



Welcome!

Since my introduction to our Spring newsletter, I am delighted to have been appointed as the permanent CEO for Guideposts Trust. It is a privilege to lead the charity and I am enjoying developing our forward plans which I will share more on page 6!

I am extremely optimistic for the future and for what we can do as a charity. Despite difficult times, we always focus on the important needs of our service users and how we can make their lives better, keeping them away from crisis that threatens all too often.

I expect you have noticed the new Guideposts Trust logo that we have introduced recently. The new, stronger, look is intended to represent our essential role as navigator in people's lives, and the optimism that our support engenders in the people we serve. Please let us know what you think!

Thank you for your continued support.

Kathryn Courtenay-Evans

Thank you for your continued support of Guideposts' work, meaning that we can provide guidance towards a happy, more fulfilled life, for people who would otherwise be left behind in crisis.

Together we are working to ensure no-one is left behind.

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Latest News



Olympic Fever

The Olympics have inspired many of our service members over the summer to create their very own Olympic games.

From three-legged and egg-and-spoon races in dementia friendly CONNECT groups, coin flipping, can rolling and other inventive challenges at our Community Mental Health Hub, and an unforgettable Olympics day and barbecue at our Outdoor Wellbeing Hub.

The Gardeners at Dig'n'Grow surpassed themselves, creating games with their woodworking and artistry for members of all three day services in Oxfordshire. The shared games brought camaraderie and confidence through friendly competition, lots of fun, and even a dance off! The day wouldn't have been complete without a medal ceremony.

"I loved meeting new people when we got together for the games." Matthew

Emotional Benefit and a Recharge

One of our CONNECT at Home befrienders recently took a session of flower arranging, card making and nail painting to the home of a lovely couple, John and Ann. Ann lives with dementia.

Support worker Beth said "Ann started smiling and you could see the emotional benefit of having her nails done.", while John was able to take time to re-charge, and be ready to face his duties again.

These good feelings continued for the rest of the day, helping both cared for and carer.

Taking up a Challenge for Others

Seven intrepid explorers from our Stroud Community Hub day service have started a sponsored walk the length of the Sharpness-Gloucester canal (16 miles) this summer, in aid of their chosen charity the local Donkey Sanctuary.

With a wide range of physical and learning disabilities, the group are taking it in 6 stages of about 2.5 miles each, and are due to finishing at the iconic Gloucester Docks at about the time you receive this newsletter.

Walking in rain or shine, they have been cheerful throughout, helped by the amazing views stretching across the Severn Estuary, the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds. Impressive work!



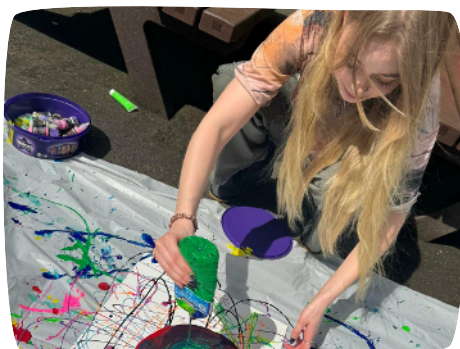
How can you help?

A donation of £30 could provide a CONNECT at Home respite session for a carer.

New 'Happy Path' for Mental Health

New members to any group can find it daunting, joining a set of people who already know each other well. And for people with a mental health problem, it can be even more so.

That's why our Community Mental Health Hub in Herts introduced a **new group for newcomers this year**. Catering for a diverse range of challenges they face, the group offers a variety of activities to help them get to know each other and the regular meeting routine. **The topics and activities are carefully selected to foster self-awareness and**



personal growth, with a focus on art, mindfulness, and creativity. So far it has been very well received.

"I really enjoy my group on a Friday. The people are lovely the way it's run. I always feel really good when I leave."

Carers' ideas combat isolation

An unexpected change of plan recently resulted in new initiatives reducing isolation amongst carers.

When a speaker for our carers group in Hertfordshire had to cancel last-minute, the session was quickly turned into an open discussion to share the group's expertise and collective knowledge. The discussion proved highly successful, with a fruitful exchange of experiences, advice, and knowledge.

The chance to connect with each other more informally also allowed the space for new ideas. One carer even took the initiative to organise walks and coffee outings with others, which has led to new friendships and helped to reduce their isolation.

A Song for Success

Promotions for our first ever Charity Song "Never Seen, Never Been" have continued, with the Guideposts pop-star members who sang it being interviewed on BBC Radio. It has made a huge lasting impression

particularly for David, who can't wait for the next opportunity to appear on the radio again. They are so proud of their achievement.



guideposts.org.uk/charity-song



Forest School and Bushcraft tackling Anxiety

This September we launched our new Forest School and Bushcraft services for children and young people with educational, social, emotional and mental health needs.

Building on our Forest School work of the last 10 years, **the new service meets needs that are much in evidence in our post-Covid young people** : it has been widely reported that NHS referrals for anxiety in children has more than doubled pre-Covid levels.

