

FOCUS

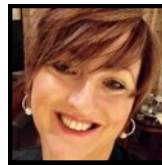
Volunteering Matters RSVP Newsletter
For Coordinators, Organisers and Volunteers
April 2016

Inside this month:

- Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers
 - Coventry You Tube link
 - Radio Oxford 100th walk
 - Fundraising Advice from our HQ team
 - *Vamos Juntos*—the Citywise prison visit scheme
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 - Brighton LifeLines on Sussex Radio
 - New Shared Online Space—a 'Drop Box'
- Plus lots more!



The 100th Get Active Walk, organised by Radio Oxford together with Volunteering Matters. More inside.



Hello everyone,

I hope you all enjoyed a brilliant Easter break and are now looking forward to some well deserved Spring sunshine!

I know that you all continue to be very busy with a multitude of projects across the UK which I've seen are all of great value in the community. We really are such a vital resource that I'd like us to sell ourselves even more. I feel one of our main aims this year should be to develop and grow, increase our role and scope, and spread our volunteering message even wider. Currently RSVP volunteer numbers are about 10,000 and I would like to see what we can do to raise this and increase recruitment. I will be in touch with organisers soon to think about ways of achieving this.

RSVP North Conference—Rethink

We have been listening to what you have been saying and have decided that it would not make sense to go ahead with the North Conference. Instead, as you preferred, we will be looking to arrange smaller local meetings to get together with groups in the north of the UK, since you felt that this would be more useful and helpful.

Several people are leaving the RSVP fold and inside this edition we say our goodbyes. I'd like to wish them all well in their new ventures and thank them for their support to me over the last year.

*Best Wishes
Yvonne*

Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers

The wonderful Norfolk knitting project just grows exponentially and their superb recent newsletter illustrates the great variety and output of their work. The whole project was the brainchild of Organiser **Linda Brown**, and Linda has overseen the growth and development of this amazing scheme since its inception.

As Linda says in the newsletter: "As I look back on 2015 I am simply amazed at the growth of our organisation. We now have four resource centres instead of one, our membership stands at 2570 and we have 121 groups! It is really heart warming to know of so many charities that benefit from our work and so many people who enjoy participating in these activities and whose lives are richer for it. None of this would be able to happen without the hard work of our members in different parts of the county."



The Vintage Christmas Event in Norwich. As Linda says, "A huge success, with around 200 people coming to enjoy the day. Especially popular were the 'chat' times with five of our favourite charities"



St Edmund's Church Hunstanton were looking for someone to make some Nativity dolls at Christmastime. Norfolk Knitters to the rescue! Result?—these beautiful characters. And the church gave a generous thank you donation.

Events are regularly held and Linda points out especially the Roadshow in Diss before Christmas and looks forward to extending into Suffolk with the opening of the Ipswich Wool Loft in April—which will add to the lofts in Norwich, North Norfolk (at Sheringham) and Lowestoft.

Their combined knitting and stitching output is prodigious, so much so that supply sometimes seems to exceed demand, and new outlets are regularly sought!



Sheena Hood (left), leader of the sewing group at Spellbinders Wisbech, with **Margaret Turner** who completed a beautiful Advent calendar

SCHOOLS

Among the many projects and schemes undertaken in RSVP West, their schools programme is of vital importance. Here are two reports from an organiser and a hands-on volunteer.

Making a Difference to Lives, Young and Old

Joan Whitehead, *Regional Schools Development Organiser*, reports:

Our schools project is going from strength to strength. We are now fortunate to have three organ-

isers in Bristol and we have recently branched out into South Gloucestershire and have volunteers in primary and one secondary school.

Our volunteers are diverse. Some are retired, while others combine their volunteering with part time or other voluntary work. Some are grandparents who miss regular contact with their grandchildren, some have recently moved to the area or are recently widowed, while others are looking for new purposeful activities to enjoy. What unites them is their interest in being with youngsters

and their desire to share with them their love of books, numbers, a language or other relevant topics.

Our aim is for volunteers to find a context in which they feel they can help make a difference to pupils' learning. Volunteers delight in describing the pleasure they get from seeing a young child's face light up when they meet. For some pupils, having another adult to relate to in school can make a big difference. Our schools are enthusiastic as they recognise how the presence of other adults with time to spare can play a useful role in developing pupils' confidence and social skills.

The Joy of Volunteering in Schools

Volunteer Judy Harris reports:

My first day as a reading 'buddy' at a Bristol primary school brought back memories of my own school days—walls covered with colourful work, youngsters trotting around purposefully and that indefinable smell of school!

Each week I work with two year groups. I meet three girls in Year 5 (aged 9-10) for an hour—usually as a group but sometimes individually. Their teacher gives us an interesting worksheet that I help the girls to read and discuss. Sometimes we then read a book chosen by them. Seeing the same children regularly

means that I get to know them well and can see their progress during the year.

