

FOCUS

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



Volunteering in Schools meeting—from the left **Dorothy Falconer** (North East), **Roy Tate** (West Yorkshire), **Joan Whitehead** (West), **Teresa Walters** (Wales) **Yvonne Ogden** (UK RSVP Manager) and **Tony Bell** (Lambeth, London)

Hello and welcome to this edition of FOCUS. I hope you've all been enjoying the sun and whether you've had a 'staycation' or 'vacation' I hope you've had a great time!

South Conference. It's been very busy here and things are moving ahead for our *South Conference* in Salisbury—I hope you have the date, **12th October**, in your diary! As you know, the key theme of this conference is '*growing stronger together*' and I'm looking forward to volunteer organisers and coordinators sharing their knowledge about recruitment and retention of volunteers and succession planning so that we can continue to grow RSVP across the UK.

Volunteering in Schools. This month in Birmingham we hosted the first of our project specific working groups. Volunteering in Schools is a very successful and well supported activity across the UK. I was joined by representatives of RSVP staff and volunteer led projects and solo volunteers from across England, Scotland and Wales to look at a delivery framework to help support our work in schools going forward.

Tim Smith from Facilities also joined us to look at insurance for our schools volunteering, and some great, well thought out conversations were had.

This is only the beginning of our journey, but we hope to consult with schools volunteers across the country before agreeing anything. In the New Year I'd like to look at working groups across our other key projects, so watch this space for more information!

At the end of last month I visited our Poole organisers and am delighted to see the joint working that's going on there—so a big thank you to **Dee Hoy** and **Jean Frake** for all their hard work.

This month I visited RSVP Forth Valley where I was very pleased to meet our new regional organiser **Anne Mackay** and visit the Dunblane Knitters, who made me feel very welcome.

It was sad to say goodbye to **Mavis Francis** our RSVP coordinator in Doncaster—see inside.

Best Wishes
Yvonne

Cool Therapy Canines are go in Wales!

Encouraging Reading...

At Llandeilo Primary School in Carmarthenshire, dogs **Riley** and **Leila** recently enjoyed a star-spangled celebrity reception. Together with their handlers **Leanne McFarland** and **Susan Smith** of Carmarthenshire Therapy Dogs, they strutted their stuff on the catwalk (dogwalk?) to the sound of *Hound Dog* and then demonstrated to pupils how much they loved to listen to people reading—and to children's stories in particular!

The event marked the launch of *Reading with Dogs* in Carmarthenshire, a collaboration between Carmarthenshire Therapy Dogs and Volunteering Matters' pan-Wales project *Learn Together Cymru*. Learn Together Cymru Project Co-ordinator **Rebekah Sharpe** explained, "Although most of our volunteers are human—and we are always keen to recruit more—research has shown that reading to dogs can also be immensely valuable in promoting a child's love of reading and their reading skills. For some children, reading to a dog can be a real boost to confidence: the dogs are always pleased to have the attention and they never criticize!"

Susan Smith from Carmarthenshire Therapy Dogs explained that both the volunteers and their dogs go through a selection and training process to ensure that both are suitable for being in school. She is keen to hear from more dog owners who think that their pets have the temperament to join the project.

After the launch event, Head Teacher **Karen Towns**, who was the first Head in Wales to request a *Reading with Dogs* volunteer, will be distributing leaflets to request that volunteers – with or without dogs – come forward to listen regularly to as many of the children as possible.



...and Providing Therapy



Carmarthenshire Therapy Dog volunteer **Ann Cooper** visits residents at Brookfield House on a weekly basis with her lovely dogs **Lady** and **Bounce**. **Clarice** (pictured) has become very attached to her weekly visits from therapy dogs and it is something that she eagerly anticipates. **Cillian Barry**, Registered Manager at Brookfield House said, "I would like thank all at Volunteering Matters for arranging this and to Ann, Lady and Bounce for brightening up the lives of our service users."

Ann has kindly offered to make dog socks for use when visiting the elderly with delicate skin, where a scratch can cause major problems. The socks are made to measure and have slightly elasticated tops to keep them up.

Scotland

Jack attends Queen's Garden Party

Jack Paterson from Alloa has been an RSVP handy-person volunteer for over ten years, and he was delighted to be invited to the Queen's Garden Party at Holyrood Palace on July 5.



