



Hello everyone,

One of the important aims of the project is to increase awareness of the nature of dementia, its impact on individuals and families, and to highlight that, although there is no cure at this time, there are positive ways in which we can help. This last year one of the main foci of our campaign has been on increasing awareness among the younger generation and particularly the High School students. We "oldies" may be coping with the illness today and trying to provide care and support, but it is from the current school generation that will come the scientists, doctors, nurses, carers, etc who will find the cures and effective treatments, and provide the community-based love and care that will ultimately enable people to "live well with dementia". It is a long road but I am confident that whilst we may not be able to eliminate the disease we will make huge strides in reducing its hold over us. We are roughly where cancer was 50 years ago and just think of the massive strides that have been made since then in tackling that illness.

So, we have been very grateful to be able to talk to the Debenham High School students in assemblies and classes, and especially this last month to be a part of their "Diversity Week". Four of the youngsters joined in, as volunteers, in a lunch club and another four experienced one of our chair-based exercise therapy (Fit Club) sessions. They all said they had a great time and developed their understanding. I am sure they found that "caring can be fun". Maybe one or two will go on to "make the difference".

On another tack, over the last year or two I have been heartened that there have been real improvements in the level and quality of dementia support in the Suffolk. I am even more pleased with the desire of the NHS and the Social Services to listen to those patients and family carers who have personal experience of coping with the impact of dementia on their lives. A couple of weeks ago seven of us from the project were invited to take part in a consultation to decide upon Suffolk's priorities in the design and provision of dementia care services. There seemed to be a "buzz" about the event and those I talked to said they found it worthwhile. In about 6 weeks' time the organisers have promised to come back with their plan. We must bear in mind the very restricted financial situation but I am hopeful that it really will reflect the things that family carers and those they care for said provide the most benefit to their quality of life.

Finally, we are now doing our annual count up of the donations that customers in the shops and pubs of Debenham have put into our collecting boxes over the last year. We are always so grateful – these boxes regularly contain up to £50 in not only the odd bronze and silver coins but frequently also notes – thank you everyone.

Best wishes, Lynden Phone 01728 862003 **Website:** www.the-debenham-project.org.uk