

FISH VOLUNTEER CENTRE



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Autumn

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*Registered Charity
No. 286318*

From the Chairman

Hooray, finally we are back at Springhill in a completely refurbished office!

I would like to thank our volunteers who have been brilliant in helping to keep the charity going and moving back. Not forgetting our thanks to our good friends at Christ the King Church for their generous hospitality over the last 7 months.

At our recent AGM we had to say goodbye to Fred Nickson and Jill Vallis as trustees. Fred, being our fundraising supremo for several years, intends to still be involved with FISH. Watch this space and the Tea Parties!!! Jill has moved out of the area and we sincerely thank them both for their commitment over the years and wish them both well in the future.

At the AGM we were able to announce that Karen Guy has agreed to become a trustee.

Karen used to drive the FISH bus and her husband David still does, so they know a thing or two about us. They moved to the area 12 years ago with their five children. Karen worked as a nurse in the NHS for 41 years and latterly was the Registered Manager of Sue Ryder where in 2017 it achieved an outstanding rating from the Care Quality Commission.

This year we have decided to be different and not hold the Charity Sale in October. Instead we shall be organising a Craft Fair in March 2019 run by Pam Gross. More details on this event in the new year.

On the 17th November we shall be having our annual volunteers' coffee morning in the hall at Christ the King Church hall, as we did last year. All our volunteers will be most welcome and anyone else who would like to know more about FISH. Do come along if you would like to speak to our volunteers informally and maybe become a volunteer yourself.

We hope to be able to arrange a representative from Age UK to give a brief talk on volunteers caring for the elderly. This subject being very important to us all.

My best wishes.

Clive Mills
Chairman



Support and Transport for the Community

In Praise of FISH Volunteers

The FISH team have helped me feel like part of a larger family. Inherent confusion over how and when it all started is in the nature of families. So, no surprise that I'm unsure of exactly when we first contacted the FISH Volunteer Centre.

Their able team of volunteers helped me work out how to get my father to a Reading Hospital appointment while not leaving my 92-year-old mother alone for hours. The multi-drop-auto-print out appointment sheet said he would need to attend over a possible four-hour time slot. Thankfully the understanding and empathy of FISH volunteers supported us, by engaging a companion finder service. The support of this charity helped us prior to, during and after this appointment.

My previously intrepid well-travelled Mum was matched with an adventurous soul who loves to go further afield. My mother continues to have her life enriched sharing stories with this lady to this day. I am in awe of the emotional intelligence and intuition, probably honed over a career, which enabled this astute character matching across the generations.

Clearly it is tricky to meet others when physical or mental frailty curtails movement. Our family find a dark sense of humour helps us shuffle through the sequence of health care appointments, however it's tricky to hold on to any humour when poor health is at the core of social events. FISH came into the equation introducing our 3 generational family to Sonning Common through the monthly Tea Parties.

Chrissie's Owls brought great joy to my mother, I was transfixed by the magician who transformed a stack of cards (which I gripped firmly within my palm) into a transparent Perspex cube. My Dad enjoyed the melodic singing of the lady from Gallowstree Common, though I reckon it's the cakes he likes the most. It's great when supportive volunteers enable one elderly person to attend a club.

Sometimes it's great to have some space and relish the differences, even between people who have spent half a century together. The Memory Café in Henley boosts self-esteem, encourages reminiscence and helps mindfulness through song. Once again kindly volunteers have helped lighten the burden of responsibilities carried (largely by myself and my son) by facilitating attendance at this club.

The FISH volunteers include some excellent drivers, the minibus can negotiate a bumpy track and accommodate wheelchairs. Professionals can hire rooms and provide locals with services for a fair price, which couldn't otherwise be afforded. This unusual charity provides a social core, encourages relationships across the generations & helps people share knowledge. The generosity and kindness at its heart helps preserve the identity of Sonning Common as a village in these changing times.

From a Grateful Family



A Day in the Life of a FISH Volunteer

Hopefully, you have seen my previous article on being a FISH Driver..... and are not put off from reading of my further adventures as a FISH Home Visitor. There is no change of uniform or badge involved... just the same positive attitude to do the best for people in our local community. Give a little personal time to build a rewarding relationship into the future, which makes a difference to people, less lucky people, than us due to their immobility, circumstances, or incapacity induced by illness and anno domini.

Ask yourself how you would feel if you were made lonely through loss of a partner, only infrequently visited by relatives who live at a distance, never go out of the house for days, never see another person, or cannot get to the shops. Think about how you would feel if your only close friend is a cat or dog and your entertainment is constant TV. Yes, I feel depressed just writing this, but positivity prevails and let us think about how a FISH Home Visitor makes a difference.

First, you need to join Sue Nickson's happy team of enthusiastic Home Visitors. Sue is the FISH Home Visiting Coordinator and she approached me in April as a possible Home Visitor and at the end of May I accompanied Sue for introductions to a wonderful, but aged couple, who were new to Sonning Common. They had been visited by a lady FISH Home Visitor for some months; however, my focus was to be the man, to engage him in lively conversation and all those interests that "boys" talk about.

That plan did not last long as I was soon transporting them, both husband and wife, every week, to a regular well-being activity in Henley. Despite their infirmities we engage in quizzes, conversations, singing and most important socializing with new friends, and all enabled by tea and home-made cake. I certainly enjoy this and their smiles, which are nearly as broad as mine, last until we arrive back in Sonning Common.

What has now happened is that they are increasingly confident of meeting people. They attend the monthly FISH Tea Party and look forward to being accompanied by their carer-daughter to other events.

