

South & Vale Carers Centre

.....where carers' views count

5 Lydalls Road - Didcot - Oxon - OX11 7HX - Tel: 01235 510212
Email: carers@svcarers.org.uk - Web: <http://www.svcarers.org.uk>

WINTER 2008



Carers' Voice

What a busy year 2008 has been. We have set up the Befriending Service to give Carers a much needed break and we would like to thank the volunteers who regularly contribute their time, sometimes at very short notice, to help others. We have been able to improve the links with GP practices around the area and have worked closely with some to run our own "advice surgeries" in Faringdon, Wantage and Henley. Jackie Moss, who is from the Primary Care Trust Clinical Executive, managed to take some time from her job as a practice nurse to speak at our AGM in November and talked about how important it is to recognise the contribution that Carers make and to ensure they receive the support they need. It is being recognised that Carers often have to juggle working and caring and I know from my own experience that this can create challenges. We are fortunate to have Cara Brandi working with us to find out about Carers' experiences of this and some of you may have recently received a questionnaire from us. Please take a few minutes to fill it in as it will really help us to gain a clear picture of what Carers need and influence the types of services that are provided in the future. Cara writes:

"I will be working at the South and Vale Carers Centre until the end of March 2009 researching the needs of carers in employment, study or wishing to return to work. The research is being carried out collaboratively by all three Oxfordshire Carers Centres and will look at carers' needs and how they are being currently being met by Oxfordshire County Council and where improvements could be made. We are looking to gather as much information as possible in a very short space of time and if you would like to share your experiences, good or bad, then I would love to hear from you. I can be contacted at the South and Vale Carers Centre by telephone on 01235 510212 or by e-mail at cara@svcarers.org.uk. Thank you very much for your help."

Archway Foundation

"It's Friday night. Everyone seems to be going somewhere or seeing someone except me. Is there something wrong with me?"

The answer to this is no. Feelings of loneliness and isolation can hit us at various points in our lives. Bereavement, divorce, relationship break ups, unemployment, friends moving away/getting married, are just some of the triggers. It may be that for some, making meaningful links with others has always been difficult. Whatever the reason, Archway is here to help. The Archway Foundation is a registered charity, founded in Oxford, "serving those hurt by loneliness". It is currently expanding to Abingdon, working in partnership with the Hospitality Centre at 35 Ock Street to provide a regular social evening for anyone looking for company, friendship, a listening ear and social activities. For more information contact 01865 790552, email office@archwayfoundation.org.uk or see our website www.archwayfoundation.org.uk



Volunteer Befriending Scheme

Chris Elliott writes:

On January 1st it will be a year since I joined the team at South & Vale as the co-ordinator of the new Volunteer Befriending Scheme. I remember drawing out plans, lists and diagrams covering the first six months of my new job and the path it would take, and pencilling in the whole of the year. Well before the beginning of February I knew better, as my wastepaper basket filled up with all the plans, lists and diagrams, and my shiny new notebook became dog-eared, battered, and full of more useful accounts of what was actually happening. In fact I think the best thing about 2008 has been the unpredictability of every single day.

My first task was to let the world know that we were looking for volunteers, and what we would be asking from them. In order to do this in detail we had to work out the practicalities of carrying out visits to carers' homes that would be enjoyable to everyone involved. (I suppose the major problem of the job has been constructing systems before we had any experience of what the events they were intended to regulate had happened – and the second major problem has been trying to avoid writing long complicated sentences like that one...)

We spread the information in as many ways as we could: from the glamorous (and always helpful) Bill Heine's programme on the radio to the humble Parish Newsletter. We soon found that the lower the profile the higher the response, as enquiry after enquiry came in from Parish Newsletter readers. They have consistently provided over 80% of our volunteers.

When I receive an enquiry I visit the potential volunteer's house with written information, including, even on that first meeting, an application form. I try not to be pushy, but sometimes I admit return with the form already filled in. Usually people have trouble with the question 'Why do you want to do voluntary work?' as it's hard to reply without sounding pious and do-gooding. I nod in agreement, and never admit it was me who wrote the form.

Volunteers are then summoned for interview here at the Centre, and meet me again with a colleague. Colleagues are very good about sparing the time for this duty, and I think find it very interesting. Our volunteers come from such varied backgrounds, and are all warm and not often shy – which of course is just the ideal person we're looking for.

The training course is held on a Saturday morning, and then the following Tuesday evening, and Alan Steer, who is the Volunteer Co-ordinator at the Oxford Carers Centre, helps me to run it. He introduces a different note into the proceedings: more formal but more intimate at the same time (I haven't ever said that to him...). We both include as much of the class's personal experience as possible, and as much humour, and I enjoy it immensely. So far all our trainees have passed with flying colours, and the fourth group will be trained in January. The total trained during this first year is 17.

