



Newsletter – July 29th 2011

Hi everyone, it's mid-summer and Hot, Hot, Hot! Wimbledon is in its second week and we are fast approaching the school holidays. We are very fortunate to have such tremendous local support and volunteers that we will be able to continue our programme of activities unchanged throughout the summer months.

I was just looking back through previous newsletters and purely out of curiosity clicked on the one for July 2009. Glancing through it I was amazed to see just how far the project has developed in 2 years. **Back then** I was writing about; us putting some initial "balsa wood and string" services in place; our initial research into the incidence of dementia in our area; and planning the Launch for October. **Now** the project provides; a range of local support services second to none in the county; has helped, in some way, nearly half of the estimated number of carers in our catchment; has become well known throughout the professional community in Suffolk and beyond; and continues to develop the philosophy of "Caring in the Community" "Caring by the Community" "Caring for the Community". This has been achieved by the incredible goodwill and support from everyone - volunteers, support workers, the local authorities, the NHS, the charities, etc who have so generously given up their time and experience to enable us to "get on do it". Thank you indeed.

This nature of the project was amply demonstrated just a few days ago with our annual garden party for all our volunteers, family carers, those they care for, professional support workers, and for everyone else who has directly contributed at the local level, to the past year's success. A wonderful luncheon and afternoon, which was very generously provided and hosted by one of our sponsors, just to say "thank you".

For those of you that will be at the Suffolk ACRE AGM and Awards Ceremony, there will be an opportunity to see us enjoying ourselves and to learn a (very) little more about the project. We have been shortlisted for the Probert Cup – Suffolk ACRE's annual award for the best community group/project - and Nat Bocking has made a short presentation video of the nominees to be shown at the event. Whatever the result is – winner or runner-up – it is a great encouragement for The Debenham Project to have been recognized for its efforts in this way.

As a regular part of our programme we have started "special" afternoons in which we introduce ideas and activities which we think will benefit or entertain our clients. So far we have had reflexology, a "Suffolk Archives" film show, and chair-based exercise. Local professionals (Jean Parnell, Zoe George,

and Pam Harling-Challis) have given their services free. The idea is that, if they seem popular, we will explore whether it might be possible to make them a more permanent element of the project. It is all part of the way that we see the project evolving with time. Already a "taster" session of "Exercise Therapy" has been organized to show how it can make life easier for all (not just carers and those with dementia) who may be "over 60" and , perhaps, just "a bit stiff in the joints" or "a bit out of puff". A big difference can be made with some simple exercises that we can do whilst sitting in a chair – removing stress, reducing pain, improving posture, and so on. We are also tentatively looking at the role that reflexology may play as a therapy for people with more severe symptoms.

The Specialist Memory and Support Clinic is now monthly (2nd Tuesday at 9.30 a.m. in Dove Cottage, 39 High Street, Debenham). Every other month the hospital specialist and community psychiatric nurse are there to provide diagnosis and advice, and we are arranging for GP level advice to be available on the intermediate dates. On all occasions there will be professional and trained volunteer advisors to help with any social care questions and concerns. This is not only a formal NHS clinic seeking to meet the needs of carers, and those they care for, with a familiar, local, and friendly approach to diagnosis and support, but also providing an opportunity to "drop in" whenever advice or support may be a help. In time we anticipate that anyone who seeks a diagnosis from the specialist team will be referred to this "local" clinic. We aim, as much as possible, to reduce the stress and disorientation that is currently involved and offer a local presence that can help with all aspects – medical and social.

The support and goodwill of everyone is something that so encourages us and confirms the value of the project. Chris Grover and Douglas McMyn cycled "Coast to Coast" across England (Workington to South Shields) raising money for The Debenham Project and "The Cancer Campaign in Suffolk". The figure so far for the project is £417 (+gift aid) but if anyone would like to make a late donation to their sterling efforts please let me know. Yet another spontaneous contribution came from the Woolpack quiz night – very many thanks to Pat and the teams. We also continue to receive private donations, but it is not often recognised that some very generous discounts in labour and goods from local businesses have been an enormous help to the project – thank you particularly to Seers Medical for such help in fitting out Dove Cottage with an examination couch and wheelchair. A heartfelt "Thank You" to them all.

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