

The Pershore Volunteer

Pershore Volunteer Centre puts volunteering at the heart of the community to reduce rural and social isolation for local people.

November - December 2020



Our Chairman Writes..



As I write this article on the 25 November we are still in lockdown, but this coming Sunday (29th November) see the start of Advent. Advent is the period when we start to look forward to Christmas. It feels strange to be starting to think about Christmas whilst still in lockdown.

Strange is one way to describe 2020 - I'm sure you can think of other words! The year started normally, but by the end of March the Volunteer Centre, together with the rest of the country, was in lockdown. But even then the Volunteer Centre's lockdown was anything but normal.

You would have thought that as our normal activities reduced we would close the office, furlough the staff and put our feet up - not a bit of it. The minibuses were parked up, the lunch club was suspended and the Social Car Scheme all but stopped. A small number of drivers were able to continue and covered the reduced number of journeys. The number of journeys may have reduced, but their seriousness increased; social trips stopped, routine non-urgent medical appointments were cancelled, but the number of urgent trips increased. People unable to get to hospital had to have their urgent life saving treatments delivered to them at home. Our drivers regularly drove to Worcester Royal, Kidderminster and even Dudley hospitals to collect vital chemo-therapy and other life saving treatments. I would like to thank them for their dedication and commitment.

We recruited new volunteers and looked for new ways to support the people of Pershore and the surrounding villages. Working with the town hall we established a network of volunteers in Pershore and at least one in each village. This network was then coordinated by a skeleton office staff - only one person in the office at any one time. The volunteers undertook daily prescription collection and delivery services, shopping trips, dog walking and many other activities.

As loneliness and isolation became an issue the Centre's staff contacted all our lunch club regulars, and with the help of volunteers we recruited for the local *Here4You* project, we established a network of people who are now in regular contact with people who are once again self isolating.

Contd over



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None of this would have been possible without the dedicated work of the team at the Volunteer Centre, Donna and Sue who between them staffed the office, Angi who kept in touch with the volunteer network, especially those who were not being used from time to time and Kate who continued to ensure that the vital funds kept rolling in. We could not have done any of this without them.

Christmas will not be the same, this year. No coffee morning and no Lunch Club Christmas lunch, but rest assured we are still here and still able to help our clients. With the hope of multiple vaccines in 2021 and the lifting of the national lockdown I look forward to a brighter 2021.

I would like to thank our staff for their hard work during the year and wish them a peaceful rest over Christmas. I would also like to wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and a happy and more normal 2021.

Eric Wiles



A Volunteer's Experience : On the Transport Desk at Pershore Volunteer Centre

We rely on many wonderful volunteers to enable us to run our Volunteer Social Car Scheme. We have 20 Volunteer Drivers at the moment and our Transport Desk Volunteers who co-ordinate the drive requests in the office, talking with registered clients who need drives and liaising with the volunteer drivers to fulfil them, are a very important part of our team.

Hello, my name is Kate Redfern and I have been volunteering at Pershore Volunteer Centre on the transport desk for about 2 ½ years. I had found myself with too much spare time on my hands as both my children were happily settled at school, but I was reluctant to go back to paid work due to my oldest daughter's disability and the changing nature of her needs.



I contacted the Volunteer Centre and was surprised to discover that the centre itself was actually the place for me. I volunteer on the transport desk on Monday mornings – this means taking calls from Pershore and surrounding area folks who cannot get from A to B and back easily themselves. I take the details of their journey and then pair them up with one of our amazing volunteer drivers.

What I love most about the role is that I am directly in contact with the people I am helping. I love that the phone rings and it could be anyone wanting anything – from a lift to the doctors to help getting to the hairdressers (when we are not in lockdown!) or getting home from a major operation. I am given the opportunity to chat to some of the most isolated and vulnerable people in Pershore and the surrounding area and help them in a very practical way. Sometimes I might be the only person they have spoken to that day, and that human contact is so important.

The atmosphere in Pershore Volunteer Centre is so positive and all the staff have a positive 'can-do' attitude. Donna, the Centre Manager always makes me feel valued and I love our regular chats! I genuinely feel I make a difference every time I am there, at a place that is a central part of my local community.

I started at Pershore Volunteer Centre to help other people, but feel that I have got more out of it myself. It is now a vital part of my life!





Some Splendid News!



Pershore Plum Plodders have once again crossed the winning line for the Volunteer Centre!

Despite all the restrictions on their activities this year, they have donated the glorious sum of £500 to support the centre's work in our local community. The Centre has benefited from the Plodders in previous years and it our pleasure to thank them once again for their efforts - and they are physical efforts - on our behalf. Please have a look at their website <https://www.pershoreplumplodders.co.uk/> and find out all about them.



Our photograph shows Centre Manager Donna King (L) receiving - at a social distance - the cheque from a Plum Plodders' member.



More Good News!



