Guideposts
Here for You

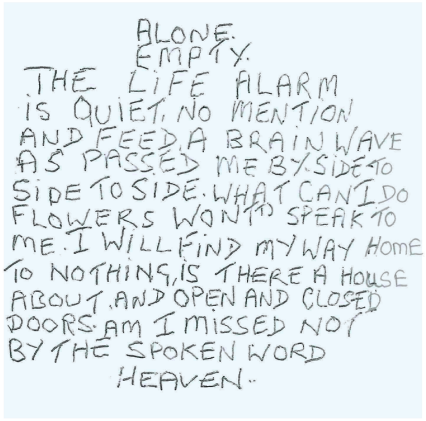
WELCOME | Autumn Newsletter 2018

As 2018 comes to a close, so does my first year working with Guideposts Trust. Listening to the people we support daily has only affirmed my belief that loneliness isn't a benign concept, but something that can do harm, or good. Without **positive intervention**, loneliness and social isolation can lead to depression, mental health problems and even physical ill health. Being lonely and/or living without meaning can cause some people to seek destructive remedies – such as substance misuse, or doing something that leads them to be involved in the criminal justice system. I received a poem entitled *Loneliness* earlier this year, written by one of the attendees of our Gloucestershire Dementia lunch club, and their words still affect me today.

I count working for Guideposts a privilege, we are always looking to see how our experience and skills can support others and this includes parts of society who are marginalised, either because of their conditions, disabilities, geographic location, life circumstances, or because of how they see the world.

"The life alarm is quiet. No mention."

We have been very grateful for all the support we have received to help the work of our charity, whether that's through service users, volunteer and staff fundraising or the gift of creativity. On sale alongside this Autumn edition are this year's **Christmas cards**...



ALONE.
EMPTY.
THE LIFE ALARM
IS QUIET. NO MENTION
AND FEED. A BRAIN WAVE
AS PASSED ME BY. SIDE TO
SIDE TO SIDE. WHAT CAN I DO
FLOWERS WON'T SPEAK TO
ME. I WILL FIND MY WAY HOME
TO NOTHING, IS THERE A HOUSE
ABOUT. AND OPEN AND CLOSED
DOORS. AM I MISSED NOT
BY THE SPOKEN WORD
HEAVEN.

ABOVE: Poem entitled '*Loneliness*'

Credit: KF , Lucy McMillan-Scott, P.W, Margaret Gibbs.

...kindly donated by service users and supporters, all talented artists who have generously gifted us their time and work to help us exchange best wishes for the season. All profit from Christmas card sales will fund exisiting and future services in our regions, and the development of our national information, advice and guidance service.

I hope you enjoy reading about the lasting difference we're making to local lives, I sign off with an extract from a poem, written by another person accessing our services, that resonates with us all at Guideposts Trust. Thank you for your continued support, and keep safe.

**"When sunlight never falls on you, and Winter days drag on,
Remember Spring will come again, and with it, sweet birdsong."**

Matt Jones, CEO

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A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

Volunteering offers many benefits. The idea of giving up your free time to give back to the community and make a difference to someone's life is certainly commendable. The benefits that are perhaps less talked about are the personal ones; **meeting new people, building long lasting-friendship and making wonderful memories.**

Guideposts Mental Health Services organise a joint event for volunteers and carers in June each year. A number of our volunteers are also carers of people who experience or are recovering from mental health problems. The event is a great opportunity to say **thank you to volunteers** who are so invested and give so much of their time to help support our work and also to give **carers a break and a change** from the normal day to day and meet everyone. The event is held in a **lovely venue and setting** making the lunch and afternoon extra special. It is during one of these events that Sophie *(volunteer)* and Jan *(carer and volunteer)* met:

> ***"It was a chance encounter around a cup of tea and piece of cake. We had both been volunteering for a while and never had the opportunity to meet. The event made it happen, changing our lives forever. We share such a close, supportive friendship and are so grateful for Guideposts to have allowed this to happen."***

GARDEN OF FRIENDSHIP

Stan & Fred have been coming to **Oxfordshire's Dig 'n' Grow** Project for many years. Promoting wellbeing through gardening, the project provides support for people with a range of needs including learning disabilities and acquired brain injury. It is open to adults of **all ages, background and level of abilities**. Stan & Fred are both over 50, they used to go to the same school but their friendship grew from the day they started attending the project - one garden they have helped create and regularly tend to is located on Witney's *Smith Estate*.

