



# FOCUS RSVP NEWS



## December 2014

CSV-RSVP's Monthly Newsletter for Co-ordinators, Organisers and Volunteers

### A MESSAGE FROM IS



Hello everyone,

To introduce myself for those of you I haven't met—I am **Is**

**Szoneberg** Director of Volunteering Operations. As from 1<sup>st</sup> October, I became a member of the new CSV Senior Management Team along with my colleagues **Laura Doughty** Director of Fundraising Policy and Communications, **Kate Morris** Director of Resources and our new Chief Executive **Oonagh Aitken**.

Although new to this role I am not new to CSV having recently completed 30 years with the organisation. I have worked across the spectrum of CSV's many and varied projects, including early in my career establishing some of the first projects to involve older people sharing their skills and experiences with pupils in schools in Newcastle Upon Tyne.

The aim of my current role is to provide leadership to, and be accountable for, the operation and delivery of CSV's Volunteering and Social Action projects and programmes across the UK, and to ensure that the organisation is able to deliver high quality and financially sustainable work. With my colleagues in the Senior



Is [right] with **Laura Doughty**

Team and our Trustees, we will be providing the strategic direction for the organisation.

We are committed to the value, importance and impact of our RSVP work and its further development. To this end we have been fortunate enough to secure funding from an anonymous donor that will be dedicated to helping us fulfil that commitment. The funding will pay for a development post dedicated to RSVP and for administrative support. We know that some of you have been eager for us to have such a post which will provide a direct line of contact into CSV as well as providing you with any information and support you might need. We will be beginning the recruitment process very soon and hope to have someone in post by the New Year. When in post they will be in touch with you to find out about the fantastic projects you run and how we can further build on them.

Thank you all for your dedication and commitment to the work of RSVP and the invaluable contributions you make. We look forward to RSVP's continuing to thrive and grow.

*Finally let me wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year*

*Best wishes*

*Is*

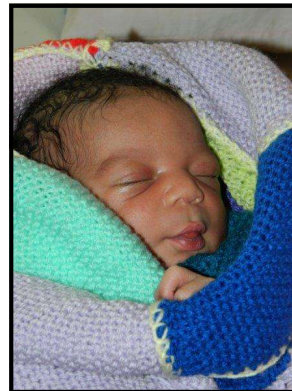
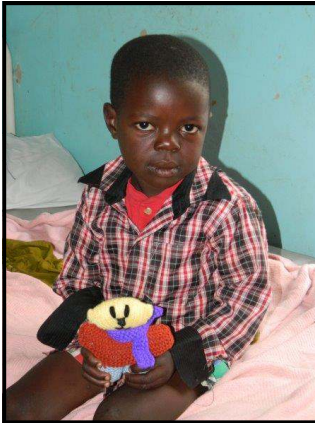


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## Grampian Knitters



A tremendous amount of fabulous knitting has been prepared by **Kathleen Mutch's** Grampian Knitting Group and sent off to all the corners of the globe. Here are some wonderful pictures from Zambia, one knitting destina-



tion, and the delight on the faces of the children is quite touching..

With reference to the photo below, **Kathleen** says, "The photos of the ladies surrounding my ladies' knitting are not in fact my knitters, but members of the Congregational Church in Peterhead who had gathered to see the handiwork before it was sent to Iraq to be distributed by aid workers in early September. Through that church the Grampian Knitters have sent knitting in the last year to a children's hospital in Accra, Ghana and to Zambia, Syria and to Kurdish refugees in Iraq".





Good to hear from **Judith McCullough** (former staff member but now a volunteer in the Cardiff office) who sends information about **Howard Thomas**, a long standing volunteer in North Wales. Howard has prepared this fascinating article about his background and his experiences as a schools volunteer.

My background in the Probation Service had made me acutely aware of the problems associated with persons who possessed a low level of reading skills and so on retirement I determined to explore how as a volunteer, it was possible to assist those who struggled with the written word. By chance the local FE College was recruiting students to undertake a City and Guilds Certificate in Literacy Teaching and for a time I worked with adults in the local library. I am uncertain how I noticed an advertisement by CSV for persons to assist with reading support in primary schools, but I enrolled on their course and following its conclusion indicated that my preference would be to work in a secondary school. Seemingly the organisers had never received such a request, but shortly after I was assigned to a local Comprehensive. Some ten years later I am still at the same school for two mornings per week, usually with some 6 students being seen on an individual basis! When I started, the arrangement was that pupils would come with a reading book and I would mark their progress in a log. The setting was the school library and has remained so ever since. Later I suggested that perhaps youngsters needed to be encouraged to follow their particular interests, with reading as the principal by-product, and a "pilot study" based on this principle was agreed. Some 10 years later that "study" is still in progress!

