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Nigel Foss with some of the Awaaire Bears that will be his daughter's legacy to others

FOR VIKKI'S SAKE

SHE was a young woman with her whole life ahead of her.

When Vikki Foss died of a severe asthma attack at the age of 22, her family were devastated. But they have found a way in which her memory can help others in a similar situation.

Her dad, Nigel, from St John's Church, Rowlands Castle, has set up a charity to help children who also suffer from asthma. He can see God working through the Awaaire bear non-profit company.

He said: "Her passion was children and their wellbeing. She would champion the underdog and look out for others at the expense of her own health.

"This charity was our way of

bringing some sense to the confusion we felt after her death, and continuing Vikki's desire to look after the needs of small children. I believe that the Lord uses what he has in us, and in me it's the drive and instinct to help others. It's this that gives me focus."

As a trainee teacher, Vikki (pictured right) saw the importance of child protection legislation but was concerned that guidelines mean that teachers are unable to hug children when they are upset at school. During her training, she had the idea of having a



teddy bear in every classroom to help comfort children. She'd already bought one enormous teddy to keep in her classroom.

Nigel took Vikki's original idea a step further and came up with Awaaire bears. As well as providing comfort and hugs to small schoolchildren, the bears remind teachers of the potential problems of asthma, helping to raise awareness of the condition and raise funds for asthma research.

Research shows that as many as three children in every class will suffer from some form of asthma.

Anybody can

nominate a school or teacher to receive an Awaaire bear at a cost of £50. All the profits go to AAIR – the Asthma Allergy and Inflammation Research charity based at Southampton General Hospital.

So far, more than 40 bears have been given to schools and teachers across Hampshire and beyond. Among the first recipients were newly-qualified teachers who trained alongside Vikki.

A further 35 bears will be placed soon, and Nigel has 100 more bears to find homes for in 2009. Each bear comes with a special information pack about asthma. For more details, see: www.awaairebear.com.

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Melvyn Bragg will help train our clergy

LORD Melvyn Bragg will help our clergy to think about how their faith relates to today's culture.

The broadcaster and author will be speaking in our cathedral on May 15 as part of a bishop's training day on 'Christianity and Contemporary Culture'. Bishop Kenneth has asked all clergy from across the diocese to put the date in their diaries – and to bring a friend.

"Melvyn Bragg's perspective is always worth hearing," he said. "There is so much going on in the culture in which we're set that touches on our life and work together, and it will fit in well with the work in the diocese towards a strategy for ministry and mission.

"Clergy, parochial and non-parochial, will be invited to bring along with them someone from their own locality or area of work."

Melvyn Bragg (pictured above) is best-known for presenting *The South Bank Show* on ITV and *Start the Week* on BBC Radio 4, and became a Labour life peer in 1998.

The bishop has also announced an optional pre-Lent quiet day for clergy on February 16 at St. Wilfrid's Cowplain, led by Bishop Godfrey Ashby on 'The Servant of God'.