

Volunteering News from



From the Regional Coordinator

New Members

A big welcome to all those new members who have joined us since the last edition of *Volunteering News*.

This edition is the first to be produced under the guidance of its new Editor **Edith Lowe**, with the excellent support of publisher **Sandra Barnes**. Apart from working with **Joan Whitehead** as a Schools volunteer in Bath, **Ede** has also agreed to become our **Regional Marketing Organiser** and lead on a mission to raise RSVP's profile locally. Any thoughts you have on this very important issue will be gratefully received.

We are also delighted to welcome **Paula Johnson**, who has joined Ken Dolbear and Jan Snook's Bristol Lay Assessors team as their **Home Care Organiser**. This scheme is extremely successful – and growing – and we hope in time to extend it to other local authority areas.

Friends of RSVP West Region Charity

As you know, this charity's sole purpose is to raise funds to support the activities of all our members in the RSVP West Region. We have recently taken steps to strengthen its operations, and we are particularly pleased that the independent accountant who handles its annual accounts, **Vanessa Kitchen**, has agreed to join its Trustee group - the others are Sylvia Carpenter, Joan Whitehead, Jan Snook, John Griffiths and myself.



Rosemary Grant, Bristol Surgery Schemes; Sylvia Carpenter, Regional Surgery and Drivers Schemes; and Bob Maggs, Regional Coordinator, at RSVP Organisers' Meeting in Bristol, 8 September 2016

Fundraising

We are pleased to announce that one of our local authority funders is significantly increasing their financial support over the next two years because they want us 'to expand our community services and schools programme more quickly', and because our volunteer-led model makes us 'so sustainable'.

And Finally

Many thanks for all your efforts and the help and excellent support you provide. We do know that the services you offer are very much appreciated and, hopefully, also bring enormous satisfaction to all our members.

Happy Volunteering!

Bob Maggs

RSVP West, The CREATE Centre, Smeaton Road, Bristol BS1 6XN

www.rsvp-west.org.uk 0117 922 4392

We are part of Volunteering Matters, the leading UK volunteering charity, in policy and practice

Retire into action

NEW VOLUNTEERS, NEW SCHOOL

At the beginning of this year, two new volunteers, Sue Parker and Mark Fraser, started reading with pupils at Bathampton Primary School.

The secret of genius is to carry the spirit of the child into old age, which means never losing your enthusiasm.
Aldous Huxley

Head teacher Paul Falkus

We were delighted to be contacted by Joan Whitehead from RSVP to ask if we would be interested in accepting volunteers to listen to our pupils read and were thrilled to welcome **Mark** and **Susan**, who have generously volunteered their time to assist children with their reading once a week.

Sue Parker

"After many years in Cambridge working as an occupational therapist, especially with families - and after taking a TEFL course, six months ago - I found myself agreeing to volunteer with young readers at Bathampton Primary School, work that seemed to suit both my experience and skills.

I spend one morning a week with all the children (individually) in classes One or Two, listening to each child for about 10 minutes. The children love talking about their chosen books and get really involved with the characters and stories (especially the gory ones!) Most of the children have strong parental input - much welcomed; the only problems arise when the pupils forget to bring their books, almost inevitable at such a young age."

I love the work and the way just talking about books and stories can help kindle their enthusiasm - hopefully for life!

Susan has been reading with our younger pupils in Year 1. Her support has been invaluable to both the children and the teachers. Her enthusiasm is infectious, as the children always leave their sessions happy and looking forward to reading.



Sue Parker with one of her readers

"I like reading with Sue because she is kind and listens." (George)

"I like talking about my book with Sue, she always asks me questions." (Amy)

I must say, I find television very educational. The minute somebody turns it on, I go into the library and read a good book.
Groucho Marx

RSVP's aim is to encourage the over 50's to volunteer for the benefit of their local community

Retire into action

Mark Fraser

"Having worked as a General Practitioner in Kent for thirty years or so, my wife and I decided to move to Bath (our eldest son and his family live in Wiltshire and our daughter is completing her Oncology training in Plymouth).

After we had settled in, both Veronica and I felt somewhat underemployed and missed the structure our employment had provided. For the previous two or three years Veronica had been working in Wandsworth Prison in London for the charity Fine Cell Work, and her experience there reinforced what, I suppose, we already knew: that many of the prisoners had extremely poor levels of literacy.

Through RSVP we were made aware of the possibility of becoming a volunteer in a local school to help pupils improve their reading skills.

