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**Carers’ Group**

**May 2023 Newsletter**

Dear Everyone,

Good afternoon.  I hope you are all keeping well. I’m sitting down to write this newsletter in the hope that the threatened thunderstorms don’t interrupt my work. I can’t help worrying in case Winter/Spring continues until just after the middle of the year, at which point we may slide inexorably into Autumn! But here’s hoping that we get some sunny and more summery weather very soon. My family have now returned to Australia and I and my house have returned to something approaching normal.

**April meeting – Tina Adams speaking about Connected Living**

Tina came to speak to our group about Connected Living who are part of Aster Living. They help people to feel safe, happy and supported independently in their own home, particularly if there is any chance of them falling or getting into other difficulties.  They offer products and services to meet individual needs both in the home and out and about. This involves the use of different kinds of technology such as pendants connected to a monitored alarm unit, falls monitors, key safes as well as GPS location devices which might be needed for those who wander or could get lost. Their monitoring service is available 24/7.  She showed us some of the devices available and explained them very clearly. This type of equipment can give peace of mind to both those living with dementia and their carers, whether they live together or not. She gave us all an informative pack explaining it all. I have a spare one available on file if anyone missed the meeting and would like to know more about their services.

**May meeting – Friday 12th May 2023  Bishop’s Palace.  10:30 – 1:00**

This session might be a little longer than usual, but there will still be plenty of time to collect your loved ones from Heads Up or other day centre.

The advertised session about wildlife photography by Val and Al has had to be postponed as Bridget scheduled this session without realising that we had already got a speaker.  But Val and Al will be very happy to come along with their presentation later in the year.

This time we will be having a craft session delivered by Vanessa Gordon, one of our Heads Up Trustees who has kindly offered to share her expertise with us. All materials will be provided. The session will include a combination of both creative and wellbeing elements geared very much towards Carers. It will be an opportunity for us to unleash the creativity from within us! I’m not sure where mine is exactly, but I’m sure if I dig deep enough, I will find it.  We will get a chance to participate in a Decoupage session, following a demonstration by Vanessa who is, I gather, wonderful at this craft. The funding for this course has been donated by Somerset Skills and Learning. (No, I don’t know who they are either, but I’m very grateful that they are able to do so.)

I think this will be a great morning where we will be able to perhaps gain another skill as well as have the usual refreshments and chat.  I’m busy trying to perfect a Jaffa Cake Traybake recipe – but don’t hold your breath, it may not work! But, if all else fails, I’m sure Rocky Road will be available.

**Other meetings coming up in the year**

9th June – Shirley Pays from the Alzheimer’s Society will come to talk to us and will be able to answer any questions we may have related to dementia or the care of our loved ones.

14th July – Mogers Drewett, Solicitors, speaking to us about Power of Attorney and how to ensure we have the most effective ones available.

11th August – Possibly Val and Al talking about their birdlife photography on the Levels.

8th September – Glastonbury Care Home visit, more about this below.

In March we had a visit from Edwin Jose from Glastonbury Care Home telling us a bit about the care of the residents and other interesting information based on research into Dementia. Following this he has offered us an opportunity to avail ourselves of the expertise of some of their staff to learn even more about how we can care for our loved ones, both at home and when they have to go into care.  At the moment, there is no specific plan for this session. We are hoping to get some ideas of what you would like to hear about when we meet on 10th June. Or before - we’d be happy to hear by email if you have some ideas you’d like to put to us.  We would like to ensure that this course is relevant to our needs as a group so it may cover a range of different situations and conditions. So, please let us know what you think. The other good news is that we may be able to use the new Heads Up mini-bus to transport some of us to the home. We are very grateful to Edwin for offering this opportunity and it will hopefully break down some of the barriers between us and a care home.

