



Message From Our Chair

I hope you have all had a good summer even though it seems to have passed all too soon. As you will see from this Newsletter, life across our OPAL Services has been full of fun and activity for our members and carers, our volunteers and staff.



We have been busy establishing two brand new services, in the Frodsham and surrounding area, both commissioned by Brightlife. In order to help us with this we have taken on a new member of staff, Julie Ennis, who a lot of you will meet, especially if you are living in the Frodsham and Helsby areas. We are pleased to have Julie on our team and are sure she will be an asset to both our organisation and the projects she is involved with.

We are also very fortunate to have a new Trustee, Gill Swash. Gill is also a volunteer for the New Horizons scheme and we know will bring a great deal of energy and skill to the organisation.

The Council and Health Commissioners have been introducing changes to the way in which they commission some of the services we provide, which they have previously funded. This change has meant we have had to work very hard to ensure that we will remain funded, even though it looks likely that in all cases the funding we receive from these sources will be less than before, and we will have to look for funds from elsewhere to bridge the gap.

Before I finish I must say thank you to all our volunteers and our staff who put so much energy and effort into making our OPAL Services as effective and valued as they are. Without this massive contribution we would not be able to achieve what we currently do on behalf of the older people and carers in rural West Cheshire.

Jane Colville

Scaling The Heights

On Friday 25 August, long serving volunteer, Eric Platt from Malpas OPAL Club, scaled the dizzy heights of the Velocity Zip Line in Bethesda, Wales, Europe's longest and the world's fastest Zipline.

Last year, Eric underwent intensive treatment for throat cancer and this was his way of celebrating his recovery. As well as taking on this scary challenge, Eric wanted to use the opportunity to raise funds for Rural Community Services, and through sponsorship raised £670 for us.

Eric would like to thank all his friends and fellow volunteers for their support throughout his illness, and we would like to thank Eric for both his generosity and his bravery.



Eric supported by wife, Brenda, and fellow volunteers, Julie Clarke, Fiona Lee, Penny Smith and Marj Langley.

Lots To See and Do!

At our OPAL clubs we like to entertain our members. That doesn't just mean things they can watch and enjoy, but also entertainments which they can get involved in, move around and stimulate the "old grey cells".

Here's what we've been up to at Frodsham:



Parachute games, flower basket art and wedding day reminiscence



At Helsby we held a cheese quiz. Ten exotic cheeses, grapes and crackers. Let's just hope we didn't give anyone nightmares!

Our members love to have trips out and we enjoy taking them.



(Above)

Helsby members enjoy lunch at the Forest Hills Hotel, Frodsham.

(Left)

Kelsall members dine out at The Lounge in Oakmere.



More Trips and Music Too!



[Left] Volunteer, Janet Wright, opens her garden to Malpas OPAL Club



[Right] Malpas and Tattenhall OPAL clubs on a day out in Llandudno. A lovely lunch at the Queens Hotel was followed by a stroll down the prom in the sunshine

Let's enjoy the music



Ashton Folk play at Helsby . Roy Clinging performs Cheshire Folk Songs with tales of Cheshire Folk Lore at Tarporley and members also enjoy listening to Ageless Ukes.



At GoOnline music has also been the theme during August, with musical sessions provided for carers and those they care for in Frodsham and Tattenhall.

Everyone was encouraged to sing and move to well-known songs. Judging by the amount of laughter it seemed as though everyone enjoyed themselves.

We have more sessions planned during the coming months, focussed on comparing utility costs and collective switching and accessing health care information online.

Please visit the GoOnLine pages on our website at www.opalservices.org.uk/go-online for full details or visit our facebook page at www.facebook.com/opalservicescheshire for information on this and all of our other GoOnLine services.



Meet One Of Our Breaktime Volunteers

'Everybody needs somebody and by helping them it helps me too.'

This is what Joan says about what being a volunteer means to her. Joan was a client of our Breaktime service before she became a volunteer. Here is her story.

Joan is a widow, now 81 years of age. She lost her husband, Frank, six years ago.

Joan became aware of OPAL when we took over the Age Concern day centres, as her late mother Freda was a member. Freda then became a member at the Kelsall OPAL club. She was a little reluctant at first but took to it 'like a duck to water'. She was always disappointed when it was a bank holiday Monday, as this meant the club was closed.

As Joan was a carer to her mother she became a Breaktime client; the very first, in fact. Breaktime gave Joan peace of mind knowing, that her mother was safe with a volunteer, and allowing her to have a break.

Freda passed away in 2015 at the age of 97. Joan still maintained her links with OPAL and often supported the fundraisers and coffee mornings that Zoe held at the Methodist Church. But she found herself in a new situation following Freda's death, and felt that she was becoming lonely and very isolated.