After lunch I support reading with Year 2 children, aged 6-7. Each child, selected by the teacher, reads to me for about 10 minutes from either their current reading book, a book they choose from the school library or a book that I take along with me. These youngsters vary in their reading age and attention span but are always delightful and great fun.



Judy with pupils

Being a reading volunteer is definitely a rewarding and fun experience for anyone who enjoys being with youngsters and helping them to develop a pleasure in reading.

BRISTOL AGEING BETTER

Congratulations to Organisers **Jan Snook** and **Ken Dolbear** (in partnership with the charity *Alive!*) who have won the first funding obtained from Bristol Ageing Better for supporting their Care Homes work.

Radio Oxford 100th Walk!

BBC Radio Oxford together with Volunteering Matters have regularly organised Get Active Walks and in February were proud to be holding their 100th Walk, this time a 5-mile route around the grounds of Blenheim Palace. The aim was to get 100 walkers for this centenary occasion. Was this achieved? **Kate Brown** of the Volunteering Matters Action Desk reports: *"It was brilliant! We had 101 walkers! The weather was good and everyone really enjoyed themselves.*



There were 29 new people and lots of people we hadn't seen for a while. "

Kate added, *"Many charities encourage walking as a way of raising money. Before the start of the walk we ask for a donation of £1 for a chosen charity. So far we have collected £4,011 for both local and national charities. Before the February walk we made a collection for Sport Relief, the charity that aims to make a difference by encouraging the British public to get active and have fun to help change lives. Of all the money raised by the public through Sport Relief, 50%*



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is used to make a difference, right here at home, in the UK. The other 50% goes towards transforming lives across the world's poorest communities."

To find out more about these Get Active Walks go to <http://getactivewalks.blogspot.com>. As Kate says, *"I try to keep the blog as up to date as possible."* Otherwise you could contact Kate directly at kate.brown@bbc.co.uk.

Dorset East Goodbyes

After many years of valuable volunteering with RSVP, **Judy Green**, **Romy Shepherd** and **Pauline Lawrence** have now decided to move on to pastures new. We thank them very much for their hard work, dedication and achievements in the Dorset East scheme.

Brighton LifeLines

Chris Martin, from PrimeTime, the project for older men in Brighton, was recently interviewed on BBC Sussex Radio to promote the project and get men to sign up. Apparently he was a brilliant interviewee and dealt admirably with some tough questions!

Busy Edinburgh Knitters!



INSPIRING PEOPLE, CHANGING COMMUNITIES

Poole–Dorset East

Rossmore Garden Project

Dee Hoy is planning for a big Open Day at this project on 30th April. As Dee says, *“The garden is not far off being finished so we are all out on a mission now to get it completed by 30th April!”* There will be a sale



The position in March

of different garden items and general crafts along with a tombola.

“Invitations have gone out,” adds Dee, *“and I am particularly happy to say that Councillor **Mari-***

on Lepoidevin has agreed to open the new garden.”

Waitrose Tokens

Dee notes that the Bourne Valley knitting group *Valley Knits* has been selected by Waitrose for their token donation scheme for April. *“This is another surprise for us,”* adds Dee, *“and the money we get will be used to go back into building up the community.”*

This could be a funding opportunity for you also—see over the page

Goodbye to Cindy

Cindy Lane has been running *Wessex Wheelchairs* in Weymouth for many years now, and has decided to leave RSVP for a well-deserved rest. *West Wheelchairs* has been a very valuable mobility scheme making a great difference to the local community, and we thank Cindy very much for all her hard work and diligence in establishing and running this scheme.

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Citywise—Vamos Juntos!



The lottery-funded Citywise scheme covers a wide variety of projects across the London boroughs, and in this edition we are featuring *Vamos Juntos*, a group

of volunteers who provide a vital specialised befriending service for Ibero-American, Spanish and Portuguese prisoners currently in British prisons and detention centres.

Clara Elena Giraldo explained how the group works: *“We make regular visits to prisoners, help them with letters, keep in contact with their families, and organise cultural and educational talks. We aim to provide them with practical, emotional and moral support, make their sentences easier to handle by*



providing links to their world outside, and help with any other challenges they might face in prison.” The group also produce a quarterly newsletter for prisoners, and provide them with any Ibero-American newspapers produced in London. Pictured here are members of the group visiting Huntercombe prison. There are currently 18 volunteers in the group and they have visited over 1,000 inmates in five prisons over the last year.

Citywise scheme will also be celebrating this year’s National Volunteer Week by holding its first Citywise Conference on 16th June.

INSPIRING PEOPLE, CHANGING COMMUNITIES

The Fundraising Page!

Waitrose and John Lewis Opportunities



For any group not already aware of this, Waitrose and John Lewis provide excellent local community fundraising opportunities.

