



## Newsletter – Summer 2014

In this edition:

- 1. Publicity and Communication!** “Being positive about what can be done to make life better for the families we try to help is crucial.”
- 2. The Newsletter - Content, Style, and Readership!** “..... our direct readership is wide (400+) and 80 + more access it on the website each month”
- 3. Care and Support Gathers Pace!** “..... step by step the “challenges” will be met.”
- 4. 2014 Dementia Awareness Campaign!** “..... Dementia - be aware - be positive .....”
- 5. Debenham’s Pop-Up Department Store!** “..... a model that other small charities ..... might try.”
- 6. Funding the Debenham Project!** “.....need to find between £8,000 and £9,000 each year.”
- 7. 4 year study “Puts it all Together!** “..... offers a new direction in the provision of care .....”
- 8. Academic Recognition!** “..... has been accepted for publication in the leading Journal of Dementia Care.”
- 9. The Annual Garden Party!** “Yet again it was a wonderful occasion .....”
- 10. Dementia Learning Hubs!** “..... yet another example of the efforts being made to help family carers and those they care for receive the support that can make a positive difference.”

### **1. Publicity and Communication!**

To start with, a few words on the subject of our newsletters and other forms of communication. The most important publicity and communication within our community about what The Debenham Project is up to, and what it can offer to those who are trying to cope with the impact of dementia on their lives, is “word of mouth” – would you be more likely to trust what your friend or relation recommends, or what you come across in a poster or a website? However, how can we make sure that what they (poster, website, or friend) tell you is based upon reliable sources of information? This is the job of our publicity activity and our “Advice and Information Centre”. We are linked into the best professional organisations in Suffolk. So, if we cannot provide an answer we know who can. However, the most important element of our efforts is to gradually improve understanding of both dementia and the support that is available. In this I believe that our monthly articles in the Parish Magazine and our newsletters

are central in keeping dementia in the “local” eye. Being positive about what can be done to make life better for the families we try to help is crucial. But in addition, “advertising” to our wider audience just how important and valuable community-led activities are in tackling the impact of dementia on all of our lives reinforces the need for them to develop an effective investment and funding strategy.

**2. The Newsletter - Content, Style and Readership!** Each time I sit down to write the newsletter, I wonder what to say about the project. Should it just be to tell you about our achievements and highlights since last time – or should it be to offer some insights of the broader world of dementia care and support that I come across in my “travels” – or yet still, some thoughts and concerns of a more general nature by way of a “blog”. I guess it ought to be a balance between all three and I hope that this has been the flavour over the 5 years that the newsletter has been being published. However, sometimes it is difficult to know how to “cast” the contents as our direct readership is wide (400+) and 80 + more access it on the website each month – it is primarily intended for those who are directly involved in Debenham and the surrounding area, but it goes out to other community groups, health and social care professionals in the county, local government officers and council members, important charities, key regional organisations, contacts at the national level, and many others. All these people are not just “on our database” – they have all played a part in the development of The Debenham Project – the success of our project is due to the goodwill, efforts, and recommendation of so many. So if you feel that you would like to see some changes in the style and content please let me know.

“Once upon a time” I tried to prepare a newsletter every month (and I just about succeeded!) but after a while this proved a difficult challenge to meet and for the last couple of years newsletters have been produced about every 2 months. Also, each month an article is produced for the Parish Magazine, and there are other requests for reports on our “performance”. With the growth of the project it can all take up a lot of time. I find that wisdom has come to me in my senior years. So, in the future, the Parish Magazine articles will now be reserved for the monthly news of the project, and the Newsletter produced as a regular seasonal round-up of all things that seem important.

**3. Care and Support Gathers Pace!** When things are dark and gloomy I feel that it is important to be optimistic. When we read the newspapers or watch television it does seem that with dementia we are indeed in a dark and gloomy situation – massive numbers of those with the illness, no cure, limited treatment, poor information, inadequate support services, poor diagnostic rates, limited funding, etc. However, when I compare with how it was just a few years ago when The Debenham Project was started, I am filled with hope. Certainly, there is still no cure or really effective treatment but there have been scientific breakthroughs which will play their part in eventually overcoming the illness. Certainly, the level of information and advice could be better but through the efforts of NHS, the local authorities, the Alzheimer’s Society, AgeUK and other major

charities, no one should be unable to find out what they need to know about coping with dementia. Of course, the level of support for many (perhaps most) family carers and those they care for is still not good, but there are individuals and communities similar to Debenham who have been setting up clubs, cafes and activities, the charities are increasing the supply of and local delivery of their excellent professional support, and the NHS and Social Services are implementing major changes to the way they provide care. I know that there is still fear and stigma attached to dementia which prevents or delays people with concerns seeking help but the initiative to encourage dementia friendliness and dementia friendly communities is improving public awareness and understanding. So, I am confident that step by step the “challenges” will be met and I am also very proud of the leading part that Debenham has already played due to the support and participation of its many volunteers, carers, cared-for, support workers, donors, etc.