Challenging Behaviour & the Autism Spectrum

A course for parents & carers presented by the **Service for Autism, Oxon County Council Education**, with the **Autism Family Support** project. Led by Jonas Torrance & Pete Austin.

The Wheatley Centre, Littleworth Road, Wheatley, OX33 1PH
On Thursdays, 7 - 9pm, January 15, 22, 29 & February 5 2009.
Plus optional session, 7 - 9pm, Thursday February 12.

For more information and booking details please contact Kathy Erangey, Autism Family Support, on tel. 01844 338696 or email Kathy@autism-fs.org.uk
Closing date for bookings is January 5 2009.



Carers' Groups

'Drop In' Information Clinic for People with Parkinson's, their carers and family

Starting 8th January 2009, 2-4pm, continuing every 2nd Thursday of the month
Bicester Resource Centre, Launton Road, Bicester OX26 6DJ.
For more information contact Maggie Wainwright, Information and Support Worker
Oxfordshire for Parkinson's Disease Society
Tel: 08442 253679 or email mwainwright@parkinsons.org.uk OR JUST DROP IN!

Dementia Support Group - Abingdon

Carers and Sharers meetings take place in the Abingdon Mental Health Centre, Marcham Road, Abingdon. We meet on the 2nd and 4th Thursday afternoon of each month, usually from 1:30pm to 3pm.

This is an opportunity for carers to meet other people who know what it is like to care for a loved one with dementia. We also welcome the person who is in receipt of care.

Speakers come and talk on topics of interest to carers. Members of the community mental health team are also on hand to answer your questions.

If you would like more information, please ring 01235 205404, and ask for Sarah or Lisa. We look forward to meeting you.

Memory Difficulties Support Group - Wantage

This group is for people who have memory difficulties and their carers. We aim to provide a supportive environment for carers and the people they care for, to share their experiences, ideas and expertise in living with the effects of memory difficulties. No referral is necessary, please drop in and join us.

The group meets at the Mably Way Health Centre, Wantage, OX12 9BN, on a fortnightly basis. The meeting starts at 1:30pm with a hot drink and an informal discussion, followed by a guest speaker. The meeting usually ends by 3:30pm. Both you and the person you look after are very welcome. We may be able to arrange transport for you.

The first meeting of the New Year will be on 16th January 2009

For more information please ring 01235 810 575, and ask for Paul or Alison.

Are you caring for someone with Alzheimer's or a related dementia?

If so, we are a small and friendly group of carers who meet in **Didcot** to offer support, information and friendship, as well as occasional social activities and you are welcome to join us. We offer a light sandwich lunch and meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month 12.00 – 1.30 at the Didcot Health Centre, Britwell Road, Didcot. Arrangements can be made for the person you care for to go to the Didcot Day Centre.

For more information contact Stella on Tel: 01865 876508 or Brenda on Tel: 01865 455816.

Donations

We would like to thank all the parish councils that have given donations to support the work of the Centre. These include at time of press:-

Ardington & Lockinge, Aston Rowant, Chalgrove, Childrey, Cholsey, Crowmarsh, Dorchester, Drayton, East Hagbourne, Garsington, Great Haseley, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor, Lewknor, Little Milton, Mapledurham, Nettlebed, North Hinksey, North Moreton, Shrivenham, South Moreton, Stanton St John, St Helen without Parish, Watchfield, West Challow, Wheatley.

We would also like to thank the Hagbourne Parochial Church Council and the Ian McTaggart Trust.

Carer Trips

West Side Story, High Wycombe (matinee performance).....Wed 25 February 2009
(this is a Sadlers Wells production, tickets are limited, so please return forms early!)

Stratford upon Avon.....Wed 25 March 2009

Carer Training

Bereavement Course.....Wed 4 February 2009
(Didcot Civic Hall, 9.30am - 1.00pm)

Depression course.....Wed 18 March 2009
(Didcot Civic Hall, 9.30am - 1.00pm)

Emergency Contact Numbers

Social & Community Services

0800 833408

(5.00pm - 7.00am, weekdays, 24hr at weekends)

Out of hours, urgent medical and dental care

0845 345 8995

(medical - 6.30pm to 8.00am, weekdays, 24hr on weekends / bank holidays)

(dental - 6.30pm to 10.00pm, weekdays, 9.00am to 9.00pm on weekends / bank holidays)

Christmas Opening Hours at the Carers Centre

Christmas Eve (Wed 24/12/08)....10am - 2pm	Tuesday (30/12/08).....10am - 2pm
Christmas Day (Thur 25/12/08)....Closed	New Years Eve (Wed 31/12/08)...10am - 2pm
Boxing Day (Fri 26/12/08).....Closed	New Years Day (Thur 01/01/09)...Closed
Monday (29/12/08).....10am - 2pm	Friday (02/01/09).....10am - 2pm

