

charity and highlights youngster's plight

Summer safety message from NIE



ABOVE: Ellie has had to undergo a number of operations to overcome her congenital heart condition. LM3009-624.

LEFT: Some of the life-saving equipment used when Ellie has had to undergo major open-heart surgery. LM3009-620.

SUMMER holidays are here and Julie McDowell, Safety Officer at Northern Ireland Electricity, has issued a reminder to young people throughout Northern Ireland to have fun and to Think Safe, Act Safe and Be Safe when they are playing outside.

Julie said everyone should be aware of the dangers of electricity: "It is essential that children and their parents understand that electricity is safe when left alone, but can be potentially fatal when tampered with. You only get one chance with electricity – make sure you know the potential dangers and stay a safe distance away when working or playing near electricity equipment."

"During the summer months children generally play outside and we would urge them to be aware of their surroundings. People can be seriously injured or killed by coming into contact with overhead electricity lines and equipment while fishing, sailing or flying kites and model aeroplanes."

Julie's advice is simple but potentially life saving to the young and old alike.

- Never bring an object close to overhead lines – electricity can jump gaps so keep well clear especially when fishing or kite flying.

- Never throw anything at overhead lines or any electricity equipment.

- Do not try to climb on top of or enter a substation to retrieve a toy or football. It is not worth risking a life over a toy. Every substation has a sign with a telephone number to contact the local NIE representative.

- If anything makes contact with an overhead line, do not try to retrieve it – contact NIE immediately on 08457 643 643.

- Never play in derelict buildings as the electricity supply may still be on.

- Never touch or tamper with electrical equipment or wires inside or outside your home.

Julie added: "It is crucial that children appreciate the dangers of playing near electricity substations and overhead lines, especially during the summer holidays. Electricity pylons, poles and substations can attract adventurous youngsters but our advice is simple – stay safe by staying away from electricity equipment."

If you would like more information on Kidsafe or any other safety advice, check out the NIE safety website www.niesafety.co.uk



NIE Safety Officer Julie McDowell talks to Beth Mullan about the importance of taking care when playing near electricity equipment this summer. LM2809-804con

Nominate top mums

THE annual Tesco magazine 'Mum of the Year' awards have launched for the fifth year running and the search is on to find the winning mothers.

So if there's someone in our local community that you feel deserves special recognition - now's your chance to nominate them for this fantastic award.

These star-studded awards celebrate the courageous and outstanding achievements of amazing mums across the country - such as last year's Overall winner, Iris Billing, from St Austell, Cornwall, who founded the charity Tanya's Courage to help young cancer sufferers in her area, following the tragic loss of her own daughter, Tanya.

Iris not only won a fabulous cruise prize but also, more importantly, has seen awareness of her charity go from strength to strength.

As a wonderful additional bonus she received a new patron for her charity - Crystal Palace manager, Neil Warnock who has ties with Cornwall.

Next year's winners could include someone from our area. Applicants don't have to nominate their own mums, just someone who goes that extra mile and has shown extraordinary kindness, or bravery.

This could be a next-door neighbour, or someone you know who goes out of their way to make time for the community. It could even be a dad who successfully fulfils a mother's role.

The deserving winners will enjoy a wonderful day out in London at a glittering awards ceremony where they will be wined, dined and pampered, and get to meet a host of celebrities.

So come on, let's give a local mum a day they'll never forget. It's so easy to nominate someone. Look out for in-store application forms or pick up a copy of Tesco magazine. You can also apply online at www.tesco.com/magazine.

The closing date for all entries is September 25.

story (written as in her own words)



I went back to the operating theatre the next morning to get the clot unblocked. This time it worked great. Mr Gladstone was very upset that it hadn't worked first time round and could not understand how I made it through the night.

I was in PICU for five days and then went back to Clark Clinic and finally got home on the December 20. I was in great form and had a big scar to show everybody.

Operation Number Two - The Glenn Operation:

I went back to Clark Clinic on Wednesday, July 4, 2007 for a cardiac catheterisation. I was in for three days and it was to make sure I was ready for the second stage of my surgery, the Bidirectional Cavopulmonary Shunt or Glenn Operation.

The Glenn operation is open heart surgery and I underwent it on January 17, 2008. This operation diverts all the blood coming back from the upper body through the Superior Venacava.

Now, all of the blood coming from

my upper body is diverted to the lungs so more pink blood is coming back from the lungs to the left side of my heart. They also removed my old shunt. The operation took five hours and I was home after six days, which amazed the doctors and the nurses.

Operation number three is the Fontan Operation. I will need to get this when I am three or four. I will have to get it sooner rather than later as I am very tall for my age and this puts extra pressure on my heart. It is the last of the three planned opera-

tions and will make me nice and pink.

The Future:

Ten years ago, there was little hope for children like me. Recent advances in medicine have enabled me to live a much more fulfilling life. I will be on anti-coagulants for the rest of my life (I am on aspirin now and will be on warfarin later). This stops a potentially fatal clot, but unfortunately long-term use has its side-effects too.

To look at me I look like any other child of my age. People comment on my blond curly hair and my height. They don't see my lips going purple and my body of scars. I often forget my physical capabilities and tire easily.

I love to play with other children and do not realise that this scares the wits out of my mummy and daddy. A simple blow to the chest when playing can be very dangerous for me although it doesn't stop me enjoying life to the full.

The doctors say I will need a heart transplant in my late teens. I try not to think that far ahead and take inspiration from other CHD patients who have done amazing things with their lives.