

FOCUS

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



Norfolk
Knitters and
Stitchers
Organiser
Linda Brown
with **Yvonne**
at the open-
ing of the
Ipswich Wool
Loft—more
inside

Hello and welcome to this edition of FOCUS. I hope you've all had an enjoyable Spring, and are looking forward to a great Summer.

A key theme for us this year is how we increase volunteer numbers, grow capacity and skills within the teams we have and secure a sustainable RSVP for years to come.

This will be the theme for this year's South Conference—'Growing Stronger Together' - as well as for organisers' meetings across the North and Scotland. We have delayed the programme of meetings in the North and Scotland to allow for the Volunteer Survey to be completed, so that we can give you an overview of the results. Look out for dates in your area over the coming months.

If you haven't already, do please take the time to

complete the survey. As ever your feedback is invaluable. Go to:
RSVPSurvey@volunteeringmatters.org.uk or ring
020 780 5939.

Please also take the time to sign up to the RSVP DROPBOX. This is a valuable resource for us all, as it holds all key documents and is a great place to share best practice from your projects. See more details on page 7.

Wishing you all a great and hopefully sunny summer, and looking forward to seeing many of you over the coming months of visits, meetings and conferences.

Best Wishes
Yvonne

Inside this month:

- North East funding news
- Suffolk Knitters takes off
- Two Scottish volunteers
- Mentoring in a school
- Brighton scheme expands
- Promoting employability in London

North East

Lots of very positive news from **Ashleigh Gibson** and **Angela Foster** on activities in the North East.

CONGRATULATIONS—GREAT FUNDING NEWS!

County Councillor **Anita Savory** has been a brilliant help in fundraising for 'Miles in Motion' to support the Weardale GP transport scheme. Councillor Savory approached Easi-Drive, the National Accident Management Company, who have agreed to donate £500 to the Weardale scheme. A company director said, "We're delighted to be able to show our support for the elderly community in Weardale. Councillor Savory wrote to us about the need for transport, so we were more than happy to help them through the company's wheelsforgood initiative." The Councillor has also campaigned for this project through local pharmacies and has raised over £800 to date. Everyone would like to thank Anita very much for all the brilliant support she is giving to the scheme.

And now, in addition, Durham County Council have agreed to fund the scheme for another year until



Pictured here with **Councillor Savory** [left] are pharmacist **Janet Price** and scheme organiser **Jean Graham**

March 2017. As Angela says, "The past year has been very unsettling for our drivers, the patients and staff. But with this additional funding, we are able to continue to take the patients to their appointments. We are hoping that funding will come from other sources for the future continuation of the scheme."

HERITAGE LOTTERY WW1 FUND

The second heritage lottery project around the Great War is now complete. This focused on the im-

port of knitting on the home front as a morale booster to the troops, and to combat uniform shortages.

"We completed our sessions at Beamish in the half term in costume, showing the visitors the items that had been recreated from original red cross patterns and showing them how to knit. The knitted items will be used in Beamish Museum on a schools project where children learn about WW1 by going round the museum to collect items to send in a parcel to a soldier on the front.

The feedback from the volunteers, the museums and the visitors was excellent. This project was really interesting to be a part of as it looked at the War from a different angle, that of the home front, and how women wanted to help their men, and how the shortage of uniforms and socks led to the mobilization of any one who could knit to 'Knit Their Bit'."

VOLUNTARY AID DETACHMENT

The aim now is to put in a third bid to the Heritage



Lottery World War One fund. Once again the aim will be to study the impact of the war on the home front, and on the changing roles of women and the volunteering roles that arose when men went to war. In this case, the focus will be on the Voluntary Aid Detachment Hospitals (VAD) in the North East.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MIKE!

Congratulations to **Mike McCann**, winner of the National Volunteer Award 2016 for his work with the Walking Health Scheme. These awards are presented by the Ramblers Association. Said Development Manager **Carol Reynolds**, "I am delighted. Mike used to be our walk leader trainer and has given us lots of support



over the years not only in training but working in partnership with the local authority." Pictured here are Mike with wife **Avrille** and **Kate Ashbrook**, National President of the Ramblers Association.

Suffolk Knitters

Norfolk Knitters has grown and grown and spread the word into Suffolk which has now inaugurated its first Wool Loft in Ipswich. We welcome **Sue Bowring** who will be the Organiser for Suffolk Knitters.

Linda Brown, Organiser of Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers, spoke at the occasion about the amazing history of the Norfolk scheme, and Sue spoke about the future ahead in Suffolk.

