



Hello everyone,

Sitting here, gazing out on the lovely sunny High Street, I realise how very fortunate we are to live in Debenham. Earlier on this morning, I was talking to a friend who said his Mum and Dad lived in similar sized village with much the same number of shops and other facilities but “Debenham is totally different” – “people here greet each other as they pass” – “they stop and chat for no other reason than the pleasure of it”. Over the years since we created The Debenham Project, I have often been told by the leaders and senior people in the local authorities and the NHS that the project would be difficult to replicate elsewhere, but that is to miss the point. Our project exists in the form it does, because of what was already here – a strong sense of community, a positive way of looking at things, and a rich background of people helping each other. I think that this is what my friend was touching on.

It is like a garden (do remember Debenham Open Gardens on June 24th), which depends on understanding the environment – the climate, the soil, the light and shade – choosing the right plants, planting and nurturing so that each plant thrives and together so that they naturally create the whole picture. Every garden is different and likewise, every community’s environment, attitude, skills, and social structure differ. Some may be suited to our sort of project, but some may not. Several have already developed different but equally exciting and valuable approaches - for example the projects in Halesworth, Wickham Market, and Sudbury are amazing – all with the aim of making a real difference. Yet others are seeking to increase community awareness of the needs of those living with the impact of dementia on their lives by setting up Dementia Action Alliances which will in time encourage growing numbers of volunteers to initiate carers groups, cafes, activities, information services, etc. I believe that what we are seeing is a very positive countywide change in our attitude to dementia towards helping every community to do whatever it can to support those with the illness without try to have one size fit all.

By dwelling less on the negative aspects and concentrating on doing the positive things that The Debenham project can offer we have shown, time and time again, what a difference can be made in the well-being of those who are living with dementia. One of those things which we are all looking forward to this month, and has become a highlight of the year, is our Annual Garden Party hosted by Lyn and Mike Rouse. Many many thanks to them for their kindness and great generosity. And following on from that we will relaunching our pop-up department store for the Village Yard Sale in July – look for it at the bottom of Gracechurch Street. Finally, I want to thank everyone for their generous donations which enable us to continue our work without being too concerned about whether we will have the money to do so.

With best wishes, Lynden

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