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Marianne Lingwood, one of our Fundraising Managers based at HQ, stresses that making these applications is a simple process and anyone can apply individually to Waitrose and John Lewis.

Waitrose

As Marianne says, *“Each month every Waitrose branch donates £1,000 (£500 in convenience shops) to be split between three local good causes. You just need to apply to be one of those local causes.”* Shoppers at the checkout are then given tokens to vote for the cause of their choice, and the money is allocated in proportion to the votes. Marianne adds, *“Application forms can be found in the stores and of course it is vital how your application is worded so as to have maximum impact and, if accepted, to be the cause shoppers go for when making their choice.”*

John Lewis

Marianne feels that it is also worth applying to the John Lewis scheme which is similar but covers a three month period. Every three months each shop selects three community groups to support, and as with Waitrose, customers use tokens to vote for their favoured group. However in this case there is £3,000 to be distributed. Charities will receive support in whichever way will benefit them the most, either in the form of John Lewis products, volunteering time from Partners, or as financial support.

More information is available on the John Lewis website.

Marianne feels that this is an excellent funding opportunity appropriate to so many RSVP local activities which we could take advantage of. If you need any advice or support in making a funding application in this way, please contact Marianne on:

marianne.lingwood@volunteeringmatters.co.uk
Or **020 3780 5883**

Some Useful Fundraising Advice

HQ Trusts and Lottery Fundraising Manager **Rob Parton** offers some fundraising tips:

Whether you're an experienced fundraiser, or just starting to think about raising funds to develop your project, here are some of top fundraising tips when seeking local grants.

- 1) **Have a good plan for your project** – this is the heart of any good proposal; show ambition, but always be realistic with your goals.
- 2) **Fundraising isn't about the money** (that's just the end result if you're successful) - it's much more about the need you are meeting and the impact that you are going to make (see point 1).
- 3) **Get to know funders** – research them in depth; if they are a charitable foundation look at their accounts on the charity commission to get a sense of what sort of grants they give; always read guidance carefully to make sure you are eligible; take your time to find out more.
- 4) **It's all about who you know** - building relationships is essential to fundraising: using the telephone, meeting in person, communicating via email/letter are your tools to start to develop funding relationships (if you're successful make sure you keep up the relationship, if you're unsuccessful always ask for feedback and REAPPLY).
- 5) **Keep it simple** – make sure your application is clear and succinct; read it aloud, and get someone else to read through it for you to make sure they understand what it is you are asking for.

If your group or organisation has its own constitution you may be eligible to apply to a number of funders in your local area. Some recommended avenues for seeking funding include:

www.j4bcommunity.co.uk (an online directory that you can use to conduct free funding searches),
www.ukcommunityfoundations.org (administrate local grants in 48 locations across the UK), and
www.peopleshealthtrust.org.uk (regularly update their grants to target specific geographical locations).

Do get in touch if you have identified a funder, are looking to make an approach, or if you want any further advice. Volunteering Matters staff and Volunteer Organisers are regularly making funding approaches for projects all over the UK. But we do need to make sure that our fundraising is well coordinated so that we are not approaching the same funders and are making the most of our funder relationships.

rob.parton@volunteeringmatters.co.uk or **020 3780 5887**

Coventry

You Tube

Coventry's excellent RSVP project, funded by the City Council, recently had a very informative and entertaining short film made about their activities. This is now available for all to see on You Tube. Go to this link:

<http://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/celebrating-rsvp-coventry/>

Goodbye to Lesley

We're all very sorry to be saying goodbye to **Lesley Hawkins** who as Development Worker has helmed the Coventry project for over 15 years. She established an excellent series of vital local schemes and will be a hard act to follow. I will especially miss Lesley as she always provided me with good FOCUS copy, and on time!

New Shared RSVP Online Space

RSVP Administrator **Tammy Yugin** reports on a new useful set-up for all RSVP members:

We have created a new shared online space—a Drop Box—as a resource for all organisers and coordinators to access. It contains lots of useful information such as contacts lists, publicity materials, insurance, policies, ID card templates, issues of FOCUS and regional RSVP newsletters produced by organisers around the country—if you want your newsletter to be included, please make sure I'm on your mailing list—tammy.yugin@volunteeringmatters.org.uk.

Over time we want this to grow into something which is a space for people to share ideas, advice and best practice, and to put our volunteers, organisers and coordinators in better contact with each other and help everyone find out about what's going on. We'd like to create separate areas for all the main 'types' of volunteer groups where people can share interesting articles, hints and tips, and general advice. Please do let me know if there is anything in particular you would find helpful to have access to, and if you want to submit anything to share with other groups please do send it to me to get access to this space.

Next time.....

In the June edition of FOCUS look out for news about Silver Sunday, the 50+ Show and our 100 year old knitter!

Useful RSVP Volunteering Matters Contacts

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