I feel good that I am making a difference, and this could be YOU. To paraphrase that robust song from South Pacific

‘But what ain’t we got, we ain’t got MEN’

Yes, calling all MEN. Would you like to volunteer as a FISH Home Visitor? Your community needs YOU. We simply do not have enough men on our books to make a difference to all those lonely people out there in Sonning Common.

I challenge you to talk to Sue Nickson, in the first instance phone the FISH office 0118 9723986 between 9.30 and 11.30am any weekday and take it from there. Come on guys we can't let the ladies do all the work!

Think of Morecombe and Wise.....

‘Bring me fun, bring me sunshine, bring me love’

.....and just reach for the telephone, now
please.

A FISH Home Visitor

HELP OUR FUNDRAISING

Donations of unwanted or broken jewellery, gold and silver items, clocks and watches are good fund-raising items. We can sell/auction these to help finance our ever-expanding activities

In Memoriam

It is with much sadness that we record the death of David Mew on 22nd August this year. David was a well-known and highly regarded FISH Bus driver for some seven years and only reluctantly gave up the role when a cancer diagnosis and the ensuing treatments meant that he could no longer be certain of his availability or state of health.

Always ready with a helping hand, a kind word, or a humorous quip whenever the circumstance required he was one of the most popular bus drivers. The more so when he took over the responsibility of organizing and driving the monthly pub lunches from Ian Fraser, who had that role for many years.

Ian was a hard act to follow but David was well up to the task and soon had the various pub venues sorted and the FISH clients eagerly anticipating each monthly trip.

In his memory we are reprinting below an article David wrote for the first FISH Newsletter in June 2014.

A final thank you, David, for all your good and selfless work for the FISH community.

The FISH Trustees

A Bus Driver's Tale

I have driven both the old yellow bus and the new blue bus which I like to call Bubbles.

Why did I start driving for FISH three years ago? Was it that I enjoyed shopping? Ask my wife and she will tell you 'NO'. Anyone in the queue at the till in front of us is not a good situation for me! Decorating; now there is another reason to drive as queuing in a supermarket is marginally better!

Gardening, now that's a different story, I can watch my wife garden all day!

Did I need something to fill my time? No, I play golf two or three times a week as well as gardening, redecorating and seeing the grandchildren.

So why do I drive the bus? Well, for a start It saves on a gym membership, what a workout we get when on shopping trips loading and unloading the shopping! On any trip a workout is high on the list, in and out of the bus and up and down the steps. I also, once a month, arrange a pub lunch for the locals. Now there is a good reason to drive for FISH as each pub must be checked out first!

The feel-good factor gets even better when you hear all the chatter and laughter going on in the bus. But for me the best part of it is the happy smiling faces at the end of the any trip.

In modern terms it is JOB SATISFACTION and I hope to be entertained by the passengers for a long time to come. That's why I do it.

So, from me to all my passengers 'thank you'.

David Mew

FISH Minibus Driver



How do You like Your Fish?

Baked in the oven, poached, shallow fried, grilled or deep fried from the chippy?

The FISH Volunteer Centre in Sonning Common has evolved over the years. For a long time, it was mainly concerned with volunteers using their own cars to take people to hospital appointments and similar, not forgetting the minibus outings for shopping and leisure trips. In recent times FISH has offered a more extensive menu of services so it can cater for a wider range of needs. So, whatever your requirements or skills as a volunteer FISH can probably fit the bill.

The office has moved on from a small room in the back of the Village Hall where the office volunteers wrote everything down on lists to much larger premises at Springhill, Kennylands Road where the volunteers sit at computers and take telephone calls wearing headsets. Much of the requests are still for car transport and booking bus trips but the system is much more sophisticated with the car drivers receiving a computer-generated confirmation by email of the job they have agreed to undertake.

While transport is still very much the staple diet of FISH it now offers a more varied menu of services so caters for a wider range of needs and interests.

The monthly Tea Parties in Sonning Common Village Hall have proved a great success with upward of 60 people attending to enjoy tea provided by volunteers, a free raffle and usually some form of entertainment.

In the last couple of years or so we now have a new breed of volunteer called a Home Visitor who makes regular visits to individuals who spent a lot of time isolated in their own homes. These volunteers are proving to make a positive difference to the lives of those they visit.



It is great to see some of them attending Tea Parties with their visitors when previously they hardly ventured out of their homes. Many of the visitors get great satisfaction from seeing their clients blossom through their friendship. So, you will see that FISH now serves up a gourmet menu for clients and volunteers alike!

Sue Nickson

Home Visits Coordinator

Guess who's 40 years old next year?

Well you may not realise that the FISH Volunteer Centre will celebrate 40 years of supporting and transporting those in need in our community in 2019. Any excuse for party!!

We would love to hear from all you folk who have known FISH for a number of years and tell us your stories and memories. Maybe some of you can go back as far as 1979.

You may have been a volunteer in those early years. Let's hear of your experience, and if you have any photos that would be great too!

Please contact Fred Nickson on 0118 972 4520 or 07768 918501 if you have any FISH memorabilia or an anecdote, story or recollection which illuminates the history of FISH.



VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE FISH VOLUNTEER CENTRE

We urgently require computer friendly volunteers to work in our busy office. The work involves dealing with client bookings for car journeys, minibus trips and the day to day office enquiries. The hours are 9.30 to 11.30 weekdays.

If you have one or more mornings available each week to work in this friendly environment then please do get in touch.

Car drivers are also required to take clients to hospital and medical appointments.

This can be on days to suit you. Mileage allowance is provided.



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and any transport if required*

0118 972 3986

**WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A LEGACY
WHERE THERE'S A LEGACY THERE'S A CHARITY
WHERE THERE'S A CHARITY THERE'S
THE FISH VOLUNTEER CENTRE**

Please remember FISH in your Will