#### **4. 2014 Dementia Awareness Campaign!**

Of course that doesn't mean that the project will not continue to evolve and develop. We shall be supporting the Parish Council in its role in leading our “Dementia Friendly Community” initiative with this year's objective of “Dementia - be aware - be positive” campaign to further raise the understanding and awareness of the illness throughout our community. The focus will be on our shops and businesses (see below) but also and very importantly, on encouraging our High School students to learn about the impact that dementia will have on their future. We have already introduced ourselves in school assemblies and we will be directly involved in the “health and social care” curriculum by talking with the students about the project and discussing the impact, issues, career opportunities, etc, arising out of our ageing population. In addition, the Art Department has kindly offered to lend us the results of their “Wartime Memories” project to use in our clubs and activities.

#### **5. Debenham's Pop-Up Department Store!**

On the topic of encouraging our local shops and businesses to adopt the “dementia friendly” philosophy it seems that there is no need – they already “get it” as shown by our latest “get on do something” venture. Pop-Up shops are becoming all the rage and recently Danielle launched “Trinity” at Swan House in the High Street – the first Pop-Up in Debenham. So when Laura, who owns Ruby and the Angel (a very stylish gift shop), offered to help with a very generous offer of some stock for The Debenham Project to sell in aid of funds, it set “the little grey cells” in motion. Maybe it could be an opportunity to not only raise funds but also to increase dementia awareness and friendliness in a positive way by setting up a stall at the “Street Fair” at the end of June. The result of a few enquiries was amazing – all the shops, the pubs, and the Fish and Chips shop joined in with offers – so that we were not just able to have a stall, not just a Pop-Up shop, but the first and only “Debenham's Pop-Up Department Store”, offering the widest range of merchandise available in the village at “half retail price sale” - with household, jewellery, gifts, gardening, comestibles, furnishings, pre-owned, fine books and stationery, grocery, fresh food departments, and more – not a charity shop or a bric-a-brac stall, but selling goods which have been offered for sale on the high street and would normally be sold in the “New Year Sales”, but were given to the project instead. It demonstrates how Debenham fully deserves its status

as a leading “dementia friendly” rural community. Despite typical June weather – rain, rain, and more rain - we managed to sell over 55% of the stock in just over a couple of hours raising nearly £300 and leaving us almost a similar amount as the basis for another occasion. For the first time out it proved a great success – very many thanks to all our local shops and businesses are coming together to support the project. I believe that this is a model that other small charities in communities like ours might try.

## **6. Funding the Debenham Project!**

On the subject of funding, I am always touched by the number of unsolicited donations we receive. Broadly, in order to keep the project running, we need to find between £8,000 and £9,000 each year. Thank you so much to the businesses and individuals who have looked after one of our collection boxes ( those coppers, silver coins, pounds and even fivers all added up to £202.60), those people who donated their Co-op “divvy”, the congregation of The Forge Church for their very generous donation of £200, those who enjoyed Pam Vinten’s concert entitled “Song Cycles for May, Those who came to Nancy and Tim Nickel’s organ recital and gave a very welcome £208, the £100 as part of the proceeds of a “Outlaws” charity music event organized by our Leisure Centre, the families and friends of James Christopher Keogh and those of David Terry Wilson for all the kind donations made in their memories, and especially the person who anonymously pushed an envelope containing £25 in cash through my door.

We are so grateful all for these donations, and in the coming years we will come to depend more and more upon them as regular funding for charities from the local authorities and similar sources becomes increasingly difficult to obtain. But that is not to say that we will not still depend upon funding from the local authorities and charitable foundations. We were delighted to given £1,000 by Sports Relief, especially as it has gone towards the cost of our annual insurance – getting money for this sort of basic core expenditure is nigh on impossible as most funders want to see their money paying for new projects and initiatives – that’s great but we still have to finance the everyday running costs.