Recognising this, we arrange therapeutic activities and staff ratio proportionate to the participants' needs, adapting activities to each person's abilities and interests. We are taking this to schools and families across Oxfordshire in the first instance, and looking forward to expanding from this pilot.



Carer Spotlight

Meet Trudy



Trudy is mother of Guideposts member Gareth, and told us about his development, her worries, and hopes for the future.

"Since Gareth started at Guideposts Dig'n'Grow, he's never looked back. He's learned so much, and he's very happy there. It is like his second home because it is so friendly, it's as if every project manager becomes his second mother.

Gareth and I moved to the UK from Zimbabwe in 2010, when he was in his early 30s. While he thrived in Zimbabwe – even winning medals at the Special Olympics - it was time for us both to leave. Luckily we had family connections that allowed us to come to the UK, and my daughter was already settled here.

Before coming to Guideposts, Gareth had been attending another centre in the area, but his interest in being more hands-on and learning new skills drew him to Dig'n'Grow.

At Dig'n'Grow he has learned gardening skills, but what he loves doing is woodwork. His father was an experienced woodturner and he likes to follow in his footsteps.

For Gareth, having a purpose is crucial: whether to water the plants, or to be there for the other service members.

If someone is unhappy, he will go and cheer them up and make them smile.

Over the years Gareth has gained so much confidence. At one stage when you talked to him, he used to say something, and then stop. Not for just a second or so, but for a long time. He found it very hard to tell you something. This morning when he brought me coffee, he had so much to say, and could say it all, because he's grown so confident now. If I told

Quick Facts about Trudy:

Role: Mother, and Carer, for Gareth

Guideposts Service: Dig'n'Grow

Number of years attending: 3

Biggest Take-Away: "If Gareth's brothers could see him now, they would be astounded"

his brothers that, they wouldn't believe me. They haven't seen him since we left Zimbabwe.

He is a changed person.

I'm always impressed with each achievement and skill Gareth learns, however incremental. Recently, he independently cooked a frozen pizza pocket for the first time – while I was out, which was a little alarming! Also at a wedding this year, I didn't see Gareth all night. I found him in his element, talking and dancing with different groups of people. He wouldn't have done that five years ago. It's quite an achievement.

What do you worry about?

Gareth is very trusting. If somebody says to him, let's go over there and talk, he'll just do it.

I'm also not going to be here forever, so I'm working on finding him a supported living place now. I thought

maybe he wouldn't accept it, but his confidence is at the point now, where he knows that he can do it.

The only times he's slept away from home have been brief stays with his sister, and once he went on a trip to a caravan park. It mostly went well, but he didn't understand what's appropriate away from home, so that after his shower he just streaked through the caravan! It's all part of his ongoing learning process.

Guidepost has had such a positive impact on Gareth, the hope is that he can continue to attend while in supported living, because I think without somewhere like Dig'n'Grow he wouldn't be happy.

I'm actually dreading the day that he moves out. But **this morning he said**

"Mom, I've got to go forward. I've got to do this myself".



Guideposts Skills Academy



The first graduations from our accredited courses

This year has seen the introduction of a major new initiative in the way we support people: the Guideposts Skills Academy. We are now providing nationally approved courses to help people with disabilities acquire essential life skills, while enhancing their confidence and independence.

Since our foundation over 50 years ago, Guideposts has recognised how much people's lives are improved by learning skills for independent living and the confidence that these skills bring. Guideposts' day opportunities for adults with disabilities has always included activities to help develop these skills, but we decided to bring in courses to formalise the work, and to ensure that people get the due recognition for what they have learned.

Even better than expected

Taking a course for certification has enormously added to the pride and confidence in the students, much more than we had expected.

The Life Skills courses are to GCSE-level, and accredited by ASDAN, an education charity that promotes personal, social, and employability skills among learners of all ages, empowering them to lead more independent and fulfilling lives.

The first students graduating from the cookery course in July hailed it a great success. The subjects include meal preparation, budgeting, shopping, and healthy eating. **Many of the participants started struggling to cook a jacket potato and graduated being able to cook a healthy vegetable Rogan Josh curry made from scratch, with not a cook-in sauce in sight.**

The course broke down the complex tasks into manageable steps, incorporating strategies to work with each individual's learning styles. The participants' range of motor skills, spatial awareness and sensory processing, which make a seemingly simple task much more complex, all had to be taken into account.



"I am so proud of my certificate. All my friends want me to cook for them now."

The first participants "graduated" and received their well-earned certificates at a ceremony, with **big smiles of pride on their faces**. All of them had grown in confidence, knowledge and picked up many life skills along the way.

"We believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to learn and grow, and we are dedicated to providing an inclusive environment where adults with learning disabilities can thrive." said Sharon Baker the Support Worker leading the course.

The Guideposts Skills Academy launched at Guideposts' Community Hub in Stroud in spring, and as well as further cookery courses we are starting courses in creative living, relationships, self-esteem and identity.

