

Esther brings smiles to young carers



With a demanding role as a client service team leader at RBS and a busy family life, you might think that Esther Zuijderwijk would like to relax when her office day is done and her one-year old son is sleeping.

But on two nights a week - and often at weekends - Esther devotes her free time to accounts, finances and administration for the FunCare4Kids foundation. Far from making her tired, Esther says that her responsibilities as Treasurer for the charity somehow boost her energy and enthusiasm. As the name suggests, FunCare4Kids organises fun-filled days out for children aged between 6-16 years, who have a close family member who is disabled or suffering from a chronic illness. The thinking behind the organisation is that every young person deserves to enjoy their childhood and have times when they can be carefree and have fun. For children who live with a disabled or sick relative that's not always easy. Sometimes they have to take responsibility for caring for their relative, or to cope with the fact that their parents have another disabled or ill child who needs constant attention.



Esther and kids during a Funday at the Spelerij en Uitvinderij in Dieren

Chance to be a child

Esther first became involved with FunCare4Kids through a colleague at ABN AMRO six years ago. To begin with, she went along to help at the fun days. "It was great to be with the children and witness the transformation that occurs when they have a chance to spend a day doing fun activities with other children from similar backgrounds."

The fun days we arrange are designed to be active but also to bring out their creativity. At our Olympic-themed day, for example, the children took part in a range of sports but also designed and made team banners. A few years ago, Esther took on the additional role of treasurer and became a board member of FunCare4Kids. It is extra work and challenging to manage at times because we are all volunteers. But I feel that I gain so much from the experience. To see these children enjoying themselves is so rewarding. Volunteering also helps me in my own personal and professional development. Being on the board is like running a small company. I have learned so much and gained skills that definitely help me to achieve **high performance** in my day job and vice versa. Ultimately, both my RBS role and the FunCare4Kids responsibilities are about working with people. That's what gives me a real sense of satisfaction.

Spread a little happiness

And if there are times when Esther does feel tired or under pressure, she always thinks of the children she has met. "I will never forget the smile on the face of one little boy after he had a great day out with FunCare4Kids. He was exhausted but absolutely brimming with happiness when his parents and disabled sibling came to collect him. I cherish that smile and it never fails to give me an extra boost of energy and motivation!"

If you would like to find out more about supporting or volunteering to help FunCare4Kids, contact Esther +31 10 2963166 or check out the website: www.fun-care4kids.nl