I can only say that I have found the staff at Bathampton most supportive and appreciative of the little that I contribute, and the pupils are delightful and easy to engage with. Having gained a little experience in this lovely, rural school, next term I am looking forward to adding to my volunteering by also working in another Bath school, St Andrew's C of E Primary, with its diverse intake and creative approach to learning.

And from a purely selfish point of view, the sessions – lasting between one and two hours – are pretty flexible, so one doesn't feel too guilty when pleading leave of absence on the grounds of holidays or grand-parenting duties!"



Mark with some of his readers

"Mark is really nice and kind. I like reading with him because he tells us lots of information about difficult words." (Cam)

"He is kind and theatrical which makes it fun." (Fergus)

"He helps me with expression so that I read the sentence in the correct way. For example, he helps me when words are in italics." (Kate)

Mark offers excellent support to Year 5 children, helping with the pronunciation and meaning of difficult words, phrasing, rhythm and expression, enabling them to become more confident, fluent readers. Benefiting from his wide knowledge of all manner of subjects, the children love to engage in discussions and extend their own knowledge whilst sharing their books with him. They have also expressed how amusing and interesting his anecdotes can be!

The reading sessions are very popular and the children are always very enthusiastic to read. The help offered by these lovely volunteers is proving to make a real difference, boosting the children's confidence and enjoyment of reading. And quite apart from that, they are benefiting from the life experience and wisdom of senior members of the community.

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Bristol School Volunteers Get Together Over Cake and Coffee!

Sue Andreson, Mina Malpass and Judy Harris organised a coffee morning at Bristol's Bordeaux Quays to thank local volunteers for their hard work reading with children in schools.



"We had 22 volunteers turning up, as well as Mina, Judy and me. Everyone seemed to get something out of it and said how nice it was to share their experiences with each other. For a lot of those who had been doing it for several years this was the first RSVP event they had been to so it was really worthwhile doing it and something we will repeat."

Sue Andreson

Top:
Renewing old acquaintances
and making new friends
with a common bond



Bottom:
Hugh McGovern (left) and
George Biggin (right)
swap stories

Bristol Learning City

Many of RSVP's volunteers live in Bristol and may already have become involved in the city's Year of Learning initiated by the former mayor, George Ferguson.

Learning Cities are global, and involve organisations working in partnership, both to create and promote learning opportunities for all ages, groups and communities across the city.

Four 'challenge groups' have been set up in Bristol to focus on specific aspects. The two most relevant to RSVP are Learning for Life, which aims to reduce the social isolation of Bristol citizens, and Learning for Everyone, which has a remit to increase the wellbeing of all citizens and communities. RSVP is represented on the former, as older people are among the groups who can experience social isolation. The other two challenge groups are focused on Learning for Education and for Work.

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Retire into action

As part of the Learning City initiative, individuals are being encouraged to become Learning Ambassadors, in order to help change attitudes and behaviour, promote learning and inspire others to participate in learning activities, both formal and informal. If you would like to become a Learning Ambassador - or know someone you would like to nominate - then do look at the Learning City website: learning.city@bristol.gov.uk .

There is still time to become involved!

Tackling Fuel Poverty

The Home Energy Team at the Centre for Sustainable Energy provides free, impartial energy saving advice. This includes advice on keeping warm and well in winter, cutting your energy bills, referrals for home visits and funding for energy saving improvements.

**Please call them free on 0800 082 2234
or email: home.energy@cse.org.uk**

Upcoming Event

On 28 September RSVP will be holding a reception at BRLSI in Queen Square, Bath, to celebrate the volunteers who have been reading with children in local schools - and the schools who have welcomed them.

If you know of anyone who hasn't yet been contacted - or if you think that someone you've worked with would appreciate being recognised - then please contact Joan Whitehead: joan.whitehead@rsvp-west.org.uk

They provide:

- A useful advice website www.cse.org.uk/loveyourhome
- Advice available for home owners, private and social tenants and private sector landlords.
- Advice on insulation and heating improvements, grant and discounts, energy bills including debt, switching energy suppliers, understanding meters - including smart meters, energy consumption and condensation, damp and mould treatment.
- Help to access the energy companies.
- Home visits for more complex bill or switching enquiries, heating controls advice e.g. controlling night storage heaters, and condensation, damp and mould advice.
- Support and advice for clients looking to remove a prepayment meter.
- Onward referrals to installers of insulation and heating improvements.
- Onward referrals to other agencies for further support e.g. other debt advice and charity searches for funding.

