

# NEWSLETTER



## *Cake Expectations!*



December is always a very busy time for the care home. Residents were very enthusiastic about our gingerbread men Christmas theme, and had a lot of fun making an array of different decorations. For this they used a host of mediums, including fabric, salt dough and paper.

One of the most important things in the diary is making the Christmas cake, and this started in October.

The residents guided Tracy as to the secret of a great cake and brandy seemed to be the general consensus!

Not everyone enjoys fruit cake and

so the residents came up with the idea of a snowcapped mountain with a gingerbread house at its summit. It came complete with ginger cake snowballs and gingerbread men.

It won first prize in the Village competition, whilst also tasting absolutely delicious! *Tracy Mercer*

### Feb 2015 & Mar 2015



2 - Employee of the Month Andy Plaistow.



3 - A sit down and chat with our new Head Gardener Nick Grigg and The Independent Advice Centre.



4 - Feb and March shopping trips and a note from Lizzie.

## Residents Association News

I have two very different matters to bring to your attention this month.

Firstly our new charity of the year 2015 is the Independent Advice Centre in Market Place, Wantage (see page 4). Leaflets about the Centre and the service it offers are available in the library and their contact details are on the notice board outside the restaurant. Many residents already use its reasonably priced transport service to go to hospitals and other medical appointments. We hope that a representative from the Centre will visit us shortly to

explain its work in more detail. It's good that we have a local charity to support and one from which we benefit greatly.

Now to something different. Happy Hour will return in the week between our regular get together for Richard's Records. This will give us another chance to socialize over a glass of wine, cocktail or other tipples. I do hope you will be there to meet and make more friends!

*Shelia Reiter, Chairman*

## Employee of the month: Andy Plaistow, Activity Coordinator

*What do you enjoy about working here?*  
The most satisfying part is working with the residents, putting a smile on their face and seeing them enjoy the activities I've organized. Secondly, it's the people I work with.

*What activities do you run?*  
I run Brain Games, which get people thinking and a sports group, which talks about sporting topics from the past week. I also run a current affairs group on Friday mornings, which was originally set up to get men interested in activities. Since then it's grown and is now dominated by the ladies. We discuss current events over coffee and a biscuit.

*Is it hard getting the residents talking?*  
No! Once we throw a subject out it will generally provoke a lot of debate, sometimes heated and quite lively. Everyone has an opinion to offer.

*Which is your favourite group?*  
I really enjoy Brain Games, but in truth they are all interesting. I can have a lot of fun on the care floor and with ILU and ALU residents. It also keeps my mind stimulated, as I have to stay one step ahead of them.

*How do keep everyone entertained?*  
I tend to have a core of topics and subjects, which I rotate. I'm also coming across new topics and events, which I introduce regularly. If I come across something new I prepare some materials that will give residents a variation and alternative.

*Sounds like you enjoy memory tests, do you like crosswords?*  
Not so much crosswords but I enjoy Sudoku and word puzzles where

you have to find phrases. Or you might be given a selection of letters where you have to come up with as many words as possible.

*What do you find challenging about your job?*

In the early stages it was getting residents interested in my activities. But as the groups have grown, the challenge has become finding new topics, subjects and areas to discuss. Also I have a massive challenge in trying to stop talking about football and Tottenham Hotspur!

*Are you planning on any interesting sporty type events going forward?*

I'll organize something around major sporting events like Wimbledon, and I want to get more external guest speakers to come in. I also want to organize more external trips, like to Williams F1 or to one of the local sports clubs. There's lots of cricket clubs for instance, and we can have an afternoon out.

*What do you do in your spare time?*

I'm a qualified football referee which I do every weekend. I also enjoy playing golf on my day off, and taking my dog Lola for a walk – all of which keeps me fit!

*What are your aims for the future?*

I want to continue growing my groups and launching new ones – and getting more participation from those residents who do not do much at the moment. On a personal level I'd like to bring my golf handicap down to single figures!



*I want to organize more external trips, like to Williams F1 or to one of the local sports clubs.*

### Memorable moment diaries – on Care Floor

All the diaries are kept on the lower shelf of residents' bedside tables, until we find a better location. These are for residents, Activity Coordinators, Carers, Nurses, plus family and friends to write in. This is an opportunity to quickly share information, interesting conversations and memorable moments. The diaries are there as a springboard for conversation with residents and to inform the Activity Team about subjects of interest for reminiscence purposes.

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## Meet our new Head Gardener Nick Grigg



In the three weeks he's been with us, head Gardener Nick Grigg has identified immediately what the grounds need.

