

The Debenham Project

(Dementia - Caring for the Carers)

I guess many of you will have noticed a number of articles on the radio and in the press which have talked about Alzheimer's disease - the latest was a report of a new test for its early diagnosis - and have wondered how this might relate to Dementia. In fact, as there are many different types of Cancer, there are many different types of Dementia. Alzheimer's is one such form - there are many others and the list is long! However, despite the different causes, the physiology, symptoms and progression of the illnesses are very similar. It is right that the media should capitalise on our perception of Alzheimer's to encourage the Government, the NHS and the Social Services to seriously address the problems but this is, in some ways, akin to tackling Breast Cancer whilst forgetting about other forms of Cancer. Dementia is bigger than just Alzheimer's but the problems that individual carers face are much the same - the difficulties, frustrations, heartaches, anger and guilt of caring for a loved one who is progressively losing their mental powers.

“The Debenham Project” has the mission of providing practical and emotional support to all those in and around Debenham who are caring for a relative or friend with Dementia, whatever the cause. Not only that, we aim to show that “Care in the Community” is not just some political buzz-phrase but is a reality, perhaps expressed better as “Caring within our Community” or “Caring for our Community” or “Caring by our Community”. Starting in September the project intends to provide:

1. **A get-together and activities club** to cater for a broad spectrum of clients and their carers.
2. **A confidential telephone support line** for carers providing a listening and understanding ear. It will be staffed by trained volunteers who are able to understand the challenges of coping with

Dementia.

3. **An information service** to help carers in understanding Dementia, finding out what support services and charitable assistance are available, and in managing the practical and emotional difficulties of being a carer.

4. **A Website** that enables rapid access to information, support services, contacts, other carers' experiences, articles, activities, meetings, etc.

Beyond this, we aim to grow the project with the ultimate aim that no-one should have to travel 7, 10, 15 miles to access the services and support that they need, and that everyone should be cared for within their own familiar environment and in daily contact with their family and friends. We believe that Debenham already needs its own day care centre and by 2014 it should have a quality residential care home followed quickly by secure nursing care accommodation.

To achieve our aims we will need lots of support and committed help. If you feel that you could contribute in some way or other please let us know; if you feel that you have skills that we can harness to support carers who are practically, emotionally or physically stretched please let us know. If you just want to help, but can't quite see how to, please let us know.

For further information contact Lynden Jackson on 01728 860348 or l.jackson225@btinternet.com