



NEWSLETTER

February 2021 | Volunteers

This month...

Zoom Community

Gathering Weds 10 Feb 11am - 12.15pm

Adult Learning sessions below will run on Microsoft Teams which is similar to Zoom, ask if you need help:

Resilience Weds 24 Feb 10 - 11.30am

Creative Writing Weds 24 March 10 - 11.30am

See over for more details of course content

Contact Community Champions to join any of these sessions.

Get in touch...

Rohini, Jenny, Sam & Denise

Mon -Thurs 9am - 5pm, Fri till

4.30pm. T: 01858 439262

E: champions@vasl.org.uk

W: vasl.org.uk



VASL

INCLUDE • INVOLVE • ENRICH

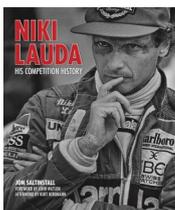
Torch House, Torch Way, MH,
LE16 9HL

If you are self isolating and need help to get food or support please contact the Harborough District Community hub: 01858 821 231.

January Community Gathering

20 people (our biggest crowd yet!) met via Zoom at the January Community Gathering. People were allocated to small groups so there was a chance to catch up – vaccinations, the third lockdown, scams, home schooling and quizzes were all topics of conversation. Rohini gave notices about learning opportunities and asked people to refer anyone who was lonely to the project. She thanked volunteer Roger for sharing YouTube videos of the Naseby Village Band. These videos had been enjoyed by VASL clients, volunteers and staff. Another volunteer's wife had nominated VASL for a donation from the Bank of Ireland, which was a huge compliment. Rohini also thanked volunteer Sarah for facilitating today's exciting

speaker. Jon Saltinstall (pictured) is a local author who spent 9 years writing a book about Niki Lauda (pic below). Jon wrote the book whilst working in a full-time job and when published, attracted critical acclaim. Both clients and volunteers asked Jon about Niki Lauda, epic races and stories about other personalities like Jackie Stewart and Sterling Moss. Jon commented "The champions are a lovely, engaging group and it was nice to spend time with them. I was delighted with the number and variety of questions that came back - it always makes it fun when it's two-way". A participant reflected: "Really interesting talk and what an achievement too! Grateful thanks to all".



Community Voices

Many people have told us how much they miss chatting to different people at Community Gatherings during lockdown. Whilst we still cannot organise any face to face events we thought we could do a little project called Community Voices to help people in our project get to know more about each other. It's a simple idea, the volunteer will ask their client some questions to learn more about them – it could be about their professional life, a hobby, a fascinating life experience etc. Questions the volunteer could ask are:

What was your professional role? What did you enjoy about it? What are your hobbies? What do you enjoy about them? Have you had an exciting experience to share e.g. lived in a different country? Met someone famous? We would ask the volunteer to write up the client's responses (up to 200 words) and then email them to the project. A booklet would be produced from the collated responses, which we would share within the project. We hope this little Who's who will lead you to discover the fascinating variety of people we have in the project, link up with people with similar interests or tempt you to talk to someone new. The booklet would be a stimulus for conversation and connection and we would share it with the Lottery to show how we are valuing the breadth of older people's experiences. We would only use your initials in the booklet; contact details would not be shared. If you are interested in taking part, please let us know. We would like to have all responses back by Monday 15 March and will then start sharing the booklet after Easter.

Coping with Loss

8 ladies from the Community Champions project joined Linda Pentland, Soul mid-wife, for the Coping with Loss session. She explained that grief is not a linear process, and affects individuals differently. She shared an experience about how storytelling could help fill the hole when we lose someone. Others were invited to share their stories of loss which included experiencing siblings face major health challenges (dementia, cardiac arrest), getting divorced, losing close family members and friends to Covid and non - Covid causes. People shared strategies that helped deal with the loss: talking about the person, sharing memories of times together, looking at photos, volunteering to helping others, exercising, being in nature, listening to birdsong, visualising.....We talked about how smaller funerals during Covid felt



more intimate and personal, but also the challenges of honouring people who had died when we could not attend their funerals. Lighting candles, praying and remembering them were all important. Some-

times it is hard to put the grieving process into words so Linda introduced us to mandalas (example pictured), a Sanskrit word meaning circle or essence. They are circular drawings used in many cultures to unlock feelings. She showed us different mandalas used to explore Community, Discovery, Growth, Passion, Roots and Grief. We were then invited to try drawing our own mandala for tears using teardrop drawings and key words. We were also given the chance to draw a mandala about a person who had died using the prompts I wish..I wonder..and I will. Mandalas are believed to allow the imagination to run free and access different parts of the brain. They are colourful and non-linear. Linda finished by reading a Blessing and Rohini thanked all for their active participation, especially Linda for her skilful facilitation and Jenny for her technical support. Feedback has been positive. "A very good session. It was nice how Linda demonstrated drawing the Mandala as it was clear to follow." One lady found it really helpful, and said that people's suggestions made sense. She felt that she had been able to speak on zoom in a way that wouldn't have been possible in a physical room. A really worthwhile session.

Scams Update

Action Fraud are raising awareness of scams offering the Covid 19 Vaccination. In emails that appear to be from the NHS, recipients are asked to click on a link offering the vaccine. If they respond 'yes' the recipient will then be asked for personal information and bank details. In a similar scam people are receiving text messages asking for the same information in exchange for the vaccine. Leicestershire Police are issuing regular bulletins to update the community on what to look out for and what to do if you receive one of these scams. Please remember the vaccine is only available from the NHS who will contact you via your GP. The vaccine is free to all. If you receive a call you believe to be fraudulent, hang up. If you are suspicious about an email you have received, forward it to:

report@phishing.gov.uk. Suspicious text messages should be forwarded to the number **7726** which is free of charge. Report scams to Action Fraud as soon as possible by calling **0300 123 2040** or visiting **www.actionfraud.police.uk.**

Adult Learning Sessions - more details

Mary Baker will be leading these sessions and has provided extra information about what she will cover:

Resilience

- What is resilience? What does it look like? How we can build up our resilience to life's ups and downs?
- Identify strategies / techniques you and others use that helps build resilience.
- Exploring the '5 ways to wellbeing'.
- Create a 'Resilience Toolkit' that you can use when feeling anxious or worried.

Creative Writing

- History of how writing has developed over time.
- Creating a Mindmap to create a vocabulary.
- Exploring how to develop creativity
- Having a go at 4 different styles of poetry including, Haikus and Cinquains.

Run on Microsoft Teams.

Self care and Wellbeing from LALS

Sessions recently piloted by Community Champions are now available generally through the Adult Learning Service, running online. Dates for the course are: 9 Feb 9.30 - 11.30am, 3 Mar 10am - 12pm and 31 Mar 2.30 - 4.30pm. For more details see W: leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/adult-education or T: 0800 988 0308.