



COMMUNITY
CHAMPIONS

GET IN TOUCH Rohini, Jenny,
Sam or Denise

9.00—5.00 Monday - Friday

Phone us 01858 439262

Email: champions@vasl.org.uk

Or call in: First Floor, Torch
House, Torch Way,

Market Harborough, LE16 9HL

Volunteer Newsletter

March 2019



Your Local Charity Improving Lives

Diary Dates

Community Gatherings, for Project Members only, please call by 9.30am on 25 Feb to book transport

5 March 2.30 - 3.45pm Kibworth Golf Club, Weir Rd, LE8 0LP Talks: Emma -The Well, Valerie - Libraries

6 March 12.30 - 3.30pm **Community Champions Volunteer Event** Torch House Conference Room

3 April 2.30 - 3.45pm Lubenham Village Hall, Langham Road, LE16 9TE Harborough Movie Makers

20 March 10am - 12pm **Fraud and Cyber Prevention Information Session** Torch House, Conference Room
Call the office to book places and transport

February Gathering

45 people (clients, volunteers, Community Friends, drivers and a visitor) met at The Roebuck for the February Community Gathering. Volunteer hosts made sure that everyone had a drink and Jade delivered cakes and flapjacks to each table. There was a lively hum of conversation as new introductions were made, people swapped news about family and volunteer visits.

Rohini used a microphone to wish everyone Happy Chinese New Year and gave short notices reminding everyone to book for the next Gathering. She also encouraged all to go to community activities run by Leicestershire Libraries and a new social group started by Christ Church (all details were listed on a flyer).

The focus on Year Two of the Community Champions project is to encourage people to expand their social networks by getting involved with local clubs that appeal to them. Rohini asked all for feedback about new groups they join.

New connections were made - some people discovered that they were going to be new neighbours. Our visitor, Andrew, Equalities Officer from LCC was pleased to meet Peter whose story he had shared at a Loneliness Summit. "What a smooth operation this is – it's lovely to see community resources like pubs being used for lively social gatherings – it's great to see so many conversations happening". Feedback included: "So enjoyed my time with you all today. Great crowd...wonderful feeling of 'some body cares'.... lovely to meet new people and chat. Thank you so much". Some people fed back they have joined the library since the talk last month and were enjoying accessing a variety of information in different formats.



Mini-gatherings Update

In late 2017 a small group of us started to meet every other month in the villages around Harborough. The project had found that some people were struggling to get to the main gatherings or were finding them too loud. A smaller gathering held in the villages seemed to be a good solution at the time. We've now found that everyone that attended those now come to the main monthly gathering so this smaller group will no longer be running. Thank you so much to everyone that came along and to all the volunteers who helped transport, support and host.



We support people and communities to thrive.
The National Lottery Community Fund

Community Champions is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund
VASL Registered Charity No. 1141274
Company Registration No. 7517828



Community Pet Support Scheme

A pet companion scheme helping combat loneliness is set to be offered in Harborough District. Pet owners suffering from social isolation will be able to apply to Leicester Animal Aid for assistance with tasks such as vet visits, dog walking, grooming, and animal hygiene. Businessman and charity patron Barrie Stephen, who is spearheading the drive, said: "The idea behind Community Pet Support Scheme is to keep owners and pets together. Animals are a bridge for people suffering social isolation, including many of the older generation. I've seen the positive impact of the scheme but like many charities we are reliant on fundraising to make sure service users are never charged." VASL has welcomed the news and are set to refer their clients to Leicester Animal Aid. Anyone wanting more information can call 01455 888257 or email info@leicesteranimalaid.org



A fast journey to friendship

Volunteer Candi and Diana were introduced to each other in October 2018 as a Befriending relationship. Both have had fascinating local and international jobs and are interested in global travel, local events, history, dancing, reading, music and their families. Candi has been visiting weekly on Monday afternoons and the conversation just flows. Initially visits were about an hour long but now they can be almost 3 hours long! "Its amazing how well we connect" says Candi "we talk about so many different topics and the time just flies". "I really look forward to her visits" reflects Diana "they have made a really big difference to my life. I can share my worries, we swap tales about our hobbies and we can laugh. I am enjoying all the contacts I have made through this project. I like receiving the newsletters and love the Community Gatherings and the chance to meet other people. I like going to different cafes and it's so helpful that transport is provided. The project team are all wonderful – they give so much of themselves in organising things for us – I am 100 percent satisfied". Candi and Diana are now **Community Friends** – they still belong to the project community but have a real friendship outside of the project so can swap numbers and do not need to report on their visits. "It's fantastic that this match worked so well" says Rohini "it's a win-win-win for the client, volunteer and project – it really demonstrates how effective the Community Champions model can be".



Celebrating Volunteers

Two VASL volunteers recently attended the Leicestershire County Council Chairman's dinner. This is held to thank all volunteers from across the county. Alan (pictured with Kim) reported "We were greeted by the Chairman, Mr Ozzy O'Shea and his wife and given drinks, in the beautiful setting of Beaumanor Hall and its extensive gardens.

He then gave a short speech thanking Volunteers from all over Leicestershire, whom he totally supports in his term of office. A buffet lunch was then served and we had the chance to network with other volunteers".



Local Info Young @ Heart

Roman Way Day Centre first Wednesday each month 2.15 - 3.45pm relaxed friendly gathering for over 60s. Call Richard or Pippa 07577 719839 for details.

Joan's Coach Outings daytrips throughout the year, call Jill Mann 01858 461572 or Sandra Ward, 01858 410224 for details

NGage Social Drop in, The Cube Symington Rec Ground St Mary's Road Thursdays 1-3pm games/ chat, refreshments 60p call Nic 07534 263093 for details

New volunteers

11 people attended new volunteer training in January – a nice mix of people who want to become telephone volunteers, Pen pals and Community Champions visiting people at home. Feedback was excellent: 'Communication was clear and confident – I learnt a lot'. 'Great delivery with full engagement and interaction'. 'Enjoyable day, good content, well-presented'. We also had a suggestion about giving people more information about the project before the training which we will action.

We are now matching all these enthusiastic new volunteers. Our next volunteer training will be on Weds 10 April – please tell us if you know of other people who would like to become volunteers.



Age Concern

Lutterworth Age Concern are looking for jovial, organised volunteers who enjoy working with older people to host bus trips to local places of interest. Volunteers need to be able to drive and be willing to complete a First Aid course. For details contact Alison Anderton on 01455 557116.