

## NEWSLETTER

**Winter 2017**



**Happy New Year  
and Best Wishes  
for 2017**



### Message From Our Chair

This is written at the end of a very challenging but successful year for OPAL.

We have been supported massively by our wonderful volunteers who bring joy and happiness to our members in the clubs, our carers and those they care for in BreakTime, plus all those we instruct and advise through GoOnline. Our volunteers come from all the areas we provide a service in and beyond, and we operate in most of the rural parts of Cheshire West. We have both male and female volunteers of all ages but we always need more volunteers and are delighted to hear from people who are interested in finding out more about us.



In 2016 we worked hard to secure funding to maintain and develop GoOnline and just before Christmas we were delighted to learn that we had been awarded funding from the Westminster Foundation. Some of the funding will be spent on recruitment and supporting volunteers and the rest will enable us to extend and develop the GoOnline service. We are very appreciative of the generosity of the Westminster Foundation and the interest shown in what we do.

We are also very grateful to Councillor Hugo Deynem who was the Lord Mayor last year and chose us as one of his three charities. We received a cheque from him just before Christmas which was very welcome but we are also aware that it was he who first drew the attention of the late Duke of Westminster to our organisation.

We were also successful in an application to Brightlife which focusses on strategies and services for older people enabling them to stay healthy and in touch with others. We have had two small schemes accepted and they will start operating in the Spring, in the Frodsham area. More information is included on Page 4 of this newsletter so if anyone is interested in getting involved, please let us know.

Our Board of Trustees is working hard to update our structure and is seeking to recruit additional Trustees. This is necessary as we are a small but developing organisation and we need people with the skills and experience we don't currently have.

So, 2016 was a memorable year and 2017 promises to be so too. Can I wish everyone reading this, our members, carers, families, volunteers, staff and funders a very successful New Year.

**Jane Colville**

**Chairperson**

## What We've Been Up To

Christmas is always a busy time of year, but for those without family or close friends it can also be one of the loneliest. That's why we always make sure that our members and clients are not forgotten at this time. We hold concerts, Christmas parties, meals out, as well as a Christmas lunch in each of the OPAL clubs, get together for our BreakTime clients and presents for all.



Funky Choir visited Tarporley OPAL Club. 24 choir members joined in with the members' Christmas celebrations. All our members enjoyed the event.



They also enjoyed a Christmas lunch at the Alvanley Arms – Cotebrook.



Frodsham Volunteer Team (named the Opal Fruits) won the Christmas Quiz held in Frodsham Community Centre. This was the second time they had entered. There were 20 teams and 100 questions. The Opal Fruits won with a score of 78 and the prize was an engraved trophy. Our team will now have to set the questions for the Easter Quiz! They all enjoyed the quiz and love the fact that they have become friends through volunteering at OPAL. The team members were: Chris Milward, Jim Wilkinson, Beryl Ginner, Ian White, Suzanne Ashbrooke and Maggie Davies. Well done to them!



Helsby members enjoyed Christmas dinner provided and served by the Ellesmere Port Lions Club on the 8<sup>th</sup> December. Residents of Springfields also joined in, and everyone had a great time.

They also went out for a Carvery Lunch to Forest Hills Hotel at the end of November.



## And There's More!

At Kelsall members made mince pies, enjoyed a performance from Ashton Hayes School Choir and were also entertained by Pete Turner - as Tommy Cooper - and had a delicious lunch cooked by one of the volunteer chefs and his wife.



At Malpas, volunteers, along with Malpas Singers, performed the annual panto. This year's production was based on A Christmas Carol and raised much laughter. Members also had lunch at the Edgerton Arms, as well as a Christmas lunch at the club. All members received a handmade hamper at the annual Christmas party which included a lovely buffet! On Thursday 22 December we also held a Grand Prize Draw. Tickets had been sold across the whole of organisation and prizes included a huge hamper, £50 Marks and Spencer's voucher, bottles of wine, champagne and lots of other goodies.



Frodsham members enjoyed making Christingle Oranges and Christmas Stockings, a three course lunch at Forest Hills Hotel, a performance from Overton School Choir, Christmas dinner and hampers delivered by Father Christmas.



Tattenhall OPAL club held a coffee morning on 9th December with Christmas carols provided by the Tattenhall Singers. They also had lunch at the Egerton Arms in Broxton and a Christmas Party at the Barbour Institute on 20 December where they were all presented with handmade Christmas hampers.

## Funding News



Before Christmas we heard the exciting news that we have been awarded funding from Brightlife to set up two new projects—New Horizons and What's Cooking. We are racing ahead to get these new projects up and running for the Spring and are currently going through the process of recruiting a new member of staff. Both the projects are aimed at helping older people to feel less lonely and isolated by making new friends and rekindling old interests.



