

Welcome to our latest edition. We hope you enjoy reading some very interesting items across a range of RSVP projects.

Tribute lunch in memory of Bob Maggs

Around 25 RSVP West Organisers gathered for a buffet lunch in April, in memory of Bob Maggs, who died last November having led RSVP West as our Regional Coordinator for nearly 30 years.



We were delighted to be joined by Bob's daughter Polly, his son David and his sister-in-law Chris, as well as Natasha John (Head of Volunteering Engagement at Volunteering Matters) and Kay Libby (CEO of Age UK Bristol).

Sylvia Carpenter, Kay and Natasha shared their often moving memories of Bob in the context of RSVP and Chris gave a more personal, and often amusing, description of family life with Bob. Copies of a special tribute edition of Volunteering News were also available. This provides personal memories and anecdotes of Bob from

many of the people he worked with in RSVP and Volunteering Matters over the last 30 years. It is significant that the tribute edition of Volunteering News was twice as long as normal because of the large number of people who wanted to contribute!

What could have been a sad occasion was in fact very positive and affirming – Bob's commitment

to RSVP, his enthusiasm, his dynamism and his mischievous sense of humour came across loud and clear in everybody's memories of him.

The occasion also enabled us to look forwards and to discuss future plans within both RSVP and Volunteering Matters. It was a memorable and uplifting occasion, of which we are sure Bob would have approved.

Judy Harris, Interim Joint Regional Coordinator and Schools Development Organiser, RSVP West

Friends of RSVP West Region

All of RSVP West's activities are funded by the associated charity "The Friends of RSVP West Region", which will soon be looking for additional members to join the Board of Trustees. Further information about this will be circulated in due course.

We will shortly be advertising for a new RSVP West Regional Coordinator. If you are interested, please keep checking on our website <https://rsvp-west.org.uk> for further information.

Falldon Way Tea and Talk group

We have had two quite exciting recent meet-ups. The first was one of our favourites where the lovely Nicola from the Alive group came and entertained us. Then on the 4th July, Election Day, Eve Gordon who has been a volunteer at the surgery for a long time invited us to her house for tea. This has started to become our annual event - last year we were able to sit outside in her garden but this year it had to be indoors. Eve had also arranged a Ukulele player who sang country songs for us. This was a brilliant afternoon that everyone enjoyed thoroughly. **Mina Tanna**



Recognition of long-standing input from Ann May and Ken Dolbear

The lunch in April held in tribute to Bob Maggs, described elsewhere in this Newsletter, also provided us with an excellent opportunity to recognise the long-standing input of two other RSVP West members.

Ann May has led the award-winning team of RSVP volunteers on The Matthew of Bristol, the replica of John Cabot's ship in the Harbour, for over 20 years whilst Ken Dolbear set up and then led the scheme by which a team of RSVP West volunteers act as lay assessors in Bristol care homes, monitoring the residents' quality of life and reporting any concerns to Bristol City Council. This is the only scheme of its kind in the country.

Jan Snook, Bob's partner and a senior member of RSVP West for many years, spoke eloquently at the lunch about each of their contributions and presented tokens of our appreciation. Ken has now stepped back from RSVP, but Ann is continuing her role, which includes helping with maintenance of The Matthew and conducting public and school tours around the ship.

We are very grateful to both of them for their incredible input to RSVP!





Thank you, Shirley Stark!

Shirley Stark recently stepped down from RSVP after having undertaken many roles for over 30 years. She worked closely with Bob Maggs in the early days of the organisation, attending conferences and helping to set up several of RSVP West's early projects. Her final role was as Co-Organiser, with Judith Caines, of the Knitting Group.

Shirley is now finding it difficult to get out and about, so Jan Snook and I visited her at home during the Spring to pass on tokens of our appreciation for her long and productive contribution to RSVP West. It was fascinating to hear her stories from the last 30 years and how RSVP West has evolved over that time.

Thank you, Shirley, for all your input!



Judy Harris, Interim Joint Regional Coordinator and Schools Development Organiser, RSVP West

The Matthew

The Matthew of Bristol Summer Season is now in full swing, after the Winter months which were taken up with general maintenance etc. The Season commenced on 1st April and since then we have completed some 62 sailings, including Gorge Trips, Fish and Chip Trips, Harbour and School Trips. Considering the extremely poor wet weather conditions we have suffered until recently, this was no mean feat.

At the time of writing this we still have some 24 school trips to do before the schools break up for the Summer, as well as the Fish and Chip, Gorge and Private Trips.

The Matthew Diary is full and we have the Harbour Festival looming on the horizon (July 20th and 21st) and we will be running harbour trips on both those days.

We have been widely advertising for new volunteers and have recently taken on three. The latest of these has just retired from a position in the local maritime industry. These three have joined a very dedicated team of volunteers who are committed to the ship and have much

knowledge of John Cabot and his original voyage to find a new spice route, ending up in Newfoundland in 1497.

Many volunteers are "long timers" with some having been with the ship whilst it was being built at Redcliffe Wharf and others who have racked up some 20 years.

Ann May



Schools

"My name is John Anderson and I am a retired research engineer.

As a volunteer with RSVP West, I have been listening to children reading in primary schools for 3 years in Bristol. I currently go into 2 primary schools for 2 hours a week in each school. One school is in a middle class area of Bristol and the other is in a very deprived area.