"The Village needs more colour and form to improve the views of all the residents," he says. "I'm going to look at each single bed so we can guarantee good colour

across the seasons. Although I want to take some time and see what comes up first."

One of Nick's priorities will be the area around the bowling green, which looks tired at the moment. "The soil quality is not good around there, so I'll be taking out the plants and putting more organic matter in."

Nick is passionate about colour, even in winter with plants like Cornus (and its red stems) and Witch-hazel (with its yellow and red buds) as examples. "There's a lot to do and of course I'll be talking to the residents about what they would like to see," says Nick.

"I'm looking at improving the movement, smell and colour of the sensory garden, plus the path and seating area."

The lake will also get Nick's attention. Especially the edges of the path and establishing better flowers for the bees and birds. "Let's face it, the bees and the butterflies make the world go around," he says.

"Residents will certainly begin to see some changes soon, but we will need time to fully improve things. I like things like silver birch and different colours against a green background, which estates like ours can find hugely beneficial."

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## The Independent Advice Centre

As mentioned on page 1, our new charity for 2015 is the Independent Advice Centre in Wantage.

The Centre offers all kinds of advice on taxes, benefits and local services, as well as providing specialist caseworkers. It's also authorized by the Vale District Council to verify original documents. Once a fortnight on Wednesday afternoons, local solicitors also provide free legal advice surgeries.

Its Good Neighbour service can provide help with all the little jobs around the house, like putting up a light bulb, or just popping around for a chat.

A transport scheme can drive you to the doctors, friends, hospital or shopping. This service covers 5000 miles a month across the county.

The Centre has been in operation since 1971 and is staffed completely by volunteers, with 30 advisors, 40 drivers and 10 Good Neighbours.

Throughout the year we'll be fundraising to support this great service, with a series of events and activities.

The Centre can be contacted on 01235 765348 and more information can be found at [www.wantageadvice.org.uk](http://www.wantageadvice.org.uk)



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## A note from Lizzie

I can't believe we're in the second month of 2015 already. There are so many new and exciting things happening.

On the creative front my contact with Abi Brown from the Taking Part initiative is bringing in interesting one-off workshops. We've had felt making and are meeting singer-songwriter Matt Sage at the beginning of the month. On top of that, we're also having a workshop using handkerchiefs for making bunting. Also, Marjorie Dunning is starting a cross-stitch workshop, which will become a regular.

We've also got a photography group starting just as soon as our tutor Al Cane receives his DBS certificate.

On the music front I have connected with musicians for our Supper Clubs; and am looking at quartets; a pianist for happy hour and are bringing life to our Sundays with Opera Unmasked.

The bill for our online film library has been paid and I will be setting up a meeting in February so we can choose films of interest.

Due to their popularity, lunches in good pubs will be regularly booked and I am looking into special cinema live events, including ballets and art exhibitions.



Matinees are hard to get but I will grab tickets when I can. Along with all this you'll see monthly quizzes; additional museum talks; theatre trips; a return of magician Sam Strange with his full show; and a tea dance at the end of March.

2015 will also see a range of interesting speakers and I've booked in the exotic animals to visit again from Zoolab. We'll see some more feathered and furry friends as and when I can source them, like the owls pictured here with Lavinia.

My head's awlwhirl so I'm going to slow down to enable relationships to grow with our new contacts and for some of the activities to become regular. Thank you for all your enthusiasm and patience!

### News in detail



### Shopping dates

- 03 Feb – Newbury – 13:30
- 04 Feb – Millets Garden Centre – 10:00
- 11 Feb – Newbury – 10:30
- 12 Feb – Millets Garden Centre – 10:00
- 18 Feb – Newbury – 10:30
- 19 Feb – Newbury – 13:30
- 25 Feb – Reading, The Oracle Centre \*- 10:00 **NEW!**
- 26 Feb – Millets Garden Centre – 10:30
- 04 Mar – Newbury – 13:30
- 05 Mar – Newbury – 10:00
- 11 Mar – Millets Garden Centre – 10:00
- 12 Mar – Newbury – 10:30
- 17 Mar – London Westfield\* – 10:00 **NEW!**
- 18 Mar – Millets Garden Centre – 10:00
- 25 Mar – Newbury – 10:30
- 26 Mar – Newbury – 13:30

Shopping trips are to be booked only once advertised in the weekly schedule, as all trips are subject to change. \*Please note two new shopping locations that are on trial. Feedback appreciated.