

Dozens of youngsters are encouraging Maidstone residents to sign a petition to scrap tax on pensions and savings.

The team was put together by Cranbrook School student, Sophie Jones, aged 16, and Maidstone Grammar School student, Blaise Matthews, aged 17, who are currently shadowing Tory hopeful Helen Grant in the run up to the next General Election.

The youngsters joined Conservative parliamentary candidate for Maidstone and Weald Mrs Grant in delivering the petition to 5,000 households in Allington last week.

The aim of the initiative is to deliver all of the petitions to 10 Downing Street in time to influence the forthcoming budget in April.

Mrs Grant and her team of youngsters hope the petitions will encourage Prime Minister Gordon Brown to abolish income tax on savings for basic rate taxpayers and raising pensioners' personal allowance by £2,000, to £11,490.

Mrs Grant said: "The turnout sends a strong message to our community that young people are engaged in the political agenda and have shown that they care about the plight of a group of people who are particularly badly affected by Gordon's recession, our savers and pensioners."

Paddy Millard, director of TaxHelp for Older People, said: "These policies would provide welcome support for pensioners struggling on low incomes."



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IN BRIEF

Tax relief plea

A PETITION calling for income tax relief for low-earners and pensioners was delivered to 5,000 Allington homes last week by teenage volunteers working for Tory election candidate Helen Grant. She plans to get signatures from across the Maidstone and Weald constituency in support of the cuts ahead of April's budget.

KENT KM MESSSENGER

Campaigners step up fight to keep maternity unit



Helen at the Allington Community Association playing field in Castle Road protesting with Allington Mums and their children born at Maidstone Hospital.

Mrs Grant says lots of people have offered to join her on the walk but she has reluctantly had to decline because the route has several sections unsuitable for a mass rally on foot.

People are instead being asked to join her at Maidstone Hospital at 9am on September 27 to see her off and sign her petition.

Mrs Grant is also a member of MASH (Maidstone Action for Services in Hospital), an apolitical group which has met hospital bosses several times pressing for all women to have the choice of giving birth at Maidstone.

She said: "A shift of this nature will inevitably lead to loss of life. As a mother of two I know the importance of having a full service hospital nearby."

She also plans to send petitions to 25,000 homes, with the results going to the health secretary and shadow health secretary, Andrew Lansley.

The Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust plans to concentrate women's and children's services at the new Pembury Hospital, leaving a birthing unit in Maidstone, which would be unable to deal with complications.

Helen Grant, the Conservative candidate for the Maidstone and Weald seat, is to push a pram on the 17-mile journey from Maidstone Hospital to Pembury on September 27, to demonstrate the length of journey many mothers in labour will face.

Under the moon of love

Newsdesk: 01622 695666

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MOONLIT WALK



by **Mary Graham**
mgram@thekmggroup.co.uk

WALKERS powered their way through a 10-mile course to raise £120,000 for the Heart of Kent Hospice.

Organisers have described the number of entries to the third annual Moonlit Walk as "astounding" – 950 women signed up for the event.

The walk, with Kent Messenger as media partners, began on Saturday at 10pm from the David Lloyd health club in Kings Hill finishing at the hospice, at Preston Hall, Aylesford.

Jennie Hubbard, from the hospice, said: "The women undertook a considerable challenge by walking 10 miles to support their local hospice.

"We called this year's event the Night of a Thousand Stars and our stars were our walkers whose efforts will bring light and hope to the patients and their families, whom we care for."

Mrs Hubbard paid thanks to everyone who helped on the night from volunteers, Mandy Ellen, the Hot Honeyz dance troupe, David Lloyd centre, plus Cllr Sue Murray, Mayor of Tonbridge and Malling,



Helen with fellow moonlit walkers from Waitrose in Allington

and Helen Grant, prospective parliamentary candidate for Maidstone and the Weald.

One man who watched their efforts was moved to email our newsdesk.

Colin White wrote: "Well done to all the ladies who took part. "Their spirit and cheerful faces were a joy and a true inspiration."

Doctor says plan will hit mums hard as decision goes to the top

'Downright cruel' to move services

HELEN NEEDS YOUR HELP

Please help Helen and the Conservatives to win

- I will be voting for Helen Grant and the Conservatives
- I would like a postal vote
- I am willing to deliver a few leaflets in my area
- I can display a poster
- I would like to make a donation or send in a few stamps

YOUR DETAILS

Name

Address

Postcode

E-Mail

Tel/Mobile

PLEASE POST BACK TO:

Maldstone & The Weald Conservative Association,
3 Albion Place, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5DY

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Helen with jubilant members of MASH and other campaigners upon hearing of victory outside Maidstone's County Hall

Victory for MASH but fight goes on

MASH chairman Dennis Fowle said the group was delighted by the decision and had offered assistance to KCC to present the case to the government.

He added: "MASH members working with the Maidstone BMA have been at the heart of this for about six years, which includes attending every trust and PCT board meeting in the past four years, and have built up a wealth of knowledge from many sources.

"The reasons the health minister must think again include the powerful public opposition, transport, the transfer rate from birthing units, poor consultation in 2004 and that the current trend is away from maternity reconfigurations in other areas of the South East."

Helen Grant, Conservative's prospective parliamentary candidate for Maidstone and a member of MASH, said: "I am absolutely delighted with this decision and I congratulate the rest of our MASH team for their work in preparing and presenting our report for the committee to consider.

"The Secretary of State has executive powers and can review and overturn the trust's plans. He has the power to give the people of Maidstone what they need and deserve; let's hope he now does that."