Jack being handy

Over the years, Jack has used his skills and experience to help hundreds of older people with maintenance jobs in their own homes.

The volunteer handy-person service in Stirling and Clackmannanshire provides support for older people with everyday tasks including rewiring plugs, fitting batteries in smoke alarms, assembling flat pack furniture and putting up shelves. This service helps older people to live independently in their own homes.

Thousands of older people have benefited over the past decade and the group are also looking for new volunteers to help them expand



further. Jack said: *"I started as a volunteer handy-person in 2005 and I find it a lot of fun. It means a lot to me that I can use my skills and experience to help older people who struggle with these things in their own homes. It also gives me the opportunity to keep active in retirement."*

Project coordinator **John Brown** said: *"We have a fantastic team of dedicated volunteers who complete hundreds of handy jobs each year—we simply wouldn't be able to operate without them. Jack deserves a huge deal of credit. He has made a massive contribution to our project."*

The Royal Household hosts four garden parties a year, and one of these parties take place in the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh.

People from all walks of life are invited to the garden party in recognition of their services to charity, the public sector and the armed forces. The Queen and other members of the Royal Household circulate amongst guests and will generally speak to each guest.

New Volunteer Organiser Anne

As Yvonne mentions on page 1, we wish a very warm welcome to **Anne Mackay**, our new lead Forth Valley Volunteer Organiser.

Goodbye to Mavis

We're all sorry to be saying goodbye to **Mavis Francis** our RSVP coordinator in Doncaster.

Yvonne says, *"I'd like to personally thank Mavis for all her hard work and support in Doncaster and wish her well for the future."*

Essex Knitters and Stitchers

Twigs



Essex Knitters and Stitchers
Knitting and Stitching for Charity

Special Event

2pm Monday 11th July
Boreham Village Hall,
Main Road, Boreham, CM3 3JD

Wool Patterns Buttons needles
Display of Knitting and sewing for charity
Tea, coffee, cake and chat
Free ball of wool for everybody!

All Welcome!

Wendy Morrissey 01246 233482
www.essexknitters.co.uk

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS
Charity number 291222

Affiliated to Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers
www.norfolkknitters.co.uk

Congratulations to the new Essex Knitters and Stitchers Group who held a really successful event recently at Boreham and attracted 58 people along to find out all about their activities.

Run by **Wendy Morrissey**, the Essex Group is an offshoot from the very successful Norfolk Group and shows every sign of expanding as

quickly. Wendy was delighted with the Boreham

event and said, "It was encouraging that the open afternoon went so well. I was pleased that representatives from some of the local charities that we knit for were able to attend. It



Wendy (above left) talks to a guest and (below left and right) visitors enjoy the day

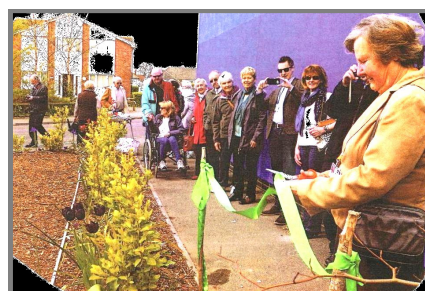
was lovely that they were able to meet the ladies who knit for them and for everyone to learn more about the individual charities. It is great that we have gained some more knitters to join the Essex Knitters and Stitchers."



Good to hear from TWIGS, the Poole gardening club, with another excellent newsletter full of horticultural activities. Run by **Dee Hoy**, TWIGS is also affectionately known as 'the social event club for the laid back gardener'.

AWARDS

Congratulations to the knitting group on being awarded £289 via the *Waitrose Tokens* scheme. And more congratulations on receiving £500 from the *Bourne Valley Community Chest* which went towards the cost of creating the Rossmore Garden Project, opened at the end of April by local councillor



Marion Le Poidevin.

AMERICAN BRUNCH

Early in August an American Brunch was held and volunteer members of the RSVP Poole group came along to join in the day. It was a splendid occasion and there were two competitions—for the best begonia (winner **Andrew Borrill**), and for a picture of the best pot plant (winner **Janet Bulstrode**).

As Dee says, "The sun came out and shone all day as we hid under the sun umbrellas. We had a wonderful food celebration with a lot of cooking from home grown goods, finishing off with ice cream cones. All that could be heard was non stop chat and laughter!"