Everyone knows them there, not just for their great work but also their **great friendship, banter and laughter**. To the great delight and entertainment of local residents, both love re-living, whilst gardening, some of their favourite scenes of *Porridge* and *Dad's Army*. Stan and Fred regularly comment about how important the project is to them and how such **friendship wouldn't be possible without it.**

OX18 SOCIAL GROUP

Spring saw the re-invention of **OX18**, a **Social Group** for people with learning disabilities and autism living in West Oxfordshire. OX18 enables members to take part in **social & community life** and build **supportive connections and friendships**. Recent changes to the way the group operates means that all members now come together to decide what they want to do and plan their own programme of activities. Bowling, golfing, pizza making, pub & games nights, local sightseeing, are just a few of the many activities chosen to enjoy. Since the group was re-launched, numbers have grown from 7 to 22 and **ages now range from 18 to 77**! The incredibly warm weather has offered opportunities for some memorable outings this summer with **friendship blossoming between members regardless of age.** Members are very supportive of one another. They keep in touch outside of the project and organise themselves to arrive in a group, support each other to take **public transport and feel safe** when travelling to **OX18** base each Thursday.

STICKING TOGETHER

Alfie, 9 years old, is severely autistic, he doesn't speak to or engage with other children very much and generally prefers to play independently. However, things changed when he started attending our **Forest School Dreamcatchers** project with Toby. Dreamcatchers, is a unique project in West Oxfordshire for children with disabilities and autism to enjoy the outdoors and **interact with nature in a woodland environment**. Toby, like Alfie, loves Forest School. Both started at the same time and Toby was really keen to find a way to play with Alfie.

Toby first found a way in by making small decorations for Alfie's tree. Although Alfie never said a word, **he kept smiling** and singing whenever Toby helped him. Toby had also noticed that Alfie loved dinosaurs and came up with the idea of creating a dinosaur egg nest and kept bringing round shape stones pretending they were eggs. Although Toby did most of the talking, Alfie **increasingly engaged** with Toby with **smiles and songs** which they would both sing together, something his mum said **he had never done before**. By the end of the 6th session Alfie and Toby really bonded through play as Toby captured in a lovely drawing *(Right)*.

STROUD SERVICES - FRIENDSHIP HUB

"The change in John's life since coming to the Hub is incredible. He is a different man. He has such a positive mindset and dynamic life style now. I can't believe he is the same person. We are delighted about how well and happy he feels now, and that our support has paid dividends."

Promoting **community integration and friendship** is one of our Community Hubs main priorities and the main aspiration of the people who come to our Hubs for **support**. John has been coming to our Stroud Hub for a couple of years now. He felt really alone, spent most of his time at home, feeling his life had no prospects. His only wish was to be more involved in his local community, and possibly meet a few new people he could call his friends. He felt very low and truly believed this may not be possible.

To make John's wish a reality, our Stroud Hub team has been helping John to build skills and **confidence to travel** more independently and safely by public transport as well as meet new people. John now has a large network of friends and travels using both bus and train to visit his girlfriend on a regular basis and he along with other friends in the group meet up during the week independently for coffee and activities. He has built a significant circle of **supportive connections locally** and the **skills and will to live life to the full**.

