



NEWSLETTER

May 2021 VOLUNTEERS

Get in touch...Rohini, Jenny, Sam & Denise.
Mon -Thurs 9am - 5pm, Fri till 4.30pm.
T: 01858 439262
E: champions@vasl.org.uk
Torch House, Torch Way,
MH, LE16 9HL



VASL Volunteers Needed...

Support for Carers (01858 468 542) need telephone befrienders, to call people caring for loved ones, to offer support and a listening ear. One morning or one afternoon per week required.

My Mind Matters (01858 411 383) need volunteers who can offer 2-3 hours per week calling or emailing people with mental health problems offering a friendly, supportive chat. Training will be provided to any potential volunteers. Contact staff on the relevant numbers shown to apply or see:

W: vasl.org.uk/support/volunteer-with-vasl/

This month...

Zoom Community

Gathering Tues 4 May 2 - 3.15pm with speaker Taylor Staines Health and Wellbeing coach.

Zoom Bereavement Session Weds 19 May 10am - 12 noon facilitated by Jenny, for people supporting others through bereavement or those interested in understanding more about grief.

Microsoft Teams Creative Writing Session Tues 15 Jun 11am - 1pm led by Mary Baker from the Leicestershire Adult Learning Service.

Client Cream Teas

The Community Champions Team delivered cream teas to clients in April. This treat was to cheer everyone up after a tough year and was a chance for a quick doorstep chat to check in with everyone. Some people also accepted Healthy at Home Bags, which were compiled by Leicestershire and Rutland Sport. These bags had ideas for physical activities people can do at home which help maintain their health. The CC team really enjoyed safely seeing clients after so long. Clients have really appreciated the treat: "Thank you so much for organising a delicious tea parcel. It was super, a really good gift, so lovely".



Community Gathering

14 people met at the April Zoom Community Gathering. As a result of our ice breaker about favourite Easter treats we discovered that a volunteer's son worked for Cadburys, and that 500 million cream eggs a year are produced, equating to each person in the UK eating 3.5 cream eggs each, every day! The most anywhere in the world! Next there was time for small group chats – people talked



about using Zoom for pizza nights and exercise classes – "Zoom is a great way of bringing people into the room". We also heard about Zoom Torch prayer meetings, birthday celebrations, quizzes although not all were Zoom fans. When asked if people would continue to use Zoom when face to face social mixing resumed, most in our group felt they would. Others chatted about new pets and nice places to visit – like Stratford, Warwick and Leamington. Rohini gave project notices and volunteer Helen encouraged all to join the Zoom Animal Drawing session led by an artist, Jennie, who Helen has done exciting workshops with, including drawing sloths in Costa Rica via web cam. Ellie explained her role as the Community Recovery Officer for Harborough District. She helps local people and organisations to recuperate after Covid by building up their resilience and connecting them with local services e.g., food/hygiene banks, benefits advice, job seekers support. She also explained how people could become Covid Champions, local volunteers helping to share information about the pandemic. We finished with a big group chat about existing concerns about the spread of Covid, plans for 12 April onwards when more facilities open up, and things to look forward to e.g., holidays, family visits, HUGS and courgette growing!

Futureme.org Looking for something quirky to do? You could write a letter to your future self using this website. The letter will be delivered to you by email on a specified date. Website users report it can be a reflective, funny and positive activity to do.

Trusted Charity Mark Awarded to VASL



This award (TCM) has been awarded by NCVS (National Council for Voluntary Services). TCM is a valuable charter mark

which demonstrates that a charity is involving volunteers effectively in all aspects of its work, from planning and delivering projects, evaluating the results and generating new ideas. Rohini would like to say a massive **THANK YOU** to every single CC volunteer who gives up their precious time to offer regular social company to our clients, brightening their day with conversation, or through chatty letters and emails. Volunteers also patiently explain how to get online opening up new digital connection possibilities for clients. Other volunteers also participate in the Steering Group, offering ideas for learning events, venues for Community Gatherings and speakers. We (VASL Community Champions) should be really proud of our joint commitment to reducing loneliness; helping to restore people's social confidence and empowering them to connect with people and activities in their local area, or via digital platforms, globally! We know that loneliness can affect anyone, but we also know we can all be part of the solution. Thank you for choosing to make a positive difference through VASL Community Champions.

Together at Last!

Jenny met with five of the digital volunteers on a lovely sunny afternoon. We realised that the background noise from the road and leisure centre makes conversation difficult when you are all socially distanced. We chatted about our experiences over the last year, the technology we have adopted and tried to think of something that we will miss as we pick up our lives again. The volunteers have found it difficult to help people over the phone so it has been even more pleasing when we have managed to get people on to zoom and to solve other problems. We are all looking forward to being able to visit people to help with technology although we know this is a little while off so if you have a particular problem let us know and we will do our best.



Wildlife Drawing Class

7 of us joined

London-based artist and illustrator Jennie Webber from Wild Life Drawing (see: wildlifedrawing.co.uk/our-story/) as she taught us how to draw a hedgehog using a reference image, and her instructions. We started with warm up exercises, and used techniques like the clock face, mark making, proportion, shading, tones and measurement to produce our drawings. We also learnt more about the lives and habits of hedgehogs, and discovered that some of our volunteers are keen hedgehog observers and have them visiting their gardens. Drawing uses the same part of the brain that we use when we meditate. "Thanks for a fabulous session. I learnt lots of tips – what a good teacher Jennie is" "Thanks everyone who helped us today. What a lovely lady, so patient and kind. Loved it. Made me forget things and enjoy nature. Love the wild life in our garden. Something amazing about nature. It heals the mind and soul".

Rohini thanked Jennie and Helen, the CC volunteer who introduced us to Jennie. CC is always keen to do taster



Hedgehog by H. Bowsher

sessions of activities you may want to take up as a hobby. "Dear all, really enjoyed today's zoom and the subjects covered".

Health News

The Diabetes Prevention Programme can now be accessed via an online tool at W: preventing-diabetes.co.uk. This service supports people to make lifestyle changes to reduce their chances of developing diabetes. May is National Walking Month, find out more at W: activenation.org.uk. Locally, Walking Buddies are trained volunteers available to support anyone that is anxious about going out again after lockdown for a socially distanced 1:1 gentle walk. Contact Taylor Staines at E: taylor.staines@nhs.net. At Welland Park, socially distanced 'Wellness Walks' run every week for 1 hour and cost £2.50 per session and are wheelchair friendly. Contact Jenny Chambers at E: gpjenny@live.co.uk. 10-16 May is also Mental Health Awareness week. Mind the mental health charity have an info line: T: 0300 123 3393 or see W: mind.org.uk for more details.



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