Citywise Celebrates

Volunteering Matters CEO **Oonagh Aitken**, Chair **Anne Heal** and several trustees were delighted to help *Citywise* celebrate over two years of excellent achievement

at their recent get-together. *Citywise* is a pan-London Lottery funded project for older volunteers covering a wide variety of schemes across the

capital, and Oonagh introduced the celebration by talking about the vital importance of volunteering to the whole community and the commitment and diligence of the volunteers in *Citywise*.

From supporting Latin-American prisoners to reading in schools, from supporting Iranian refugees to working in a community garden, the *Citywise* umbrella covers quite a range of activities. Volunteers representing many of the schemes spoke about their activities, their pleasure in volunteering and the value and impact they felt their volunteering activities contributed to the community. It was an engaging and illuminating day.

Lindsey, who is part of the Employability Programme undertaken in conjunction with DeLoitte, spoke about her need to find work following unemployment and how *Citywise* opened her eyes to future possibilities. *"For me, engagement was the key. People fascinate me and I realised I can give something back and that was my starting point."* Lindsey began helping with reading in a primary school, then went on to pilot a guide to London Living for people whose first language wasn't English, and then started



the *Citywise* Media Project building a case study database of volunteers and their work. In a short span of time, said Lindsey, *"Citywise made me aware of unexplored opportunities, they guided and encouraged me such that I met different people and learnt a lot from the different projects."*

Lisa, who was a beneficiary of the Befriending Project,

spoke movingly about how volunteers contacted her and gave vital support at a crucial time in her life when she was low, isolated and



afflicted by mental health problems. Gradually, by being able to talk to our volunteers including **Winifred**, Lisa was able to move forward with her life. *"This has had an enormous impact on me – my mental health has improved as a result of being able to talk through my problems with another person. I can now talk openly, make better choices – and I now have more self-confidence which has helped me to try new things such as speaking in public."* These



Above, members and guests enjoy the day; below, **Anne** presenting an award to volunteer **Agnes Akinseye**

are just two of the many powerful stories we heard. Anne closed the proceedings by presenting volunteer awards, and spoke about how moved she was to hear the stories told by the volunteer representatives. *"It was a truly inspiring morning,"* said Anne. *"Hearing from both the volunteers and some of the people they*

have been working with shows just what a difference volunteering of all sorts can make. The impact of older volunteers in the communities they support is immensely valuable - and the volunteers also were able to tell us what tremendous benefit they personally got from the experience. I was so proud to be there and meet so many people who are doing such great things."



RSVP West

NEW BEST PRACTICE GUIDES FOR CARE HOME STAFF

A free tool to improve the lives of older people living in care homes, *Making a Difference*, has been produced by UK organisation *Alive!* in partnership with Bristol City Council and **RSVP West**. Positive relationships between residents, staff and relatives are at the heart of good care and care home management has a vital role to play in nurturing the positive interactions which lead to close relationships.

Making a Difference consists of two guides, one for care home managers and one for care staff. The guides are designed to provide simple, practical ideas to ensure that developing strong relationships with residents is a top priority for care homes. The guide for care staff offers pragmatic suggestions for engaging with residents and getting to know them when undertaking their care work. To make sure they're fit for purpose, the guides were developed in conjunction with care managers and staff and can be used as part of an induction session as well as a resource for ongoing training.

Simon Bernstein, CEO of *Alive!*, says, "As well as offering an outstanding range of person-centred activities through our own presenters and training care staff to deliver high quality activity sessions themselves, we are dedicated to improving the lives of older people in care by championing their access to purposeful activity and intellectual, social and emotional engagement. Our policy is to share best practice with all who can benefit. **RSVP's** team of Lay Assessors will also be using the guides with care homes, as part of their work alongside Bristol City Council's Quality Assurance Officers, to support and promote the importance of quality of life for residents."

Mike Hennessey, Bristol City Council's Service Director for Adult Social Care, said: "Bristol City Council works with hundreds of organisations providing care and support to our citizens every day. Our ambition is to be a caring city and a great place to grow old. We are continually looking at how we can better support our ageing population. *Alive!* and **RSVP**, with the Council, have produced this new guide which is a good example of partnership working to improve

quality of care across the city, as strengthening relationships between care home staff and the people they look after will have many mutual benefits. I hope these new free training resources will be helpful for all providers working to treat people as individuals, with their own stories, preferences and value which is absolutely essential to high quality care."

