

**NEWS**

# Floor taken by charity at centre offices

CHARITY Midland Mencap has taken an extra floor of a five-storey office building where it offers community facilities. Walsall-based developer Gooled Estates has also let another floor at 17 Lichfield Street, Walsall, to youth organisation Rathbone. The lettings follow Gooled's own relocation to the refurbished building last year. Midland Mencap and Rathbone have

both taken floors of 2,000 sq ft, the charity on a five-year lease and Rathbone on a three-year contract. Only the third floor of the building now remains vacant. Midland Mencap offers facilities including a meeting room which it hires out to businesses, third sector organisations and charities. Charlotte Thursfield of Midland Mencap said: "We have recently taken

on a new regional remit which has created some challenges and opportunities." Rathbone is a UK-wide voluntary youth sector organisation providing opportunities for young people to transform their life-circumstances by re-engaging with learning. Anne Davies, youth programme manager at Rathbone, said: "The working environment at 17 Lichfield Street is perfect for our needs."

# African school naming boost for singer Connie



Connie performs on the stage **SONGBIRD** Connie Talbot joined the world famous African Children's Choir for a performance in her hometown - and learned that a school was being named in her honour.

The Streetly schoolgirl, who rose to fame six years ago on Britain's Got Talent, took to the stage at the Goldmine Centre in Walsall on Friday night. The 12-year-old sang two solo

The concert featuring the 12-year-old and the famous African Children's Choir by Lisa Wright songs - Made In The USA and Make You Feel My Love - before joining the choir to sing tracks including Wonder, Something Inside So Strong and Somewhere Over The Rainbow. The youngster was given a surprise on the night when choir founder Ray Barnett announced he would be building a new school in Uganda and naming it after her, in recognition of her support. Mother Sharon, 44, said: "Connie

went on an arena tour last year with Young Voices and they were both guests on there and they really got on well. Ray Barnett wanted her to be an ambassador for Music For Life and she will join in wherever they might be around the world when she can." Mrs Talbot added that there wasn't a dry eye in the house at Friday's show, at the Lower Hall Lane-based venue. "Everybody was crying, it was so emotional," she said. "There was quite a big turnout, it was the first one of many and it was a really good night."

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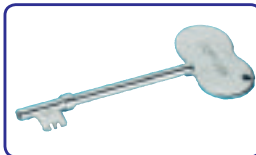
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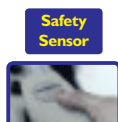
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