We're very proud of what he and others who attend the Hub have achieved and they, along with the staff, are working hard to enhance the life of other members of the group, through friendship to achieve their full potential and have the **confidence to make new friends**, fend off loneliness and exploit new skills gained to **enhance their lives.**

LOTTERY FUNDED

Fun Fab Friday is an evening social group meeting up at Ware's Guideposts Hub, North Hertfordshire. It forms part of our **Big Lottery** funded project **Friendship 4 All** and exists to give adults with learning disabilities a chance to go out at the weekend, a time they tell us they feel most lonely. The group has been running for a year now and is attended by more than 20 people each week. A few of the group members had known each other for a while but struggled to find a safe, friendly environment to meet up in in their communities. Many members had never met before and the group has given them the chance make new friends. Friendships have flourished and people often meet up outside of the group; a small group meeting up on a Sunday to play pool and two of the ladies who come to the group now invite each other over regularly for a cup of tea and a sleepover.

"A humbling experience which allows me to value life and its people. It makes me feel more contented when I am around my friend... who brings out the best in me."

There is a **strong sense of connection** amongst members of the group, they look out for each other and everyone is helpful and supportive. Support from staff and volunteers has been key to help members build positive relationships e.g. when needing some help with **resolving issues, considering other people's needs and feelings** etc. Members have also shown greater independence, self-determination and choice. The choice of activities is entirely theirs and some members take the initiative to research and find outside activities for the group carefully weighing up cost and access. Activities outside of the building have enabled our group to **develop independence and skills** in other areas. They have built confidence in ordering food and/or drinks in pubs & restaurants, handling money and interacting with members of the public.

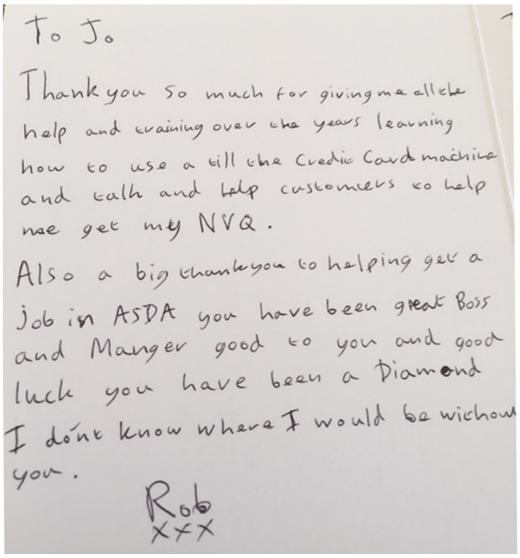
"Guideposts' schemes give people the chance to access a wide range of activities that they wouldn't do otherwise. The joy this brings is just amazing and lasting friendships are made that without the schemes would not have been possible."

The **Fun Fab Friday** group is currently supported by 3 volunteers who live locally - it is a great way for our members to get to know people in the communities they live in. One of the volunteers runs the local sweet shop and quite a few of the group members now pop into the shop during the week for a chat. Another of our **volunteers** is an older lady who really **enjoys the company of the Fun Fab Friday members** and the vibrancy of the group. This particular volunteer likes being able to support the group and its members but has said that coming along on a Friday actually really benefits her as she spends a lot of time on her own and can feel quite lonely.

amazonsmile

DID YOU KNOW? Yourself, your relatives and your friends can help raise FREE funds for Guideposts Trust with your everyday shopping? Check out *Give As You Live* and *AmazonSmile*, select Guideposts Trust as your chosen charity and support us everyday for FREE!

OPEN ALL HOURS


To Jo

Thank you so much for giving me all the help and training over the years learning how to use a till the Credit Card machine and talk and help customers to help me get my NVQ.

Also a big thank you to helping get a job in ASDA you have been great Boss and Manger good to you and good luck you have been a Diamond I don't know where I would be without you.

Rob
XXX

Guideposts Community shop has moved just a few streets down, now sitting at the heart of Guideposts Services in Ware. True to self the shop continues to bring the local community together and happiness to anyone who steps inside. The shop sells products made by adults with learning disabilities, local artists and local youth offenders.

