

VOLUNTEERS' NEWSLETTER

October 2007

Hallo

Please welcome:

- Claudia James at Creative Writing
- Becky Swan at Art group
- Celsus Nuachukwu at Open Door
- Charles East at Open Door
- Deborah Wilson at Bridge

We hope they will be very happy with us.

....and Goodbye

Sadly we must say goodbye to **Sandy Overy** who is moving nearer her daughter in Bedfordshire and to **Brenda Stephens** who is moving to Somerset for a more relaxed lifestyle. We will be very sorry to see them go and thank them for all their hard work over many years.

Marjorie Alleyne is recovering from her knee operation but living out of London for a while - hopefully she will be back before long.

Football

This event, organised by *Hear Us*, was a great success - *Carmen Gray*, one of our volunteers, distinguished herself on the field for the *Hear Us* team. Next year I hope we will have an *APCMH* team .

St. Mildred's Project - Christmas closures

Friday Art	closed 21st and 28th December
Monday Well-being	closed 24th and 31st December
Tuesday Women's group	closed 25th Dec. and 1st Jan 2008
Tuesday Writing	closed 25th Dec. and 1st Jan 2008

For Christmas events, please see 'Diary Dates' overleaf.

Harvest Festival Gift

We were thrilled to be given a fantastic selection of tea, coffee, chocolate and biscuits by St. Michael & All Angels, New Beddington.

Our thanks to Catherine Dowland-Pillinger for suggesting APCMH to her parish and to all who gave so generously.

Training and Support session - Saturday 13th October

Twenty people attended - thanks to you all for coming and for participating so positively. I hope that those who were not able to come will find this summary useful.

There will be some pressure on us as an organisation to think creatively about how we can enable our members to participate more in the running both of the organisation and the projects. This is of course something we would want to do and perhaps we have tended to assume that we are doing all we can in this respect, without really thinking about it.

We thought about the positive aspects of encouraging more involvement from members, summarised by:

- Members are experts by experience
- We should offer opportunities to demonstrate abilities and take responsibility.
- It would help to improve self-esteem as people feel that they *can* do things

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- Allows people to use their skills
- Promotes teamwork and equality and positive role models
- Enables members to develop informal peer advocacy

Some concerns that were expressed:

- We would not want to exclude people from working in the drop-ins because they did not have experience of using mental health services. We do not recognise two different sets of people - those who are well and those who are unwell - but see us all on a continuum of mental health.
- Possible insurance issues
- Concern that people should have a place to go and be, and feel supported without taking on responsibility.
- There may be pressure to attend or stay for the whole session, which members may find difficult.
- There is no enthusiasm for meetings at the drop-ins.

The suggestions of the group were:

- Small differences of attitude and action can make a difference. People can be encouraged to make their own or others' drinks during the evening and to wash up if they wish.
- Instead of a volunteers' newsletter, we will move to a newsletter for everyone once a quarter, encouraging contributions from members and volunteers. We can ask members to help with its production and distribution.

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After this discussion Andrew led a session in which we considered what kind of personality we each had and what this meant for our work in teams with other people. The key messages that came through were:

- We all have skills, abilities and strengths.
- We have different skills, abilities and strengths.
- When we work with people who have different personality types we can find it difficult because they will want to work in a different way, which we may find uncomfortable.
- We need to value everybody's contribution.

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So the two halves of the session are linked.

- We value everybody - those who are comfortable doing the practical tasks in the drop-ins and workshops, those who encourage and support our members in games and activities, and those with special gifts of listening and support.
- We all do some of these and they knit together to become more than the sum of their parts.
- Where we can we must let our members contribute to this work and some will then go on to be fully-fledged official volunteers.

In the work that we do and the way that we do it, we have something of great value. Thanks to all of you.

Finally, if you have any comments or concerns about any of the above or indeed any other aspect of your work please do get in touch.



A Reminder of the Diary Dates

16th Dec	Bridge party
17th Dec	Rainbow party
20th Dec	Bethlem carols at 3.00 pm
21st Dec	Open Door Christmas mince pie evening