Sue is busy now recruiting members for the Suffolk scheme with a wide variety of skills, and she plans to set up an Action Group similar to the one in Norfolk.



Visitors enjoying the opening

Norfolk Celebration

A special celebration was held at the North Norfolk Wool Loft Open Day recently to mark—amazingly—the 2,000th member joining Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers! Congratulations!

More North East

MIDDLESBROUGH SPORTING CHANCE

Do check out the video promoting Middlesbrough based project Sporting Chance. This is aimed at men over 50 who may be isolated or suffering from redundancy, retirement, bereavement or injury. The pro-



ject provides a community for these men, keeping them active both physically and mentally. You can connect to the video via the Volunteering Matters Website.



Pictured above is the cutting of the red ribbon, with Sue on the right, and below, Sue and Linda talking to everyone at the opening.



LEADING UK VOLUNTEERING IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

INSPIRING PEOPLE, CHANGING COMMUNITIES

SCOTLAND

This month in Scotland we focus on two volunteers and their brilliant work.

Judith Morgan

Judith has been volunteering for about six years in the Stirling Community Hospital and she tells her own story.

Before I became a hospital volunteer I worked as a Senior Health Promotion Officer in the NHS. I was mainly involved in encouraging primary care to include prevention as part of their service—commonplace now but not 30 years ago.

However I didn't discover RSVP through my work. My partner was a Handyperson Volunteer with RSVP and introduced the concept to me when I retired. My main reason for volunteering was to continue my link with the NHS which had been part of my life since I was 18. I was used to working with NHS personnel and the public and knew I would miss it. Needing to fill each day I was keen to return.

I began my RSVP volunteering in a paediatric ward for 9 months and then moved to the main reception. Before Forth Valley Royal Hospital was built I helped the paid receptionist who was a charismatic and funny woman from Chicago. Following the move to the new hospital, including the receptionist, I was asked to lead the group of ten volunteers needed to cover the desk. Working alone means we rarely see each other so I organised a few lunch time meetings and we have lunch every few months. The volunteers are extremely committed and always text me to let me know if they are unavailable to cover a shift. A new standby volunteer is proving very helpful.

We are very much appreciated by the NHS staff, especially the receptionists at the three outpatient desks, as we direct 350-400 'lost souls' each week to various clinics, minor injuries, X-ray and wards. Other duties include hunt the wheelchair, phoning for taxis and chatting to the lonely. The only downside is the regular few who insist I must be bored or lonely. Not true. Volunteering is a great help in deterring both these emotions and I look forward to my half day 'at the desk' each week.

LEADING UK VOLUNTEERING IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

Pauline Shaw

After moving from England to Scotland, Pauline's local vicar introduced her to the Alloa Knitting Group where she has been volunteering for seven years.

Throughout my time with the Alloa Knitting Group I have seen my skills massively improve and one of my proudest creations was a Usain Bolt doll. I now knit all the time for the Group and the local church. All the goods go to various charities as I love knitting for children. I am now planning my Christmas knitting because I never like to be caught short!

Through the church I've been helping a young girl, Rose [pictured here with Pauline]. She's now almost 18 and I have taught her to knit amongst other things. She attends the Knitting Group and loves being able to chat with everyone and they love chatting to her.

I love the knitting and the Alloa group. Through this I've been able to pick up hints and tips and share my own as well. It also really helped me settle after my move to Scotland—all of a sudden I knew a lot of people in my area.

Knitting for me has been all about charity. The satisfaction of knowing that my knitted items will bring a smile to someone's face is exhilarating. I'm so glad that what I knit provides clothes for a new born baby or can become a toy for a child. I remember once handing over a pillow box that I knitted and just enjoying the smile on the mother's face when she saw that I had put chocolate inside. For me there is no greater joy than knitting for charity, and the fact that through this I've been able to help Rose during her journey to adulthood and improve the life of others makes the experience all the better. When I was just a teenager learning how to knit from my grandmother I probably never thought I'd still be knitting now and doing so for such a worthy cause.



INSPIRING PEOPLE, CHANGING COMMUNITIES

WALES

Lisa and Edie

Lisa is a befriender to Edie and she talks about the experience:

Edie, who is 100 years old next month, was a fiercely independent woman who had been sent away from Wales to go into service at only 14. Now



she lives on her own in the same house she and her husband bought over 70 years ago.