Forming part of Guideposts Employment Skills Training Programme in North Hertfordshire which for the past 20 years, the shop offers unique opportunities for people with learning disabilities to gain work training skills and the support to find a job. The shop is a wonderful place for local residents to meet at the heart of their community.

Many local people pop in for a jar of jam or a card and end up staying for a chat, they are served by our trainees who enjoy seeing them. Pam is a retired teacher and a regular customer at the shop, she enjoys volunteering to teach the students how to sew and make beautiful gifts to sell in the shop. It is a joy to witness the group chatting and singing around the table as different generations come together to have fun and socialise.

WEDDING BELLS

We are thrilled to announce **Mates 'N' Dates** members Mark and Theresa got engaged on 10th June! They met at the Mates 'n' Dates Ball in 2016, and got on well straight away - at the end of the night, they asked us if they could see each other again. *'We always get on well, we are never unkind to each other'* says Mark. Mark was one of the first members of Mates 'N' Dates when it started 10 years ago. He has been a great support to other members who are looking for a partner, giving great advice about 'being patient' and 'not rushing into things.'

Theresa joined Mates 'n' Dates looking for friendship, but **found love** when she met Mark. Mates 'n' Dates provides opportunities for people to **meet and nurtures the first few steps of a relationship**, but are unable to provide regular support to couples. It is Mark shared lives support, and Theresa's family that have put in hard work to support their relationship, and see each other regularly, even though they live 30 miles apart - both Mark and Theresa agree ***'They have been fantastic'***!

Research shows that, like everyone else, people with learning disabilities want a loving relationship with a partner. Yet in the UK just **3% of people with learning disabilities live as part of a couple**, compared to **70% of the general population**. When it comes to relationships, not everyone's support is always encouraging of relationships, usually because they want to protect the people they care for. Love isn't always easy, but we believe **people with learning disabilities have the right to relationships,** the support through the ups and downs, and support through choices. Mark and Theresa are going to have a long engagement, whilst they are supported to make arrangements to live together. Mark and Theresa would like a dog. ***Congratulations to you both!***

COMMUNITY IN ACTION
THANK YOU FROM GUIDEPOSTS

Times are hard, funding is scarce and it gets harder and harder to keep going each year, so thank you all for making it possible again in 2018.

Thank YOU to all our supporters for their incredibly generous donation, for playing in our lottery, shopping on our ebay shop, buying our Christmas cards. Thank YOU to everyone, users of our services, volunteers and staff who have gone above and beyond giving their time to raise awareness of our work. Thank YOU to the people we support but who have also helped to raise valuable funds so that Guideposts can continue its work and keep its door open to the most in need in local communities.

We can be heroes just for one day... and make a difference for a lifetime.

Anne, Ruth, Sharon, Katie, Guideposts Oxfordshire staff Team, Guideposts Mental Health staff team have decided to take on a challenge this year to raise invaluable fund to continue our work throughout our regions.

Anne Gordon a regular attendee of Guideposts **Art and Start** course in Watford took on the challenge of competing in not one but two Triathlons this year. She completed the gruelling Blenheim course in just over 3 hours; an incredible personal achievement. We are truly delighted to see her do so well. In the process, she has raised an impressive **£4,709** in support of the project which she describes as playing a significant part in her recovery from depression and anxiety.

"Exercising with a goal is a **part of my recovery** and so I have registered for two sprint triathlons, Blenheim on June 3rd and London in August 5th. I will swim 700m in open water, cycle 20k and then run 5k. **To spur me on I am raising money for Guideposts** so that they can continue to provide the **support for mental health in the community** that some larger charities cannot provide."

Thank you so much Anne for your support and well done!