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Bathwick Boathouse Reception



Many thanks to Joan Whitehead for organising such a successful evening in July at the Bathwick Boathouse! Everyone wine, dined and shared their experiences of reading in local schools, and it was fascinating to hear about the different backgrounds of each individual. We are all participating for our own reasons - and perhaps getting even more back than we put in!

Let Us Know What You Think!

I know many people tend to opt out of surveys and questionnaires; that said, most of us welcome the chance to make a difference when it is something we believe in - after all, that's why most people join RSVP in the first place. If you and your volunteers would like to be heard and help support the aims of the newsletter, please get in touch with me directly. If necessary, I can interview you by telephone or in person and write up the stories with your approval.

I would welcome any emailed pieces. Also, it is always good to have associated photographs, if possible.

Ede Lowe (tel: 01225 443065
email: lowe.edith@gmail.com)

Volunteering News Copy

We are delighted to announce that Ede Lowe has very kindly taken over as the new Editor* of RSVP West Region's newsletter.

We are determined to make it even better and, in particular, use it more extensively for external recruitment purposes, and this will only happen if we include good copy about the joys of volunteering!

We are hoping to publish a winter edition, so we need copy as soon as possible please.

* Many thanks to Sue Silvey for her excellent work as the previous Editor.

We've put more effort into helping folks reach old age than into helping them enjoy it

Frank A. Clark

Please can you and your volunteers help me by sending in your own stories, however brief or long, about your experiences with volunteering - what does it mean to be out in the community, giving your time, meeting and working with people, old and young? Do you think you help others? Is that why you volunteer? Does this help you as much as it helps others?

Thinking Ahead

A recent study by the charity Independent Age has calculated that around seven million people in the UK have never discussed where and how they would live if they could no longer live at home.

Get involved,

stay involved,

talk to friends,

talk to strangers,

do something new.

Surprisingly – or perhaps not surprisingly – this survey was conducted among those over the age of 65, surely the age group most likely to be immediately and directly affected by change in circumstance, and it behoves all of us to plan for the future.

No-one enjoys imagining what their lives would be like with less mobility, less money, less companionship, less choice – in short, less freedom – in fact all the minuses that increasing years often seem to bring. But there are three things we can all do, no matter what age we are.

Start volunteering.

Keep Volunteering.

First, we can look hard at what we have, especially in terms of health and finance, and we can plan for the short term and the long term, for the inevitable and for the unexpected. Very few people have all the answers. That's where organisations like Age UK, and individuals like doctors and solicitors, come in. We mustn't hide our heads in the sand or be afraid to ask for help and advice.

Second, we need to talk to one another, within and across the generations. Families (and I count my own among them) tend to avoid the Awkward Conversation in case it upsets or offends. But we are all living longer and only the very luckiest reach a century without a single setback along the way.

And finally, that old adage, seize the day. Everyone has something to offer; age is no barrier. Get involved, stay involved, talk to friends, talk to strangers, do something new. Start volunteering. Keep volunteering!

Edith Lowe

Retire into action

Contacts for RSVP West Projects

Surgeries and Drivers Groups

Dr Sylvia Carpenter sylvia.carpenter@rsvp-west.org.uk

Schools Programme

Joan Whitehead joan.whitehead@rsvp-west.org.uk

Lay Assessors

Ken Dolbear ken.dolbear@rsvp-west.org.uk

Jan Snook jan.snook@rsvp-west.org.uk

Office Coordinator (Membership Database Updates)

Sue Hughes sue.i.hughes@aol.co.uk

Knitting

Judith Cains cainsie36@gmail.com

External Contacts

We are very keen to maximise the external circulation of this newsletter for recruitment purposes and in order to raise RSVP's profile locally. To this end, please send Sue Hughes, our Office Coordinator, (sue.i.hughes@aol.co.uk) the names and email addresses of your external contacts.

Bob Maggs
Regional Coordinator



Are you over 50 with time to spare and skills to share? Then volunteer with RSVP!

You could help all kinds of people, young and old, in all kinds of places. The choice is yours and you decide how much time you can spare.

Use your experience to help other people in your community. You will have fun and make new friends.

We always need volunteers and volunteer organisers so please get in touch.

T: 0117 922 4392 E: office@rsvp-west.org.uk
www.rsvp-west.org.uk