**Golf Club Lunch – Friday, 26th May 2023  -   Wells Golf Club**

Last month we were ‘treated’ to quiche and, despite some people’s reservations, even the doubters had to admit it was really delicious. We did emphasise that this menu was designed to enable those amongst us who had managed to injure themselves and end up in plaster, to eat without the humiliation of their food being cut up for them!!! We don’t yet know what the menu is for next month, but whatever it is, I’m sure Alan’s home-cooked meal will be wonderful. We had a terrific attendance at the last meal and it was a very happy and relaxed occasion.  So, I hope we will be able to welcome as many of you as we can for the next one. Geoff will book the meal well in advance, although we don’t really need to know exact numbers until the beginning of that week.  However, it is possible that neither Geoff nor I will be able to attend, although this is not certain yet.  If neither of us can make it, we will ensure that we make suitable arrangements for numbers to be given to Alan and we will find out the menu in advance.

**Annual Barbecue – 23rd June 2023 – Location at Geoff’s House – more details to follow.**

We can all look forward to a barbecue at Geoff’s house in June, in place of the usual Wells Golf Club lunch.  Geoff has very kindly offered to host the barbecue at his house, we will give details of how to find it in due course.  Last year we were very lucky to have lovely weather and we all had a really good time. For meat-eaters, meat will be provided and, as last year we would be grateful if you could each bring something as an accompaniment – that too can be sorted out later. We’ll find something barbecuable (if that’s a word) for vegetarians too. Just so we don’t get ten rice salads, if you let me know sometime (no urgency) what you’d like to bring, we can make a list. We’d love as many people as possible to come as it was a lovely time last year.

**News from Bridget, Heads Up**

A good time was had by all at the Coronation Party on 4th May. I gather there was singing and dancing and general jollification.  Well done all those who enabled this to happen.

As I write this, students are being interviewed with a view to providing some music sessions at Heads Up that the clients will be able to participate in. Bridget will be able to give you more information about that in due course, but it is certainly a lovely opportunity for the clients to benefit from these musical sessions.  Something to look forward to.

Dementia Awareness Week begins on 15th May. You are all invited to an open morning at Heads Up for Tea and Cakes between 11:00 am and 1:00 pm.  All are welcome. We hope to see you there.

The good news is that the Mini-bus is up and running now. The sign-writing is going to happen this week. It will be a very valuable addition to the services that Heads Up provide. We may even be able to use it for Heads Up Connect, if we plan an outing somewhere. The drivers and volunteers are in place to facilitate safe usage of the bus.

The Carers’ Day at Ammerdown on 25th April went well and was enjoyed by a number of people. Bridget will be planning another similar day later in the year.

Don’t forget that the Somerset Dementia Wellbeing Service Roadshow is coming to town on Monday, 22nd May 2023. Wells Town Hall at 10:00am until 4:00pm.  Drop in when and for how long you want. This is an opportunity for us to meet some of the agencies who are involved in the dementia services in this area.  A couple of us attended the Street one and were very pleasantly surprised by the effort that had clearly been put into this. We were able to chat to some of the people involved which was very useful and informative.  There is also a chance to experience the mobile dementia simulator, if you wanted to!

Heads Up has been asked to become involved in a Heritage project in collaboration with the Wells Museum.  I’m not clear yet what this entails but it seems they are looking for volunteers!

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Is there anywhere in particular (relatively local) that you can think of that might be an enjoyable place to visit for a morning?  Now that we are able to occasionally have the use of the mini-bus for transportation, we are in the process of contacting some local places such as Stourhead, East Somerset Railway, Kilver Court and so on, to see if they would be prepared to offer us tickets or at least reduced entrance fees. So do let us know if you know of somewhere that might be suitable.   We are already lucky enough to have annual tickets donated to us by the Bishop’s Palace which has enabled many of us to drift in and out as we wish when the weather has been good enough.

Well, I think that’s all the news for now. I do hope you have a good week and look forward to seeing as many of you who can make it this coming Friday at the Bishop’s Palace for our May meeting.

Best Wishes

Jane

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