**New Horizons** – Attending social activities can be a nerve-wracking experience for some people, especially if they haven't been able to get and about much in recent years, maybe through poor health, or from caring for someone at home. New Horizons provides support by matching the older person with a volunteer “buddy” who will help them to get out more, to take part in a new activity, to join a new club or even re-connect them with an old hobby they've not been able to enjoy of late.

**What's Cooking** - lots of people get fed up of cooking for one and eating alone, especially after years of cooking for their partner and family. This is a club which is all about cooking - cooking together as a social activity, learning new skills and eating together. It will be run by volunteers passionate about all things food and drink who are keen to spread the cooking bug. There will be a varied programme including guest speakers, demonstrations, food and recipe sharing, as well as visits to local pubs and restaurants.



## *Festival Church*

We would also like to say a special thank you to the Festival Church, Queen Street, Chester, who have provided funding for this newsletter to be printed. This means we can distribute our newsletter to all our volunteers and others who may be interested in finding out more about our organisation.

## And There's More!

### *Westminster Foundation*

At the end of last year we were delighted to receive funding from the Westminster Foundation, which was set up on behalf of the Grosvenor family to support communities in need.

As life becomes increasingly online it can be hard to keep up with technology, or even get in touch with companies who provide essential services like gas and electricity. GoOnline is a free service which helps to take away the fear of technology. Now, thanks to the Westminster Foundation, we can operate in more areas. An extended service, GoOnline Goes Further, will provide help with online security, access to health and well-being information, and teach people how to get the best deals for everyday essentials. We are also aiming to help carers of people living with dementia and those they care for, with the use of specially designed computer applications.

Volunteers are the backbone of our organisation and some of the funding will be used to support our existing volunteers and enable us to reach new ones. Please do get in touch if you would like to find out more.

We are extremely grateful to the Westminster Foundation for their support.

### *Lord Mayor's Fund*



On 22 December 2016 last year's Lord Mayor, Councillor Hugo Deynem visited us at our Christmas party in Malpas. Here he presented us with a cheque from the monies he raised during his year in office. We are really grateful to have been one of the charities he campaigned for, not just from a financial point of view but also because his support helped to make us better known throughout the communities in which we work. Along with the money from the Westminster Foundation, this money will also help us to finance our GoOnline service.

**Our work is funded through income from grant making bodies and the kind generosity of individuals who make donations to us, as well as some funding from the Local Authority. If you are making or updating your will, once you have considered the needs of your family, please consider a legacy to us. You know that every penny will be used to improve the lives of older people living in the rural areas of Cheshire West and Chester. Our Charitable Number is 1143753. Thank you very much.**



## Volunteering



### Be a star and join us



Let 2017 be the year that you make a difference to older people in your local community

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation, without them we wouldn't be able to help to prevent loneliness and isolation of older people within our communities. We always need more people to help us. So if you are interested in joining us, we urge you to get in touch.

Volunteering won't just benefit us. Indeed, it could benefit you too. Becoming a volunteer can be a rewarding and life enhancing experience, it can help you to discover something you are really good at and develop new skills, it can bring self-esteem and motivation, and provide a connection with your community, all of which can be good for your health.

**OPAL** Clubs volunteers may undertake specific tasks such as driving, cooking meals, or offer general support including spending time supporting our **OPAL** Club members to engage in activities. Some volunteers are happy to take extra responsibility to arrange activities and become Key Volunteers.

**OPAL BreakTime** volunteers offer time on a regular basis to be a companion to an older person so that their carer can have a short break of two to three hours. The role of a Breaktime Volunteer is a challenging one but can be very rewarding as the partnerships formed between the volunteer, the cared for person and the carer can be strong and significant for all parties.

**OPAL GoOnLine** volunteers are individuals who are confident in using computers and interested in supporting older people who would like help to learn the basics and to see what opportunities a computer can give them. Volunteers can offer their time and energy on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis.

**New Horizons and What's Cooking** - Two new exciting projects starting in the Spring in Frodsham. We are looking for volunteers to help people join in with social activities. If you are a member of a club and would like people to join you, why not help us to help you? Or if you have an interest in food and cooking, What's Cooking could be the opportunity for you.

So if you feel you could make a difference, please do get in touch at:

Email: [volunteering@opalservices.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@opalservices.org.uk)

Tel: Jean on 07563 156220

Website: [www.opalservices.org.uk](http://www.opalservices.org.uk)



[www.facebook.com/opalservicescheshire](http://www.facebook.com/opalservicescheshire)

## And Finally .....

In December our new website went live at [www.opalservices.org.uk](http://www.opalservices.org.uk) and we also have a new facebook page at [www.facebook.com/opalservicescheshire](http://www.facebook.com/opalservicescheshire). Please do take a look and like us on facebook if you wish.

If you would like to sign up to receive our newsletter on a regular basis, please email us at [info@opalservices.org.uk](mailto:info@opalservices.org.uk).