



Newsletter – March 4th 2011

Hello everyone. I notice that everything is moving in the garden and the hedgerows – Spring is definitely on its way! As far as the project is concerned we haven't had a "winter rest" but we will be putting on "new growth".

The Dementia and Memory Clinic starts in a few days time, on March 8th. This is an innovative collaborative project linking ourselves with Suffolk Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust. It is the first in Suffolk and, almost certainly, in the UK. The NHS dementia diagnosis and consultancy services are being "drawn in" and delivered in a familiar and local setting. More than that, the clinic integrates the needs of the carer by also providing information, advice, and support in managing the illness. It brings together medical and social care support for dementia and memory problems without having to travel to Ipswich Hospital or Stowmarket. Even more, it will offer a comprehensive range of services trying to help carers and those they care for in one (local) place.

Another great idea is emerging – local professionals who have heard about the project and want to get involved are offering their services to carers and cared-for at our groups, or to individuals if that is desired. We are hoping to build up a number of different activities and therapies so that we can have "special" afternoons. So far we have reflexology (Jean Parnell), nostalgic film shows (Pam Harling-Challis), and exercise and fitness needs (Zoe George). I have no doubt more will follow. The first "special" is planned for March 2nd and others will be roughly every couple of months.

Suffolk Libraries continue to be a very important and valued partner to the project through the support they give through Melanie Woods and the Library Resource Centre. Many of our carers need a personal and professional "helping hand" to access information. In addition their direct involvement with the Carers' Club and Info Café by seeking out special books and "memory boxes" is so much appreciated. Furthermore, they organized a "trip down memory lane" to Brockford Railway Museum (near Wetheringset) in January. It was an occasion to remember what it was like to travel by train in "times gone by", and what it was like to have afternoon tea with sandwiches, scones and cakes. We were also entertained by the East Anglian Traditional Music Trust and their "traditional dancing dolls". For a few moments, I stood to one side and just observed – I find it difficult to express how powerful the event was in supporting carers and cared-for alike – the enjoyment and participation shown in everyone's faces was a true pleasure and justifies everything that we are trying to do. This month they have arranged a showing of some County's archive films at our next Carers' Club. Very many thanks.

Our Spring programme of awareness meetings draws to a close with the final meeting at Dove Cottage on March 9th at 7.30 pm, when we shall be having a talk with Kevin Wegg - "Telecare can make life better and safer for carers and those they care for" – and a look at how technology can make a real difference in the care of those with dementia (and other illnesses). In addition Dr. Paddy Fielder – "What will the changes in the NHS mean for us?" - will be giving us the "low down" on how the massive changes to the management of the NHS will affect you, I, and Debenham– please watch out for the posters. Please do try to come along – everyone is welcome – and it is important that we show how much we value their help.

The reputation of The Debenham Project continues to spread and grow. I was invited to give a presentation to a meeting in Westminster of senior housing professionals and national / government figures, eg Lord Best and Baroness Greengross, concerned with developing the "right" solutions to housing and care for the elderly. You may remember that very first meeting in Dove Cottage, having a "Vision" for the future which meant that no one should have to leave our community, their family, friends, neighbours, and familiar carers when they are no longer able to live safely, securely and comfortably in their own home – 7, 10, 14 miles is too far. Over the past year our ideas have developed and the theme of my talk was that a "rural solution" is needed – one in which the health, social and housing elements of caring for our elderly frail are integrated and provided locally. It was exceptionally well received and I have had follow on interest from both Lord Best and John Graham (board member of Hanover Housing Association) <http://www.grumblesmiles.co.uk>.

Once again we are so grateful for the donations which continue to come in; we are especially grateful to Debenham W.I. for making the Project their "Charity of the Year" and I was delighted to attend a meal with them in January and to receive their cheque.

As always, thanks to all in Debenham, the surrounding villages, the local authorities, and our partners for all their support.

If you would like to know more please see our display in the Post Office, ring 01728862003, call in at the Library Resource Centre or visit www.the-debenham-project.org.uk where you can access all our newsletters, and much more.

With best wishes, kind regards,

Lynden