Ruth Completed the London Marathon in support of Guideposts Learning Disability Services in North Hertfordshire raising an amazing £1001! £251 more than her initial target - an incredible result from an incredible woman! **Thank You Ruth.**

"Running the London Marathon for Guideposts was an incredible experience. My race is over (for now) but the work of Guideposts continues." *Ruth, 2018*

TAG US IN YOUR FUNDRAISING : @GUIDEPOSTSUK

COMMUNITY IN ACTION
THANK YOU FROM GUIDEPOSTS TRUST

SEWING SEEDS OF HOPE

Thanks so much to Katie for organising a plant sale in support of Guideposts work stall at the *Windrush Flower Show* in July. Through her plant stall and donations alone, Katie raised an incredible **£300.** We're so reliant on the local community's generosity and every donation we receive, be it big or small, helps wonderful people in a wonderful way.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WALK

Henry Smith House team, users and volunteers proudly completed a 5K **Mental Health Awareness** Sponsored Walk at Cassiobury Park in Watford! raising more than £500 via ***Just Giving*** and in cash, with donations still coming. A big Thank You to services users and their **families, volunteers and staff members** for organising and supporting the event, for raising Mental Health Awareness and funds for *Henry Smith House*. We'll be able to **expand outside storage**, and also plan to use the funds to **create a sitting non-smoking area for the service users** and staff in our little garden at *Henry Smith House*.

Henry Smith House
Mental Health Awareness Walk, 2018

A special Thank You to the *Watford Borough Council* Chairman, Rabi Martins, for joining the walk and supporting us as his charity of the Year.

Guideposts Trust is very fortunate to have **over 200 volunteers** who share both their **time and skills in support of all our projects** - our work would be impossible without them. There are a variety of ways to get involved, from **helping with projects on the ground, fundraising, holding events, or becoming a befriender**. If you are interested in **volunteering with us**, please contact Nicole Rolston on 01993 893 560 - we'd love to hear from you!

A team of 13 staff made up of managers, day service support staff, office staff as well as friends and family have taken part in the *Colour Run Challenge* this year for the first time to raise awareness about Guideposts both locally and nationally and to raise vital funds for our Oxfordshire Projects.
The team exceeded their target by raising a fantastic £1020!

TOGETHER WE CAN CHANGE PEOPLE'S LIVES

COULD YOU BECOME A GUIDEPOSTS SUPPORTER?

Guidepost helps so many people, in so many different ways. Any amount you can give, any contribution you can make helps us provide vital services in local communities and reach out to more people in need every day.

Whether you choose to make a one-off or a regular donation, to fundraise for us in memory or in celebration or by taking on a challenge. Whether you take part in our Lottery, give as you earn or as you shop by selecting Guideposts as your preferred charity. Whether you donate new or unused gifts or to leave us a gift in your Will. Any support you can give us, big and small will make a tremendous and long lasting difference to the lives of those we support.

£5-£15 Helps fund 3 calls to our helpline from carers who urgently need information an practical support

£15-£25 Helps purchase ingredients needed to support healthy living & cooking workshops for the people we support

£25-£50 Helps fund unique outings and trips for adults with learning disabilities and gives them experiences and memories they wouldn't have otherwise

£30-£60 Helps to give someone with dementia access the benefits of *Music Therapy*

£50- £100 Helps fund art & craft materials needed to run our various therapeutic art clubs for people with learning disabilities, mental health, dementia and/or materials & equipment needed to provide a month of *Forest School* sessions for 10 children with special needs

£100-£500 Helps fund the refurbishment and improvement of our Community Hubs to enable more people to access a wider range of support

£500-£1500 Helps fund Lunch Club activities in rural areas for unpaid carers and the people they care for, giving them a access respite and supportive friendship

£2000+ Helps fund new developments including; *Art and Memory Club & Supper Club* for people with dementia and their carers in areas where there is currently no support available

NEW AND UNUSED GIFTS ARE USEFUL TO GUIDEPOSTS

Guideposts Trust are now collecting new & unused gifts that would be suitable for tombola or raffle prizes throughout the year. If you have something of value that you would like to donate to Guideposts that can be sold on ebay or auctioned in aid of Guideposts Trust UK please contact us on 01993 893 565 - we'd love to hear from you!