



COMMUNITY  
CHAMPIONS

GET IN TOUCH with Rohini, Jenny or Jo  
9.00—5.00 Monday - Friday  
Phone us 01858 439262  
Email: [champions@vasl.org.uk](mailto:champions@vasl.org.uk)  
Or call in to First Floor, Torch House,  
Torch Way, Market Harborough LE16 9HL

## Volunteer Newsletter January 2017

Hello all; hope you have had a good break and are refreshed and ready for an exciting new year.



**Exciting news!** VASL has got through to Stage 2 of The Big Lottery funding process with the Community Champions project application. Thank you for all your help with the project consultation and most importantly doing the volunteering with such flair that we get fantastic client feedback. We now need to pull together a more detailed project plan with outcomes, budgets and partnership details. Please keep letting us have your feedback about what we can do to improve the project.

Congratulations to our Patron Maggie Philbin who received an OBE for her work with TeenTech which brings the world of technology to life for young people. We are very fortunate that she gives her valuable time to VASL in amongst all the other things she does.



## Training

One of the things which is distinctive about the Community Champions project is that we can offer a variety of good quality, relevant training to our volunteers.

**New volunteer training**—All our volunteers complete a four hour course which covers boundaries, listening skills, the practicalities of how the projects works, Wednesday 1st February 9.30-2.30pm.

**Volunteer online courses**—we are part of a Befriending Network pilot to offer online volunteer training for people who find it difficult to attend courses. We will use it to speed up the recruitment process, but still believe face to face training is the best way of becoming part of the project community.

**Digital Champions**—we train volunteers who support clients to get connected digitally, we have a course starting 12th January and hope the next will be in evenings in February. Three sessions of approx. 4 hours each.

**Bereavement training** Have you or anybody you know been affected by bereavement? How do we help somebody who is suffering with bereavement? What is the process of loss? What is 'normal' when it come to grief? If you would like answers to any of these questions or to learn about more about grief and bereavement then this workshop is for you. Wednesday 15th February 10-12 noon.

**Dyslexia training**—even if you don't need this to support a client, this course will help you to understand the difficulties that people face, perhaps your grandchildren or friends.  
2nd March 10.30-12 noon.



Community Champions is part funded by VASL and Harborough District Council's New Homes Bonus/Community Fund

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VASL runs a choir for carers who really benefit from a change in their routine, they are looking for financial support to continue.

The Community Champions **December Community Gathering** was a great success with 14 attending – 6 volunteers, 5 clients, 2 staff and a Volunteer driver who is also a Digital client. There were 7 men and 7 women. We all enjoyed warm mince pies and a hot drink.



Two ladies sparked in their Christmas jumpers and conversations included whether Thurnby / Bushby are two separate villages, the Gareth Malone Choir programme, a client's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party, what volunteers and clients had been doing ( eg, going out for walks, visiting coffee shops) and slide rules / logarithms.

During the hour clients requesting digital support were introduced to volunteers . This enabled volunteers to understand client's motivations for wanting to use computers.

Two ladies we introduced have arranged to meet separately – fantastic networking! We want more people to build their own social networks like this.

Rohini and Jenny gave out information about local events that may be of interest eg, Christmas Together and Lunch @One

**CASE STUDY** Graham had a stroke which meant he lost his mobility. He is fortunate in having lots of family members who live locally and pop in to see him regularly. He also has various professionals who come to support him. However Graham missed getting out of doors to watch the seasons changing and to exchange greetings with neighbours.

Through VASL's Community Champions Project , a volunteer called Jonathan agreed to meet Graham weekly and take him for a short walk and wheel chair outing. This has made a massive difference. " It's great to get away from the four walls of my house and be out in the community again" says Graham. "Jonathan is such a nice chap and we get on really well".



Graham and Jonathan have also come to the Community Gatherings at The Greenhouse Café and enjoyed the chance to meet other volunteers and clients involved in the Community Champions Project. "It's great to see Graham smile and interact with others" says Jonathan.

Where will they go next?

### How do we measure whether the project is making a difference?

Some things we can count

Since May we have made 40 introductions

We've had 107 attendees at events we have organised.

Six people have benefitted from digital champions with five clients waiting, more volunteers training in January and February, and further publicity this month.

But we really need your feedback, this will be a vital part of our bid for funding, so keep in touch.