She had a number of good friends one of whom was Jane Colville, our Chair, and from Jane she learnt more about OPAL and the possibility of becoming a volunteer with the Kelsall club.

Joan said she thought long and hard about this but decided that rather than being a Club volunteer she felt she had more to offer by being a Breaktime volunteer. Jean Toyn invited Joan to the Breaktime Christmas Event in 2015 and Joan's not stopped since. She officially became a Breaktime volunteer in February 2016.

She spends on average two hours a week volunteering for a lady called Betty in Dunham Hill, and if this wasn't fate we don't know what is: Betty and Joan grew up in the same village, Ashton Hayes. Joan even went to school with Betty's husband John. They both went to Normain College and used to cycle together in the mornings to get there. She and Betty regularly went to dances together when they were younger too.

Breaktime brought them back together. Sadly, Betty suffers with Alzheimer's, is quite deaf and has macular problems, but the time goes by so quickly when Joan and Betty get together. They chat and laugh about most things, especially about the village they both grew up in and the neighbours they knew.

Joan said that she looks forward in seeing Betty and John, she feels better in herself and less lonely.

Joan is also a client with Go On Line and often attends the Kelsall venue for help and support with her iPad. She says that she is still trying to master it but is more confident with it now and gains knowledge all the time by attending the sessions. She thinks all of the volunteers are very good and patient.

Thank you Joan, for sharing your experiences with us.

If you would like to become a volunteer for any of our services, please contact Jean Toyn on 07563 156220 or email: volunteering@opalservices.org.uk.

Out And About In The Community

At OPAL, we pride ourselves on working locally within our communities. It is only by knowing the people within the areas in which we work, that we can learn what is needed and how we can help. Summer is a great time to do this and so we have been out and about at village fairs and events. Not only is this a great time to meet people, but also to raise the all important funds which we need to make our services the best they can be.



The Mayor of Frodsham (Cllr Alan Oulton) visited our stall at Festival in Castle Park on 2nd July 2017, organised by the Rotary Club. The weather was great and lots of people turned out to enjoy it. The Jewellery and Teddy Tombola helped to raise £316 towards Frodsham OPAL Club funds.



(Above) We had great fun at the Malpas Fair in July and our bottle game, where you had a chance to win a bottle of wine or a bottle of water raised £140.



(Left) A concert to raise funds for Tattenhall OPAL club was held in July. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening and raised a massive £700. A big thank you to all who attended.

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 West Cheshire. Our Charitable Number is 1143753. Thank you very much.

More Fundraising

We all know that money doesn't grow on trees and neither do the funds we need to provide our services. In these days of ever tightening budgets, we can't rely on funding from statutory bodies and so at RCS we are determined to rise to the challenge of finding other income.

Our first step is to organise a series of fundraising events over the coming year. The first will be held at Manley Village Hall on the evening of Saturday 14th October 2017. Here we have planned a race night and we would love anyone who fancies to chance their arm on the horses to come and join us. Tickets cost £10 each to include light refreshments and there will be a bar available to purchase drinks. You could also sponsor a race for £25 or horses for £5 each. On the night there will be eight races, so plenty of opportunity for you to find Lady Luck and have a fun evening.



If you would like to purchase a ticket, please let us know by emailing us at: info@opalservices.org.uk or leave a message on 01948 860147.

We will also be holding further events in the spring and summer of next year, so watch this space or keep up-to-date via our [website](#) or [facebook page](#).

Don't Forget The Lottery

The OPAL Lottery is another way in which we raise money.

Annual Lottery tickets are available at £12 and run from July to June each year. Each lottery ticket gives you twelve chances to win one of three prizes: 1st £125, 2nd £80 and 3rd £40. Tickets are currently on sale and three draws will be taking place in September for the months of July, August and September, and thereafter will be drawn at the end of every month. Tickets can also be purchased throughout the year at a reduced rate per number of months remaining. Please contact your local organiser or email us at info@opalservices.org.uk if you would like to buy a ticket. Results from each draw can be found on our [website](#) and [facebook](#) page.

We Need You!



At RCS we have a dedicated team of Trustees, Staff and Volunteers, but all this fundraising is hard work! We are currently expanding our Fundraising Team and would love you to come and help us.

If you enjoy organising events, being creative, or just want to help as and when you have some spare time, please get in touch at:

volunteering@opalservices.org.uk or call Jean Toyn on: 07563 156220.

Let Us Know

We would love to know how we are doing. Every organisation is only as good as what people think of them so any feedback on what we are doing, or what we could do to improve is welcome.

We would also be grateful for any comments on our website, facebook page and this newsletter. What do you like, or what would you like to see in the future?

Website: www.opalservices.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/opalservicescheshire

Email: info@opalservices.org.uk