



Hello everyone,

By the time you read this I do hope that all the snow and ice that I see from my window will be long gone and we can look forward to Spring and Summer.

Meanwhile, The Debenham Project continues apace. I suppose that we could say that the current theme is awareness and friendliness. I mentioned last year that the Alzheimer's Society is leading a campaign to help communities, organisations, and individuals become "dementia friendly". The aim is that no one who is coping with dementia, be they the person with the illness or the person who is caring for them, should feel excluded and isolated, and not knowing to whom or where to turn for support or a shoulder to lean on. Nationally, the campaign started a year ago with the aim of creating 20 dementia friendly communities - it was quickly decided this was far too modest an aim. Later, the campaign announced that it would also like to recruit a million "dementia friends". How can this happen? The idea is that people will offer to become trained "champions" and then they will share their experience and understanding with local groups of "friends". One or two of those "friends" may also train as "champions" and so it goes on. At the same time whole communities and organisations will be supported through on-line packages and support to explore how they can take part and promote understanding. It has already started – there are already over 10,000 "friends", and "Champions" are being trained daily. Of course, we all hope that what will follow will be a desire to translate their awareness into providing voluntary services, similar to those in The Debenham Project, across the UK i.e. to "get on and do something".

But what does this all mean for us in Debenham? Well, having started over 3 years ago we believe that The Debenham Project is an example that demonstrates what a big difference communities and individuals can make in supporting family carers and those they care for. However, we also need to play our part and you will see in Sam Cage's article how she organized our own local awareness and understanding sessions. We also need to continue to develop the project's services and activities in order to provide the best possible care and support – Debenham On-Call is the latest, but "watch this space" for more.

Finally, do look at Sam Cage's article elsewhere in this edition, where you will see that Debenham On-Call and The Carers Co-op are both beginning to "sprout green shoots".

With best wishes,

Lynden

Project Phone Line 01728 862003.