Mostly I listen to the kids read books to me but often I will get them to write words and sentences on a white board. They really enjoy this and we have fun making up silly sentences often featuring them. Occasionally I will do some simple Maths.

In the middle class school a few of the kids are just behind the reading curve and I focus on them. In the deprived school, the range of reading ability is phenomenal. Some kids can't read at all, others far outstrip the kids in the middle class school.

All the kids have done Phonics, but many struggle to make the transition to reading actual words and they find that very

frustrating. I keep thinking there must be some new way to move them through this transition and become competent readers.

I really enjoy interacting with the kids and I try to use a bit of humour to gain their trust and improve their confidence. The range of family composition is so varied, but I try not to make any assumptions and I treat each child as themselves not just a stereotype product of their upbringing.

I think it's important to have a dialogue with the class teachers. This will involve not only gaining an understanding of each child's needs, but also providing feedback to the teachers on a few key points from each session, be it detected improvement or some persistent weakness.

In summary, it's a very enjoyable activity for me and hopefully the kids too, and one from which they are gaining some benefit. I think the kids enjoy talking to a non teacher."

John Anderson, Bristol Schools Volunteer



BANES school volunteers exchanging experiences over a recent, very enjoyable lunch



Surgeries

“My name is Stacey. I am on the staff of Healthwest Primary Care Network (PCN), which comprises three Surgeries in Bristol Central, namely the Pembroke Road Surgery, the Western College Family Practice and the Whiteladies Medical Group. I am the link person between these Surgeries and RSVP West.

Covid brought our Surgery Volunteer Schemes to a standstill, however, we recently extended our link with RSVP West from just one of our surgeries to all three. This gave us the kickstart we needed.

Our surgeries are so very proud to be working alongside Penny Lewis, RSVP West’s Surgery Volunteer Organiser. The journey has only just begun, we are recruiting more and more volunteers from the GP Practices, referrals to this service are coming in thick and fast and ideas on how volunteers can help each other and their befriendeds are flying around. It has become a family and we are so lucky to be a part of it.

Healthwest Surgeries would like to thank each and every volunteer who are giving their time to help others, especially our Lead Befriender Liz Conquest and Lead Driver Pat Wells, without whom this Volunteer Scheme would not run as smoothly as it does. We really appreciate the time and effort you give. We love to hear the stories they all share and I’m sure the volunteers gain as much from the service as the recipient which is such a wonderful thing.”

We are very grateful to Stacey Cook for her enthusiasm in being the link between the three Healthwest surgeries and their volunteers. RSVP surgery volunteers are recruited from amongst the over 50 year old patients of the surgeries. Some of these patients choose to become volunteer



drivers, transporting elderly patients to and from their health appointments and others enjoy befriending housebound, lonely patients who have lost contact with the outside world. These volunteer befrienders make regular visits to the isolated person and gradually encourage them to maybe even join some activities in the community again. All potential volunteers have to agree to giving us two referees and to be DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checked. Our ‘Lead volunteers’ are the people who receive the requests for drivers or befrienders and allocate appropriate volunteers to the task.

There are a number of surgeries who have signed up to our Surgery Volunteer Schemes in Bristol. Some surgeries in North Somerset and South Gloucestershire also had some volunteers but, unfortunately, during the Covid pandemic, volunteers were encouraged to stay at home. We are now hoping to get more surgeries on board and are looking for interested people to support their surgeries in this way.

If you would like more information, please contact us on: surgeries@rsvp-west.org.uk

Sylvia Carpenter. Interim Joint Regional Coordinator and Surgeries Development Organiser RSVP West

Knitting Group

In April, Sylvia Carpenter and I met Judith Caines, Teresa Morgan and Jean Backwell in the BRI café, their regular venue for enjoying tea, chat and knitting!

Teresa and Jean handed over some of their beautiful creations to Judith, who is currently acting as the Knitting Group Organiser. Judith collects and distributes knitted and crocheted goods such as 'twiddle muffs', hats, scarves, mittens, children's jumpers & cardigans, and blankets. The recipients include premature babies, former seamen, wheelchair users and dementia patients across the UK as well as needy families in countries such as Romania and Ukraine.

Group members are dispersed across our region, usually knitting in their own homes, which they find satisfying and therapeutic. To quote Jean "I enjoy knitting and giving away things that someone else will enjoy". We are

delighted that Bob Maggs' daughter, Polly, is now also contributing crocheted blankets to the group – Bob would be really chuffed about this!

Following the excellent example of the RSVP Norfolk Knitters we now have "RSVP West Knitters" labels to sew into each garment so the work of the group is appropriately recognised, and RSVP West receives some welcome publicity.

Judith previously ran the Knitting Group jointly with Shirley Stark and, whilst she is happy to continue temporarily as Organiser, if anyone would like to take on this role, or to join the group simply to knit or crochet, please let either me or Hilary in the RSVP West office know.

Judy Harris, Interim Joint Regional Coordinator and Schools Development Organiser, RSVP West



Judith Caines, Teresa Morgan, Jean Backwell and Judy Harris (L-R) enjoying a 'knit and chat' in the BRI café.

Volunteering News

The Editor, **Pam Eastley** pamela.eastley@rsvp-west.org.uk, is always looking for news articles, preferably with a photograph.

Please let Office Coordinator **Hilary Roberts** hilary.roberts@rsvp-west.org.uk have the names of people (with their email addresses) who will be happy to be added to the Newsletter External Contacts list. Please suggest a name (with email address) of any organization or person that you think might like to support us.



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