## **7. 4-Year Study “Puts it all Together”!**

When The Debenham Project was conceived in April 2009 we were asked not only to focus on the impact of dementia on all our lives, but also to “have a vision” of how we want those who are elderly and frail to be cared for in the future. This request resulted in a 4 year study addressing the provision of health, social care and housing for the elderly-frail members of a typical large rural community in Suffolk. Its findings argue that the current structures of the NHS and Social Services are not suited to coping with the challenge of providing quality care for the elderly frail in the long term and innovative solutions must be explored. As a result of this research one such approach has been identified - “The Vision of Caring” - which is predicted to not only deliver a quantum step improvement in overall care, but also to achieve economic savings in the region of 8 to 10% per annum. It is suggested that without a new structure for the care of the elderly-frail the NHS and Social Services will become overwhelmed irrespective of any increased commitments to funding them. It is

believed that the “Vision” offers a new direction in the provision of care which both matches the aspirations and needs of an ageing rural population, and is also affordable. Our hope is that we can persuade the decision makers at government and local level to pilot the concept in Debenham – no easy task but “you don’t get anywhere without trying” - so that’s what we will be trying to achieve. The study report is available on our website (<http://www.the-debenham-project.org.uk/articles.shtml>) – I hope you will look it up and let me know what we you think.

## **8. Academic Recognition!**

As most of you will be aware, The Debenham Project has become known well beyond the parish boundaries. In fact, I am always surprised just how far the word has reached. More recently we have had a group involving Cardiff University, The Welsh Assembly and others seeking to learn more about the project. Also we have been visited by a consultant doing research for Manchester Council, and also keen interest from North Wales. Each is looking for new ways to deliver health and social care at the community level. We are particularly pleased that the “The Social Care Institute for Excellence” (a leading national health & social care organisation) will be including The Debenham Project as an example of what is best practice in its forthcoming guide on home (and community) care for older people. We have also learned that the research carried out by Tim Mason and Gordon Slack to capture the experiences and perceptions of the family carers, cared for, volunteers and professional involved in the project has been accepted for publication in the leading Journal of Dementia Care (<http://www.the-debenham-project.org.uk/articles.shtml>). However, recognition at a national level is not a high priority – we are much more concerned with contributing to the development of high quality dementia support services here in Suffolk.

## **9. The Annual Garden Party!**

As you know The Debenham Project’s success is entirely due to the goodwill of everyone who helps and participates. Each year we try to say thank you to everyone who has been involved in the project over the past year at our Annual Garden Party hosted very generously by Mike and Lyn Rouse. Yet again it was a wonderful occasion despite the rain – we were all dry inside the marquee, enjoying a luscious afternoon tea, the band, and most of all, the great atmosphere. It has always been a privilege to say a few words of thanks to Mike and Lyn to express our appreciation for their kindness in sponsoring this event each year. However, on this occasion I also used the occasion to emphasise how much the project is a family – it is not simply a service or a set of clubs / activities which we use but a “community” in which friendships are made and in which we turn to each other for support when we need it. This year was particularly poignant as Mike’s mother Mary, whom he and Lyn and all the family had cared for with such love, had recently passed away. I knew Mary from the very first time that she came to Debenham and despite her dementia she remained a lovely person who was a privilege to meet in the High Street on her way to the hair dressers. She was an example of how we should care, and how much difference the “right sort of care” can make in the lives of not only those with the illness but also those who are caring for them. Sadly Mary was only one of several of “our family”

who died over the past year – we remember them all with deep affection.

Of course, although the garden party is the highlight of our “summer season” our lunch clubs, Cameo and Carers Club organize special events throughout the year – one of our lunch clubs “cruised the Orwell”, Cameo “tasted the sea air at Southwold”, and Carers Club invited “the Music Man” to entertain – just a few examples of how offering support can become “enjoying being together and having a good time”.

### **10. Dementia Learning Hubs!**

Recently we were very pleased to become part of a proposed network of Dementia Learning Hubs based upon the growing number of synergy cafes and community-led projects across the county. Led by Sue Ryder, the project will enable the hubs to work together, share experience, develop standard advice and information, and offer quality training for carers and volunteers – yet another example of the efforts being made to help family carers and those they care for receive the support that can make a positive difference in their lives. It will ensure that the best professional advice, information, signposting, and services are available on the local doorstep in a friendly environment.

If you would like to know more about our work and services please see our display in the Post Office, ring 01728862003, call in at the Library Resource Centre, or visit our website at <http://www.the-debenham-project.org.uk/>. Past newsletters are archived on the website.



With my very best wishes

Lynden Jackson (Chairman)