Well, what of the choices? The first choice offered to the student is "any book you wish to look at in the library?" My estimate is that such an offer appeals to very few pupils. Thereafter I offer a prompt which goes something like this: "We could see how airplanes fly by making one" "We could do a science experiment" "We could read some poetry" "We could read why a black person was arrested for sitting in a bus in Alabama" "We could read why Manchester United lost last

week"

"We could use the internet to look at any subject that interests you"

"You could tell me what you did last weekend/on holidays and we could write it down"

By far the most popular choices are the science experiments, (strangely enough particularly with girls), or making a paper plane. Reading scripts are then used to explore how to undertake the science experiment and, in the case of planes, we read about aerodynamics such as lift, drag, thrust and gravity etc. Various levels of scripts are available to take account of the abilities of the youngsters with lots of tangential discussion taking place when we focus on "tricky" words or consider the best ways to dissect a long word. The school lays great emphasis on ensuring that "strugglers" are given the maximum help by way of salaried staff following well- tested methods of enhancing literacy. My input is a small adjunct to the "professionals" and aimed at furthering an interest in a subject area "chosen" by the pupil, which may not form part of the any national curriculum, but nevertheless hopefully leads those youngsters to believe that enhancing their reading skills opens up great opportunities for either their leisure interests or a future career. What about the outcomes? Firstly most students like making a choice and seemingly enjoy the twenty minutes exercise. The icing on the cake is when students tell me that they have shown the experiment to their parents or ask for a photocopy of the reading material. Perhaps however the key test of success is that the school has not sacked me! Here I am demonstrating to a student how to put a nail in a bubble and inviting him to repeat the experiment! It all leads to a reading exercise on Surface Tension.



# More Wales!

**Diane Matheson**, Senior Project Coordinator with the Welcome Friends scheme, has sent this report by Volunteer Organiser **Colin Gardiner**—who is involved with the WW2 Cardiff schools project—about a tremendous trip to London:

As part of RSVP Wales' schools project, **Paul** and **Diane Matheson** and I went to St David's Primary in Cardiff to deliver a workshop on WW2. The pupils and teachers really enjoyed our visit and we were invited to join Year 6 on their school trip to the War Cabinet Rooms and the Imperial War Museum in London the following week.

When we arrived at the school, there were 27 very excited children waiting to board the coach. For most of them it would be the first time they had visited London.

The coach set off and hit the motorway heading for London, but unfortunately there were many traffic problems along the way and we did not reach our destination until five hours later! The teachers did a marvellous job of keeping the children happy and fed with snacks and of course supervising the many visits to the on-board loo!

On arrival at the War Cabinet Rooms we took part in a workshop where the pupils were given some original WW2 artefacts to identify and discuss. They came up with all sorts of questions and had great fun identifying a baby's gas mask, an ARP lamp, a car headlight shade and a wooden rattle that warned people about gas attacks.

We then eagerly devoured our packed lunches before exploring the underground rooms and passages that Churchill used to plan the war. After a short journey across London to the Imperial War Museum, we divided into groups to look at planes, motor vehicles, tanks, bombs and an Anderson Shelter. The children were disappointed that the Blitz Street exhibition had been removed to make way for the new WW1 display, but made up for it by visiting a Horrible Histories interactive room instead.

They then had a quick visit to the museum shop to buy souvenirs and presents for Mum! It was lovely to see the expressions on their young faces and listen to their excited chatter. But now the trip was coming to an end, it was time to board the coach to take us back to Cardiff. One little girl said to me that it had been her "Best school trip ever!"



Beside the big guns outside the Imperial War Museum

The children were so well behaved and although their time at the Museum was much shorter than originally planned, it was obvious that it had been both educational and FUN for us all!

