



NEWSLETTER

September 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



This month...

Zoom Community Gathering

Weds 8 Sept 2 - 3.15pm with guest speaker

New Zoom Book Club 1st Meeting Weds 8 Sept 11am - 12 noon

Sat 18 Sept 9.30am – 3pm VASL will have a stand at the **Volunteer and Community fair in The Square**, Market Harborough – come and say hello!

Weds 13 October 10 – 11.30am Volunteers Meeting by Zoom – invitation with details will be emailed

Weds 20 October 10 – 11am Safeguarding Refresher Training at Torch House (face to face) with Jenny – open to all

Thurs 2 Sept 11am New! Lutterworth Coffee Club Wycliffe Rooms, Lutterworth

Call Community Champions for details or to book on any session.

August Community Gathering

11 people met on zoom for the August Community Gathering. Sam facilitated an ice-breaker about childhood games which evoked memories about Mousetrap, Space hoppers and sports like tennis, football, rounders and games like tag and marbles. Then we chatted in small groups – topics included volunteering for St John Ambulance, hip flasks, wine making and Scottish whisky distilleries! Rev Christopher Brown was our speaker as the Baptist Church are opening a **Renew Café** at Manor Walk in September – providing a safe, welcoming space for anyone and is based on a Christian model, volunteers will provide companionship and signpost people to other community activities. Finally Jenny led a session about the Olympics. She told us about a family connection with gold medal winning Market Harborough sailor Dylan Fletcher.

Volunteer Helen was a volunteer Gamesmaker (pictured) at the 2012 London Olympics and showed us

her medal, uniform, the mascot Wenlock, a thank you baton, and letter from David Cameron. "I thoroughly enjoyed our meeting, there's so much going on!"



Email Pal Feedback

When Dhivya first became a Community Champions Email Volunteer she had just moved here from Malaysia and was finding her feet. She was eager to learn more about England and it's customs so asked her client lots of questions. They exchanged news about their families, local events and hobbies. Dhivya also participated in Zoom Community Gatherings and learning events. She enjoyed meeting new people and sharing her experiences, and learning from those of others. "It's great to feel part of a community; everyone is so friendly". As her confidence grew, Dhivya applied for jobs and secured an exciting position. "The new job is going great and I love being a support worker. The working environment and the colleagues are brilliant!" Dhivya reflects: "Community Champions has really helped me to settle in the Midlands, I have met lots of interesting new people, and taken part in fun interactive meetings and learning events. It has helped me grow my professional confidence, thank you so much."

Project Updates

Our 5 year funding for the CC project from the National Lottery Community Fund expires on 30 June 2022. VASL is in the process of seeking more funding from the Lottery and will update you. Keep your fingers crossed! The pandemic has widened and deepened the experience of loneliness for many people. We are encouraging volunteers to set up informal social groups for clients online, or in real life, as part of our project legacy e.g. Book Clubs, Lunch Clubs, Chess Club, Walking Group etc. Could you and another volunteer set up something fun and local for clients?

The CC Steering Group is meeting on **21 September** to assess how the project is doing. Let us know if you would like to join this.



We support people and communities to thrive.

The National Lottery Community Fund

Dementia Friends Session

15 people from Market Harborough Baptist Church, VASL and Leicestershire County Council participated in a zoom **Dementia Friends** session led by Julie from Harborough District Council.

We learnt about the 5 key messages:-

1. Dementia is not a natural part of ageing.
2. Dementia is caused by diseases of the brain.
3. Dementia is not just about losing your memory.
4. It is possible to live well with dementia.
5. There is much more to the person than just the dementia.

Julie shared an insightful bookcase analogy to explain how dementia impacts the factual and emotional memories differently. We talked about each person with dementia having a unique experience and how to support them by turning understanding into action. Find out more at:

W: alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect

"Thank you all so much for this session. It's so important for us to be able to help those living with Dementia. I will try to pass on today's learning."

Poems

We have received some great feedback about the poems created during the Creative Writing session featured in our newsletter last month. Thank you to all those who were happy to share their work. Included below is a new topical poem from Colin M:

Come on give me a smile

Why the long face

Summer is here

Dirty knees

Kick a ball with the boys

Thanks Colin. If you are creative, and happy to share your work e.g. short poems, a drawing or a digital photo etc please do send in to the CC team via champions@vasl.org.uk and we will try and include them in future newsletters.

Mini Gathering News

Two mini gatherings were held recently for people in the Lutterworth area. 8 of us in total met at E&R Tearooms for tea and cake. Many connections new and old were made, the chat was lively and the cakes delicious. The staff were very helpful and kind and all reported they enjoyed meeting up properly, for the first time in many cases.



Innovation

The CC project is always trying to come up with new ways of reducing loneliness. A new client keen on railways joined the project and as none of our existing volunteers shared this passion Sam put a notice on Facebook. Craig, Chair of the Kettering Railway Society, replied and said he would be happy to train as a CC volunteer. He has now been matched with the client, and they are both enjoying long conversations about their joint hobby – what a fantastic example of targeted proactive recruitment! "It's great that I have been headhunted" said Craig! Sam also hosted our first ever **scooter walk**. A client who used to go out on her scooter regularly before the pandemic said she was feeling nervous about venturing out on her own again after months of lockdown so asked if the project could help. Sam hosted a group of 3 clients, enabling them to have a 'scoot' around Welland Park and then chat over a cuppa at the café. Everyone enjoyed the event so much there are plans to have another one. One person also brought along a friend, who has now become a client which is fantastic. We are always happy to listen to any ideas you have of new things we can try. We can't promise we will do them all but if we can find a way to do it, we will.



Walking Cricket has returned to Fleckney Recreation Ground, regular Sundays 4.30 - 6pm. Call Chris Hill for details M: 078405 84296.



Intergenerational Connections

We have CC volunteers and clients who correspond by letter with students at Welland Academy, and by letter with students at Birkett House School. They exchange information about hobbies, family events, current news, future plans – all sorts of things. Here is what one volunteer feels about these forms of social communication: "I just received my student Pen Pal's letter. A really dear young man. It fills me with pride to think he has taken the time to write to me. Same as my email pal, truly amazing young men. I just love to hear from them both".