I visit her every Sunday and we have become firm friends. I look forward to my visits as much as she does.

I give up a few hours of my free time but I have gained so much more in return.

Indoor Curling in Neath



Lots of rivalry as teams get down for an afternoon of indoor curling. It was certainly getting very competitive between the Tiger Blues of Llys Nant Fer and the Red Lions of Pantyfedwyn!

MORE NEWS FROM WALES IN THE NEXT EDITION.

LEADING UK VOLUNTEERING IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

Menston School— Mentoring

Roy Tate, RSVP volunteer at Menston School, near Ilkley in West Yorkshire, talks about his experiences and offers some insights about volunteering especially in his mentoring role:

On retirement nearly 12 years ago I was keen to put something back into society as well as giving me contact with people—something my working life had always provided. As a Rotarian I was made aware of the project Listening To Children Read. Four of us, plus my wife, then became volunteers at local schools. I also discussed the project with members of another Rotary Club and they now have four volunteers as well.

Three of us are involved with Menston Primary School and listen to Year One pupils. Each of us is allocated five/six children at the start of the year and we continue with those same children for the whole year thus giving continuity and letting us see the progress made. Teachers and staff are supportive and very grateful for our help which takes weight from their shoulders. For us it is a pleasure to see the children's progress and their increasing confidence. After a few years I was asked by the headmaster to become a mentor, providing advice to boys where it was considered to be helpful. I see the same boys throughout the school year on a weekly basis and liaise closely with their teachers. Each year I am allocated new boys to mentor. I have done this for five years and hope that my advice, help and encouragement has proved useful.

I must say that there is a great feeling of pleasure in seeing the progress made by children whether in reading or otherwise. Without being able to read the children will be disadvantaged for the whole of their lives. At the same time I feel I am contributing to society, looking at the world through a child's eyes and learning from them how to keep up with my computer knowledge.

I would recommend giving up some time to do this to anyone.

Roy also would like to add that he appears at the youngest children's Christmas Party— after leaving his sledge & reindeers on the school roof!

INSPIRING PEOPLE, CHANGING COMMUNITIES

LifeLines Brighton

Excellent News! Brighton's LifeLines Project, one of RSVP's flagship schemes, will now be expanding across the city thanks to a grant from the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities programme.

Already running in the east of Brighton for 8 years, LifeLines is a volunteer-led project for people aged 50 and over. LifeLines runs activities and one-to-one support schemes to help older people stay more active and better engaged with their communities. They recruit, train and support volunteers to start up their own chosen activities at a suitable venue – and have supported activities ranging from computer lessons and ballroom dancing through to bereavement counselling.

Thanks to a grant of just over £200,000, the project is now able to focus on three areas of work:

Firstly, they are going to expand their volunteer-led programme of activities to new areas of Brighton and Hove where older people are currently not as well



Volunteer **Roger** who joined one of the LifeLines projects which made a great difference to him after his wife passed away.

served as other areas of the city, and LifeLines hope to create there a vibrant mix of volunteering opportunities and activities for older people.

Secondly they will also be able to recruit more men as volunteers and participants to the

Prime Time programme, which aims to recruit older men to set up activities that are of interest to them, and then to help find other older men to join in those activities. Currently significantly more women than men join in the volunteering and community activities available to them.

Finally, the new funding will allow LifeLines to revive its HealthLink scheme, which helps people with their health-related appointments by pairing them with a volunteer who can help them get to and make the most of their appointments.

Alan Marchbank, manager of the LifeLines project,

said *"We are delighted to have been successful in securing this funding, which will allow us to build on our success at reaching older people in the East of the City and provide them with opportunities to volunteer with us, or to join volunteer-led activities which benefit their physical and mental health and wellbeing. We would like to thank all our current volunteers for their hard work and dedication which were pivotal in our funding application being successful, and we look forward to working with them and our partner organisations across the City to reach ever more older people and give them the chance to lead or join in activities."*

Exmouth Meeting

Tammy Yugin writes:

Last month we met with RSVP Devon, where a number of organisers and volunteers are involved in projects in Plymouth, Exmouth, Totnes and other areas—ranging from knitting groups to reading in schools, as well as Heathers Hair (as featured in the previous edition of FOCUS). Some of you may remember the knitted breasts that were made for midwives training new mums! They also knit for refugees in Moldova, Jordan and Syria, as well as for orphanages in China and Uganda, and premature baby units and children's centres in the UK.