## Citywise Positive video!



Good news from *Citywise*, RSVP's pan-London project. As Project Officer **Sue King** reports, "Volunteer **Anand Reddy** used his professional film editing skills to help young volunteers on CSV's Positive Futures project make a promotional video." Anand himself said "I found my first experience as a volunteer with CSV Citywise enjoyable and fulfilling. It was also a chance to work with a group of young people, to pass on some of my knowledge and experience and to help them on their future careers". Look out for the results of this cross generational collaboration on CSV's You Tube channel.



# Grand Exhibition in Norfolk



Congratulations to *Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers* who held a fabulous Grand Exhibition recently in Dereham. Over 700 people went along and had a wonderful time seeing all the fantastic knitting for the charity stalls. As the picture above shows, there were stalls representing over 20 different charities and the high quality of knitting and stitching was remarked on. Organiser **Linda Brown** reports, *"The response to our magnificent Exhibition was really rewarding. So many people took part in one way or another. It was astonishing to realise that we had over 70 people helping on the day. This event was the culmination of so much work by so many people. But the overriding feeling that comes through is of people having fun! Our intention was to show a much wider audience the pleasure that comes from using our skills to help others and to give more people the opportunity of joining in."* Here are some pictures of the day.

Linda is delighted at the continuing growth of the whole project. As she says, *"We are now 1700+ strong and have over 60 groups—and this means more volunteers are needed in many different*

*ways. I am delighted that so many people come forward to help—on Wool Loft Open Days, with the running of the different groups and at our regular six-monthly special events."*



Councillor **Timothy Birt**, Mayor of Dereham, opening the Exhibition. *"He was amazed at the range of knitted and stitched items, and the number of charities we are able to help with our work,"* said **Linda**



The Activities Room [*above*] was a great hit, and everyone admired the garden made by the Louise Hamilton Group [*below*] which included a knitted replica by **Margaret Seaman** of a pond which her late husband had created.



Visitors were encouraged to leave written comments which were all full of enthusiasm. A typical one was *"I feel inspired to go home and make something after many years of forgetting how enjoyable it can be to create!"*

Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers do a tremendous range of activities, all detailed in their newsletter with new editor **Susan Bowring**. Check it out on their website at:

**[www.norfolkknitters.org.uk](http://www.norfolkknitters.org.uk)**



## Barnet, London

Another excellent newsletter from editor **Joy Wyndham** about the many varied activities of the Outer London North Group, including a report on the splendid party held in early September as a thank-you for volunteers for all their terrific efforts and hard work. As Joy says, *"We had everything we needed, a pretty garden, adequate parking, a downstairs toilet, attractive china, a great chef, a dog that liked to play and a team of volunteers who were willing to help! So what could go wrong? The one thing over which RSVP had no control was the weather."*

In the event it was a warm sunny day and over 40 people arrived representing every one of Barnet's many projects including schools, knitting, Keeping in Touch and Inspire. *"The sheer pleasure of those who had not met for some time was clearly evident,"* said Joy. *"Those who read with children were delighted to meet other volunteers who visit the same schools, and could compare notes with those they had never met. Some individuals even offered a little more of their free time."*

Other attractions included beautiful items provided by the knitters, books on tape available for purchase and—visitors were invited to guess the number of freshly home grown cherry tomatoes displayed in a bowl. Winner takes all!

Joy wanted to thank everyone who helped create as well as support the event by their donations. *"From the subsequent thank you notes and*



*emails the event was evidently enjoyed by all."*

The group have extended a warm welcome to **Edna** who has recently joined RSVP. Edna lives in sheltered accommodation in Hendon where she holds tea parties for her friends in the building and raises funds for Marie Curie. She was a volunteer with Age UK before becoming house-bound and they

still bring work for her to do at home. Previously Edna volunteered with League of Friends and worked for 20 years with the homeless in Kensington and Chelsea.

Edna wanted to become a telephone befriender and has already been partnered with someone and made a friendship. Edna is now Outer London North's oldest volunteer at 92, and is a wonderful example of how volunteers can keep everyone involved in the outside world and bring new friendship. The group are delighted to welcome her on board.

Having fun at the party!