Kate Walton is the Centre's Grants Manager. Kate writes:

I've been busy since my last update, chasing funding to replace our lost income as well as writing end of grant reports to the trusts and funders who have supported us. I've made 15 applications since June, but a huge chunk of time was taken up with the Crowdfunding campaign which fortunately raised £7729, although we received rather less than this after the external fees were deducted. I've also tried to target some larger grants alongside smaller pots of money, but these are more time-consuming and more competitive with a much lower success rate, but like the Lottery says, you've got to be in it to win it, so I'll keep trying. I'm particularly pleased with the results of our Co-op grant which was based on the money raised by Co-op members who chose to support Pershore Volunteer Centre - we received just under £3500, thanks to all of you who shopped at the Co-op and supported us.



Congratulations!

Here are the winners of our monthly draws for October
November and December

October		November		December	
£20	Clive Austen	£20	Shirley Martin	£20	Ian Buckley
£15	Ted Williams	£15	Fran Roebuck	£15	Margaret Roberts
£5	Rosemary Swift	£5	Jane Street	£5	Mavis James
£5	Mary Darrington	£5	Kathleen Stenning	£5	Betty Cave
£5	Grace Richardson	£5	Jean Austen	£5	Alan Winkett

A big thank you for supporting us once again this year, and special thanks to those of you who have redonated your winnings to the Volunteer Centre. Monthly draw renewals will be due on 1st January 2021. You should receive a letter early December – we do hope you will continue to support us.

Read Easy - A New Initiative



Angi Ballard, our Volunteer Co-ordinator has referred several volunteers over the last year to a newly formed local group who aim to help adults with reading - Read Easy Evesham and Pershore. If you know anyone who might benefit from some receiving free literacy support, please encourage them to get in touch with Read Easy. Their Literacy Specialist has written more about what they are able to offer below:-

Read Easy Evesham and Pershore is a recently formed local volunteer-led group whose aim is to provide help to adults in our area who would like to learn to read or improve their reading skills. Our area covers Pershore, Evesham and all the surrounding villages.

We know that many adults struggle with reading so have formed our Read Easy group to provide a free and confidential service to progress through a tried and tested reading programme at a pace to suit each individual. Most importantly, the coaching is provided on a one-to-one basis – each learner is paired up with a trained volunteer reading coach who work together usually for two 30 minute sessions per week. This makes the scheme perfect for those who might find the idea of joining a more formal class intimidating. The scheme used is phonics based and is used very successfully to teach those with all types of reading difficulties, including dyslexia.

Under normal circumstances, coaching sessions would take place in a safe, quiet area within a public space such as a library or coffee shop. Covid restrictions have meant that Read Easy groups across the country have been turning to coaching remotely via such platforms as FaceTime and Zoom. Read Easy UK has worked hard to ensure that readers and coaches have the support necessary to enable them to access the required technology and many have reported that they prefer this method of working.

If you know of someone who would like to learn to read – a family member, friend, colleague, employee - and they are aged 18 years or over (there is no upper age limit and it is never too late to learn), then please do help them to make contact with Jo or Simone who will be delighted to help them begin their reading journey.

Tel: Jo 07791 401763

Tel: Simone 07593 755875



A Generous Birthday Gift!

Jean Austen recently had her 70th birthday. Alas, Covid rules meant that a celebration party could not be held. Undaunted, Jean decided to mark her special day by donating £70 to the Volunteer Centre!

Jean, how wonderful! Thank you very much. We hope that when things return to normal you can have a truly lovely party with family and friends.



Sue Nutting, our finance guru, while wishing us all a very happy Christmas, hopes that you will remember our stamp-collecting and recycling scheme. So, please keep ALL those lovely postage stamps from your cards, especially those from exotic places. Put them in an old envelope and pop them through the Centre's letter box. Thank you.



Hearty Hellos!



We are delighted to welcome Paul Scrase who has joined us as a Volunteer Car Driver and to Sally Ludlow who has completed training to volunteer as a Passenger Assistant on the Minibus. Thank you for joining our teams. We hope and believe that you will both enjoy and find your time with us fulfilling.

And Fond Farewells!

We have said farewell to a few volunteers who have retired over the last few months:-

Graham Giles, Ron Wallace, Chris James, Lynette Heath, Trevor Hunt, Hazel Hunt, Ted Williams.

Thank you all for the time you have given to volunteering with us over the years and we hope you will stay in touch.



Pershore Foodbank

The Foodbank is approaching its period of highest demand. Please make a donation if possible. The easiest way is to use the Foodbank collecting points that can be found in Pershore's ASDA and Co-op. No fresh items, but tinned meats and small boxes of chocolates are very welcome. But all donations are valued. Thank you!



A Very Happy Christmas To You All!

As we approach a Christmas like no other, all of us at the Centre extend our very warmest wishes to you and your families. At the time of writing this, we do not know the final nature of the Covid rulings from the government, but let not our tiers end in tears. Take care of yourselves and celebrate your Christmas in the expectation of better days to come.



Please note: The Volunteer Centre office will close on Tuesday 22nd December at 4.00pm and reopen on Monday 4th January 2021 at 10.00am

