **Star** awards (see below). We want to change the way that people (including professionals) view CFS/ME. We don't want the prejudice, we don't want the ignorance.

The **GI** (General Ignorance) award is given for the most astonishing proof of ignorance/prejudice that we hear in any given month. Our **Star** award is given to those professionals who have really made a difference to your lives. We award it for 'best practice' in the field of CFS/ME. Our **Stars** are the people who really want your situation to be better and are prepared to put themselves out to improve the lot of those who have CFS/ME.

June GI award

**"Well, you're not dead so it
can't be serious"**

(said by a GP to a CFS/ME patient).

