

Wheelchair puts teen on road to better life

by Ian Lewis

ian.lewis@swwmedia.co.uk

A CARMARTHEN teenager with muscular dystrophy has been given a boost of independence thanks to a specialist wheelchair.

Simon Wakelin, aged 17, of Ffoshelig, Rhydargaeau, was diagnosed at 16-months-old with Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD).

He is ventilated with oxygen around the clock, and attends the special needs unit at QE High School to socialise with others.

Parents Roy and Maxine said Simon had a real zest for life and wanted to be able to do all the things that teenagers of his age do, and be as independent as possible.

Mr Wakelin said, "He loves the outdoors and we wanted to improve his sense of independence."

National charity React has paid for a £13,000 wheelchair to enable him to get out and about with his friends and participate in activities.

The cost was above the family's budget, which is where Surrey-based React stepped in with the cash.

Mrs Wakelin said, "This is absolutely fantastic for Simon.

"It was a large sum of money that we could never have found.

"The wheelchair will enable him to have a much broader



INDEPENDENCE: Simon Wakelin, who has been given a new all-terrain wheelchair by the charity React.



part in life and meet new friends. This specialist wheelchair will provide Simon with a much greater quality of life.

"We are over the moon, and just can't believe how quickly React was able to turn our request around. It has made a young man very happy."

Mr Wakelin added: "He

enjoys the beach and we tried the wheelchair at Pembrey, and it can get over the sand easily."

Duchenne muscular dystrophy affects one in 3,500 male births in the UK, and is the most common and severe type of muscular dystrophy.

Patients with DMD are boys and young men who lack

Dystrophin, a protein that is critical to the structural stability of muscle fibres. Patients develop progressive muscle weakness, including the heart and respiratory system, leading to them being paralysed.