# Brighton LifeLines Win Award

**Gwyneth Chanlewis**, Development Officer for Brighton's LifeLines project, reports on two exciting developments and achievements for volunteers:

## Tea Dance Award

Firstly, congratulations to **Cliff** and **Dot Raymon** who won an award for the biggest contribution to Health and Wellbeing at the Brighton and Hove Older People's Award 2014. They were nominated for their volunteering work over the past four years, running the LifeLines monthly tea dance at Patching Lodge. The tea dance has become a popular event in the calendar of many older people both locally and from across Brighton and Hove who come to dance, meet people or just to enjoy the music.

## A Volunteer Achieves Her Dream

Secondly, the wonderful story of how the LifeLines project has helped volunteer **Janice Smith** to achieve her dream! Janice had her 60th birthday party at the Brighton Hilton Hotel recently. Janice is a remarkable woman—born with cerebral palsy and with severe difficulties in speaking, she has penned over 1000 poems about her life. And to celebrate her 60th, LifeLines, which supports Janice at Patching Lodge in Kempdown, has helped her publish 60 of her poems, one for each year.

Volunteer **Jane Platford** worked with Janice to select the 60 poems and arranged to have them



**Jane, Janice** and the book!

professionally published. Jane said, "*It was a privilege working with Janice. Her poems were both funny and happy, sad and moving, and always full of interesting insights into her life. Not*

*to mention her love of the Bee Gees!*"

Jane was one of the organisers of the Brighton Yoga Festival which held its first successful event in Kempdown in July. The Festival raised £500 for two local charities, including CSV LifeLines, and some of this money helped to fund the publication of Janice's poems.

Janice was thrilled with the books of her poems, and she threatens to keep writing more! So cheers to Janice, and here's to the next volume of poetry!

Here is Janice's poem entitled Hot Cross Bun Yoghurt:

*I wish they made a yoghurt that tastes like  
Hot cross bun  
I can't eat a hot cross bun anymore  
I can't eat anything hard  
I miss hot cross buns  
I miss the flavour  
It was lovely  
Like bread pudding  
It tastes lovely  
Why don't they do a pizza yoghurt  
That would be lovely  
How about a bacon pizza yoghurt  
It's not fair  
I used to love all that stuff  
But now I can't eat it anymore  
Because I would choke very easily  
Maybe they can get me a new throat  
That would be lovely  
Cause I could eat all the stuff I want.*

## New CSV Fundraising Scheme—Part 1

This year CSV have found a great way to raise money for free, simply by shopping online through a website called *easyfundraising* ([www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk)).

Whenever you buy anything online (e.g. Christmas presents, groceries, clothes, books, train tickets, hotel rooms, etc) you can raise a free donation for CSV. There are over 2,700 retailers registered with the site, including Amazon, John Lewis, eBay and Tesco, who will donate a percentage of what you spend to CSV, to say thank you for shopping with them.

For details on how it works, see page 8!



## North East



### **SPORTING CHANCE**

**Gill Watson**, Project Development Officer of

*Sporting Chance*, reports on an exciting 12 months:



RSVP Middlesbrough and Tees Valley have just celebrated their first successful

year of Sporting Chance, a 3-year National Lottery supported project funded through the Big Lottery Fund that engages with men aged 50 and over living in Middlesbrough. The project aims to engage with men only, by offering physical activity sessions and reminiscence groups and has a remit to engage with those who would not usually participate in a community group, particularly older isolated men. Activities so far have included walking, football, indoor cricket, table tennis, cycling, walking, target shooting, aqua circuits, outings and much more! The groups have particularly enjoyed visiting Middlesbrough Football

ground to see a match and have really enjoyed talks by ex 'boro players. The project's celebratory cake was cut by the oldest participant who is in his 90s!

### **PONY THERAPY**

RSVP North East run a project in partnership with Hanover Housing at Bramble Court, an assisted living housing project in South Shields. The project is to encourage volunteering and different activities for residents and non-residents who live locally to come into Bramble Court, to break down social isolation and create wider community links. Recently, as the picture shows, they were visited by Mr P—a miniature American horse who is part of K & L pony therapy. The idea is that the animals come inside and visit, for example, older people's homes, and children with autism. It turned out to be their busiest session to date as lots of residents and family members all wanted to meet Mr P—to stroke him and ask questions! His visit stimulated a lot of chat, some from chaps who had worked down the mines with pit ponies, some from people whose children had had riding lessons.