We are hoping to gain funding to expand across Gloucestershire later this year, with plans to roll out the scheme in Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire too.

How can you help?

A donation of £96 could provide a place on a 12-week course in food skills.



Guideposts Trust



Looking to the Future

Kathryn Courtenay-Evans, CEO

As Guideposts' new CEO I am honoured to be leading Guideposts into the future. **The background in which we work is ever changing**, and in 2024 we are still discovering the extent of the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, as well as the effects of chronic under-funding in public services. While change has started with the new government, we are yet to see all the implications for us.

Meeting real needs in our communities

You may have already read about many of the new services and pilots we have been developing, including Guideposts Skills Academy, and Guideposts Forest School and Bushcraft. Our complex needs coaching services are going from strength to strength, supporting many people in their 20s and 30s with complex mental health needs. Our CONNECT services including the recent addition of CONNECT at Home are meeting a real need amongst carers, particularly caring for those living with dementia.



In order to sustain and grow all our vital services, the charity's funding is of course fundamental. I am looking at broadening our streams of income to avoid over-reliance on any one stream too heavily. In the first instance, I am looking to **develop our Corporate Partnerships** and will be holding a corporate day in the Spring.

Collaboration is at the heart of the charity - **what we can do alone is limited** - and we look forward to collaborating more to develop the Guideposts community and opportunities for the people we support. I would be delighted to hear from organisations interested in working with us.

Guideposts
2025 Calendar
Inspiring artwork from our
Community Mental Health Art Groups.

A4 size - £12

Order on the enclosed form or at
guideposts.org.uk/shop

How can you help?

A donation of £85 could pay for an Art Therapy session for a group of 4 people with complex emotional needs to work through difficult emotions.



Is it time to get your Will in order?

The time never seems right for some things, and making your Will is one of those. If you are determined to make or update your Will, we have some tools to help you.

1. Our free Guide to Writing Your Will
2. A free, simple to use, and fully checked online Will-making service.

Leaving a charitable gift in your will could make a big difference to the lives of people in the future, by enabling our services to continue adapting to the needs of the time.

When making your will, of course we would be delighted if you include a gift for Guideposts, however large or small, but there is absolutely no obligation.

Please see www.guideposts.org.uk/leave-a-legacy or contact us.





Supporter news

Support for Art gives members a boost

We are thrilled with the success of an exciting development in our community: our very own members are showcasing their artistic talents and selling their artwork in our shop!

This initiative not only supports our members but also enriches the



Art group member with his watercolour painting of a train from a photo that he likes

wider community with unique, handmade pieces that display creativity and passion.

"Today I received the 'Beautiful Day' artwork. I cannot explain how much the painting makes me smile, and will every day be my gentle reminder to have 'A Beautiful Day'."

The incredible artwork has set our social media channels alight with the hundreds of comments of support. **To see these messages has been motivational and life changing for the artists.**

Proceeds from sales are shared between the artists and Guideposts, and these funds will help us to further nurture creativity and collaboration within the community.

Each artwork reflects the unique perspective of its creator. They are perfect gifts, or a treat for yourself!

Artwork Shop

If you would like support our members, you can find the artwork at guideposts.org.uk/shop

Guideposts Birthday Raffle

1st **£500**

2nd **£100**

3rd **£50**

plus **5 More prizes of £20 each**

Tickets: £1

Buy Tickets on your donation form or Scan the QR code guideposts.org.uk/birthday-raffle

The draw will take place on our birthday **4th December 2024.**

Local Help at Dig 'n' Grow

The community comes together to help our outdoor services.

We were truly amazed by the outpouring of support we received from our call out for local DIY help at our outdoor services. **The response from the community was overwhelming**, with so many individuals stepping up to lend their skills and time to our charity.

We were touched by every offer of help, people like David from Webb Plumbing, who dedicated an entire day to tiling our toilet and bathroom. **Despite it being the hottest day of the year, David worked tirelessly** in the small space, maintaining a big smile throughout the day!



The offers of help remind us of the incredible kindness that exists in our community. **We are deeply grateful to everyone who has donated their time and skills.** Thank you.

Please email fundraising@guideposts.org.uk if you would like to help.

Why does your support count?

Our mission is to make sure no-one with mental health challenges, learning disabilities or dementia is left behind.

Supporting 1135 people over the last year

“ I’ve been coming to Dig’n’Grow for about a year and a half now. It has saved my life, actually. I was in an awful state, a really bad place. I was going through so many support work companies. Because I don’t seem disabled, they didn’t really understand. After I started coming here I came out of the dark place. I love it. I come here every day I can. ”

“ Guideposts has transformed my mental health outlook from crisis and not coping, to feeling I could take on the world. ”

“ This is such a valuable service. I feel the carers group is the only place I go where people understand the issues I am facing. ”

We couldn't do it without you. Thank you.

For information on how to get involved - whether you want to donate, volunteer, fundraise, or support us at work, get in touch!

 guideposts.org.uk/get-involved
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