Founded in 2009, *Alive!* has grown rapidly to become one of the leading practitioners in the UK of meaningful engagement for older people in care, and *Alive!*'s training courses empower care staff to deliver person-centred activities themselves.

Judy Green Award

Congratulations to former RSVP Volunteer Organiser **Judy Green** who has won a mayoral award for her services to volunteering. Volunteering Matters CEO **Oonagh Aitken** wrote to Judy thanking her:

Dear Judy,

I was delighted to hear that you have been successfully nominated for the Mayor's Community Champions Gold Award and would like to offer my congratulations, both personally and on behalf of Volunteering Matters.

As a long standing volunteer delivering years of vital service and hard work, it is clear that this is a well deserved award. The projects, volunteers and organisers you have supported, especially in your time as an RSVP volunteer, have made a difference to so many older people's lives across Dorset East. On behalf of RSVP and Volunteering Matters congratulations again on a well deserved award.

Oonagh Aitken

Results of the Volunteer Survey

Thank you to everyone who took place in our recent volunteer survey. This has been a very important exercise.

The results are due out in September and we will report these in FOCUS as soon as they become available.

North East

Stockton on Tees



Congratulations to the One Small Step Befriending Project which reached the final three in the Health Impact Category at the Catalyst Awards. As Project Administrator **Julia Pennock** reports, these awards recognise and celebrate the volunteer sector in the borough.

This wonderful collage shows the delight of everyone involved.

Sporting Chance Award

In the last edition we directed you to the wonderful video made by Sporting Chance—the group set up in Middlesbrough which runs men’s activities to improve physical health and mental well being, as well as to reduce social isolation.

The great news is that the group has now been awarded £30,000 from Stockton and Hartlepool Councils and North Tees Clinical Commissioning Group—who fund innovative projects to reduce hospital admission, and improve people’s health and well being leading to reduced GP appointments—in order to do a pilot in Stockton. Congratulations!



Brexit and us

These are extracts from Oonagh's message about the referendum vote and the likely impact on Volunteering Matters:

I thought that it would be a good moment to talk to you about what I believe this decision will mean for our charity.

One thing is really clear; nothing is going to change for us in the short term.....We know that negotiations cannot start until Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty is invoked. We have seen some movement in markets and currency but things may well settle down.However, we witnessed a toxic and divisive campaign. We saw communities and families divided. Longer term, we may find further cuts to public services. Since the referendum, there have been reports of racist incidents and there are intergenerational tensions resulting from a perception that the older generation voted to leave while younger voters wanted to remain.

What does all this mean for us?

As you all know, we have a European team, working on a range of projects and supporting our European network, Volonteurope. Their work is supported by an operating grant from the European Commission and we have an assurance that this grant will be honoured until 2018 at least. Our project funding is also secure. Our full time volunteering programme receives many volunteers from the EU through the European Volunteer Service. We hope that young people will still be able to come to the UK through this route.

I believe there are challenges to this referendum decision for charities but opportunities as well. The response of civil society organisations like ours should be to try to help to heal some of the divisions in communities. Our work is more essential than ever. We believe that community cohesion can be supported by volunteering. Our volunteers work with some of the most vulnerable people in society and in some of the poorest communities. We must ensure that these people are not left behind if there is a downturn in economic circumstances.....We can offer so many, increasingly vital, services for young people, disabled people families and older and retired people.

Our trustees, while concerned overall about the decision to leave the EU, are optimistic and confident about the future of our charity.

I'd like to thank you for your hard work now, and ahead, as we continue to strengthen our organisation and make sure that the people that need our services most receive them.

Useful RSVP Volunteering Matters Contacts

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Goodbye to Rob

We're all sorry to be saying goodbye to Rob Parton, our Fundraising, Trusts and Lottery Manager, and wish him good luck in his new job at the Barbican Arts Centre in London. Many RSVP projects have been grateful for Rob's help and advice, and as he says, *"It's been a pleasure learning about all the amazing projects delivered through RSVP and the great impact our volunteers have. I've met some really inspirational people and wish everyone the best of luck for the future."*

**For all FOCUS matters please contact
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