

NORTH TODAY

ENVIRONMENT

Helping Waldo

CHILDREN from across Tyneside helped Waldo the Wonderdog keep the borough clean over half term.

North Tyneside Council's environmental mascot led 12 street clean-ups, with over 60 youngsters collecting 66 bags of litter.

Environmental services officer Wayne Young said: "Waldo is thrilled so many people decided to help."

YOUTH

Commons visit

NEWCASTLE'S representatives of the UK Youth Parliament joined members from across the country for a debate at the House of Commons. Razzia Gafur, 16, Eddie Shields, 14, Emma Neibig, 12, and Reece Connelly, 16, were among more than 300 young people taking part in the third UK Youth Parliament debate yesterday. The members discussed five key issues, including transport and bullying.

POLITICS

MP at factory

A NORTH East MP is having work experience at a motor-cycle helmet manufacturer.



Washington and Sunderland West MP Sharon Hodgson got a placement at Washington-based Reevu in order to learn about the challenges and opportunities facing small businesses.

Mrs Hodgson visited the Parsons Road firm as part of the Business Buddy scheme recently launched by the not-for-profit Forum of Private Business.

The scheme aims to foster a greater understanding of small businesses among politicians.

EVENT

Festive market

FAMILIES are being invited to Heddon-on-the-Wall's annual Christmas market.

The event will take place on Monday, December 5, from 6pm to 8.30pm.

The market will have a variety of stalls and Heddon St Andrews Juniors Football Club will be holding a raffle with all proceeds going to the youth of the village.

DRAMA

Area sealed off

A SECTION of a County Durham industrial site was sealed off after an unknown substance caused an allergic reaction to a member of staff.

Emergency services were called to Comeleon House on the Tanfield Lea Industrial Estate in Stanley, County Durham, yesterday after a staff member suffered a reaction to the unknown substance when opening an envelope delivered to the premises. The area was sealed off as a precaution but no noxious or harmful substance was found.

Young heart patients are chosen to start Christmas

Coreena Ford

0191 201 6331

coreena.ford@ncjmedia.co.uk

YOUNG heart patients at the Freeman Hospital are huge heroes for the daily battles they endure.

That is why bosses at the Metrocentre have decided to give them the honour of switching on the Christmas lights this year, making them the true celebrities for the night.

It is the first time in 25 years that the Gateshead shopping complex has decided against inviting a celebrity guest from the world of showbusiness to turn on the festive display, and the youngsters can't wait.

Six youngsters from across the North who have each endured life-saving surgery at the hospital's heart unit have been picked to press the plunger at the annual switch-on, which takes place at the centre from 5pm to 7pm on Thursday.

Father Christmas, the Metrognomes, a school choir and Alvin and the Chipmunks - two of the stars of this year's pantomime at the Theatre Royal in Newcastle - will also be on hand to help the children with their official duties.

Karen Carr, marketing director of the Metrocentre said: "We have over the last 25 years enjoyed the company of many famous celebrities to launch Christmas and officially turn on our lights, ranging from Mr Blobby, who caused chaos, to stars from Emmerdale, Coronation Street, Big Brother, the X Factor and Strictly Come Dancing.

"They have all proven to be very popular with our shoppers but rather than pay for a celebrity this year we are going to donate that money to the Children's Heart Unit Fund (CHUF).

"Some of the youngsters from CHUF will be coming down to switch on our lights and there will be lots of opportunities to help raise funds on the evening.

"The CHUF motto is 'From kind hearts, grow healthy hearts' so with the public's support let's make this work for them."

One of the youngsters who'll be switching on the lights is Sebastian Hollingsworth, of Whitley Bay, North Tyneside, who had surgery to correct the congenital heart defect Tetralogy of Fallot at the age of 16 weeks.

His father Ivan, 35, a pharmaceutical rep, said: "This is a big gesture by the Metrocentre.

"Seb is quite little - he's three in January - and I don't think he'll fully understand what's going on, but he'll love the attention and seeing Father Christmas."

True stars will be lighting up Metrocentre



SWITCHING ON THE LIGHTS Sebastian Hollingsworth, pictured with parents Ivan and Nadine, will be switching on the Metrocentre Christmas lights, left



MP backs residents in fight against coal-mining

AN MP is to urge a planning inspector to support locals in their bid to prevent more than half a million tonnes of coal being mined on their doorstep.

Pat Glass, MP for North Durham, is due to present evidence next Friday - possibly the final day of a three-week public inquiry into plans by UK Coal to mine at Bradley, near Consett, County Durham.

Mrs Glass said: "I have long objected to

UK Coal Mining's application for an open-cast mine on the Bradley site and plan to speak out against it at the appeal hearing this month. Having met with many local residents concerning this matter, I felt compelled by the strength and justification of local opposition to add my voice to those objecting to the move and support local campaigners."

Residents in several small communit-

ies are in the midst of their third battle in quarter of a century to prevent opencast mining spoiling an attractive valley.

People living in Leadgate, Dipton, Medomsley, Flint Hill, Pont Bungalows and Bradley Cottages, between Consett and Stanley, are fighting the plans by UK Coal to mine 530,000 tonnes of coal at Bradley, part of the Pont Valley.

UK Coal's first application was rejected

by planners in 1986. The company appealed and this was again rejected by a government inspector two years later. In 2001 a second application was rejected.

The current inquiry is being held at Leadgate Workmen's Club after UK Coal appealed against a decision by Durham County Council planning committee to reject its application in February this year.