## ***Oonagh visits Dorset East***

CSV's new CEO **Oonagh Aitken** recently visited the RSVP volunteers in Dorset East. As Oonagh says, *"We have some amazing volunteering going on there—GP driving schemes, coffee mornings for isolated older people, craft groups, book groups, two gardening clubs—to mention just a few. I can only think that these activities will really expand all over the country once we get our RSVP manager in post."*

## ***Launch of Second Twigs Garden Club in Dorset***

*Dee Hoy reports on an exciting expansion:*

On Saturday January 10th a new **Twigs of Oakdale** garden club will be launched with monthly meetings at the local library throughout the coming year.

The Oakdale based club will be run by current **Twigs** member **Sue** who is an experienced and knowledgeable gardener known to us all.

Sue will be looking forward to greeting any new members from Oakdale and the nearby surrounding area. She will have meetings on the second Saturday of every month.

I know that she will make a good job of running **Twigs of Oakdale** and look forward to seeing how the club grows under her care. I'd like to give a personal warm welcome to our new group, and offer congratulations on a new beginning for 2015!

The new club will be in addition to the original renamed '**Twigs of Rossmore**' club which will continue to be run by myself, with regular monthly meetings.

*Dee also reports on some other developments:*

Earlier in the year we raised monies for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal and Royal Chelsea Pensioners. Presentation has been made to both The Royal Chelsea Hospital & Royal British Legion which amounted to the sum of £240 with £60 in monies raised from knitted poppies.

A new project which is looking at helping the elderly and those in isolated situations is in need of some voluntary writing, and Dee is looking for people who might be able to help. Interested? Get in contact on:  
deetrish12spot@gmail.com

## ***CSV's 12 Days of Christmas!***



On 1st December CSV launched its 12 Volunteering Days of Christmas Campaign.

The idea is that we are asking people to make a difference over the festive period in many different ways. From carol singing to odd jobs, 12 volunteering ideas have been suggested and it is hoped that these will inspire even the busiest of people to make a difference and help build stronger connections in the local community.

The twelve suggested festive ideas include doing a good deed for the day, cooking for isolated neighbours, being a designated driver over the holidays, helping to put up decorations—all wonderful activities. The aim is that by encouraging people to volunteer at this time, they can be persuaded to make a difference all year round. A volunteer is for life, not just for Christmas!

If you'd like to know more about this campaign, go to

<http://www.csv.org.uk/make-difference-christmas> #12dayscsv

## ***New CSV Fundraising Scheme—Part 2***

So, here's how the new scheme works:

- 1. Sign up** – go to [www.easyfundraising.org.uk/csv](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/csv) and click on the button to sign up.
- 2. Shop** – from the easyfundraising website, search for the retailer you'd like to shop with and click through to the retailer to make your purchase. This tells the retailer you came from easyfundraising. The price is exactly the same as if you'd visited the retailer directly.
- 3. Get a donation** – after you've made your purchase, the retailer will give you a cash reward that *easyfundraising* turn into a donation for CSV.

### **No cost, no catch!**

Please be assured that using the *easyfundraising* website will not cost you a penny. There are no catches or hidden charges and CSV benefit from any donations you make once registered.

Go on, give it a try!

## ***Holidays***

Thank you for all your inputs. The next FOCUS will be published at the end of January.

**CSV HQ Holiday Closures:** HQ is expected to close for the holidays in the early afternoon of 24th December. We re-open on Monday 5th January 2015.

*Have a Very Merry Christmas and  
a Happy New Year!*

*Best wishes—Colin*



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## ***New HQ and Contacts***

CSV's HQ has now moved to:

**The Levy Centre  
18-24 Lower Clapton Road  
Hackney  
London E5 0PD**

Below is the previous list of useful contacts appropriate to RSVP work across CSV. The London-based ones all have a new phone number.

As discussed at the last Advisory Group, the list of useful contacts will shortly be read-dressed.

<b>Is Szoneberg</b> <i>Director of Volunteering Operations</i>	0131 622 7766 <a href="mailto:iszoneberg@csv.org.uk">iszoneberg@csv.org.uk</a>
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<b>Paul Haylock</b> <i>Head of Finance</i>	0203 780 5892 <a href="mailto:phaylock@csv.org.uk">phaylock@csv.org.uk</a>
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