One of their longest running projects is the Phoenix Tea Bar at Plymouth Magistrates Court, started over 23 years ago by **Edna Bishop**. The tea bar—entirely volunteer run—has raised over £56,000 for dozens of local and national charities (including ourselves). Sadly, the tea bar has now had to close due to new contract requirements from the Magistrates Court. Despite health issues **Edna** continued with the bar as well being involved in various other RSVP Projects. She says: *'We are absolutely heartbroken about the tea bar—we were doing so much good. We are all devastated'*. There are 23 volunteers involved with the tea bar who are now looking for a new volunteering opportunity. They want to stay together as a group, and are meeting this month for a farewell lunch to the tea bar and to discuss new ideas for ways that they can continue their good work. If anyone has any ideas for them, please do get in touch with me on:

tammy.yugin@volunteeringmatters.org.uk

Barnet—Outer London North

Welcome to Jody

A warm welcome to **Jody Hyland** who has agreed to take over the reigns from Barbara Davis (see below) and lead the multi-faceted Barnet project. We'll have more from Jody in the next edition.

Jody is the main contact now for this project on: hyland.jody@yahoo.co.uk

Goodbye to Barbara

After many years of leading the Outer London North RSVP group, **Barbara Davis** has decided to step down. Barbara has written to all friends and colleagues:

After goodness knows how many years I have decided to step down from leading RSVP Barnet. I have had a great time meeting new people and hopefully making many new friends.

New blood with fresh eyes are necessary to move forward and we have been more than fortunate to find someone who is prepared to take on the role. Jody Hyland has stepped forward with a new approach which will be a breath of fresh air and will I believe enable our charity not only to move forward but possibly offer more things to our community.

I intend to remain as Project Manager for Goodwin Court, Athenaeum Nursing Home and the Mill Hill Coffee morning so I will still be around!

We all say many many thanks to Barbara for her wonderful work leading and developing this project for so many years.

Goodwin Court

Another excellent newsletter from **Joy Wyndham** including the many activities taking place in the Barnet area, and also featuring these wonderful pictures from Goodwin Court where residents are modelling the items produced by the Knitting Group based there.



Don't forget the DROPBOX

Lots of people are now starting to use and contribute to our Dropbox—our new shared online space which is a useful resource for all organisers and coordinators to access. It contains lots of useful information such as contact lists, publicity materials, insurance, policies, ID card templates, issues of FOCUS and local newsletters. We want this to be a space for people to share ideas, advice and best practice.

To access the box please contact **Tammy Yugin** on tammy.yugin@volunteeringmatters.org.uk or **020 3780 5886**

Citywise

The lottery-funded Citywise scheme covers a wide variety of projects across the London boroughs, and in this edition we are featuring their valuable *Employability Project*. Project Manager **Leo Atkins** writes:

The benefits of an active later life are widely recognised – to the economy, local community, and well-being of older people themselves. This wellbeing includes both physical benefits and a range of social benefits such as financial security, emotional support, the reduction of stress and a sense of belonging. Older people are finding that financially they are unable to retire as early as they would like, but many have found themselves forced by circumstances into redundancy or early retirement. This can result in loss of confidence, as they try to compete against younger applicants in the job market. Active and purposeful volunteering can often be a bridge for many older people to acquire new skills, build confidence and re-enter the workplace. Accordingly we have developed working partnerships with local employment support services, including Jobcentre Plus, as well as organisations providing services to older residents. We have also been offering workshops on CV writing and interview skills in collaboration with Deloitte, one of our corporate partners. We have already run three of these workshops and feedback from both Deloitte and Citywise volunteers was very positive. Deloitte highlighted the initiative in their Global Impact report and are committed to continue providing this support as part of their corporate volunteering strategy. We are in the process of establishing a mentoring programme whereby Deloitte staff will support Citywise volunteers on a one to one basis



A workshop in action

throughout their job seeking journey and into work. We believe this adds value to the project and hopefully increases the numbers of unemployed older people gaining employment by participating in Citywise. Through engagement in volunteering projects it is hoped that they can increase confidence and self esteem, and with the added input of employment support they can begin the job search process, and engage in peer support initiatives such as job clubs.

LEADING UK VOLUNTEERING IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

Volunteer Survey

DON'T FORGET!

You still have until the end of June to take part in the Volunteer Survey. Please do participate—go to: RSVPSurvey@volunteeringmatters.org.uk or ring 020 780 5939. Your views really do matter.

Useful RSVP Volunteering Matters Contacts

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