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**Heads Up Connect - - - >**

**Carers’ Group**

**October 2023 – Newsletter**

Dear Everyone,

How are you all? Well, I hope. It’s a funny old time of year. The weather seems to be entirely unpredictable and I’m writing this while basking in unaccustomed October warmth. I’ve been procrastinating over writing this newsletter, there are various things to include, but I couldn’t decide where to begin, it’s amazing how much ironing, vacuuming, window cleaning gets done when I know I’ve got to knuckle down and get on with it. I’m being closely supervised by my cat, although he’s not much help.

October seems to be shaping up to be quite an eventful month in the life of Heads Up, more of that later. I do have a certain amount of ‘newsletter envy’ when I look at the slick and professional offering from Heads Up, which I forwarded to you recently. But I know I’ll never be that organised. I never seem to remember to take photos at the right time so have very few to enhance ours. So, bear with me and try to find something of interest in my ramblings.

September meeting of Heads Up Connect

As we were unable to visit Glastonbury Care Home as planned, we had a relaxed meeting at the Bishop’s Palace where we did, as predicted, drink coffee or tea and eat biscuits and cakes. It was good to have a catch up with each other. We did, as often happens now, welcome another couple of new members to the group. It is always lovely to see new people and I hope they enjoyed it. I look around at the group at these meetings and I’m so grateful that you are all so welcoming to new members. We are hoping to re-arrange the visit to Glastonbury Care home in the new year for anyone who is keen to hear the help and advice from the staff at the home.

Friday, 13th October 2023, 10:30 ish. The Bishop’s Palace, Wells.

This month we are looking forward to having a visit from Emma McGarva. She is the Carers Service Coordinator and has recently replaced Julie Hanks who retired recently for a new life in the Lake District. It could be very useful to meet someone who, like Julie, is genuinely able to help with any issues that carers have, or at least point us in the right direction. It’s always easier meeting face-to-face rather than having to phone one of the many different support organisations which seem to be out there, or worse, having to contact their websites or email addresses.

We are definitely hoping to see Emma but it’s possible that, at the last minute, she may have to cancel. She has recently been very unwell and in hospital but is still intending to visit, which is very kind of her under the circumstances. I’m not sure whether she is intending to give a talk or just be with us to answer questions and help. I know she will do her best to help those who need it.

Commitment to Carers Workshop – 19th September 2023

Cathy and I were invited to attend the above workshop. It purported to be an opportunity for those in Somerset County Council to listen to carers from a variety of different situations – including dementia, younger people with mental health problems, young carers etc. About 120 people attended and we sat around in tables of about 8 – 10. For each session we had to discuss certain questions about what it means to be a carer, how we can be helped, what they can do better to ensure that the right help and support is in place. I suspect that the entire Somerset stock of little post-it notes were acquired for this exercise and we wrote down our responses to each of the 16 questions. I wouldn’t like to think of what was going to happen to those (probably well over a thousand) at the end of the day – probably nothing, other than possibly to decorate a County wall to show they cared enough to ask us what we needed. I have emailed the organiser to find out when we might hear of the outcomes. Although, I wouldn’t hold your breath if you think we might hear anything much any time soon. Call me cynical but it must have cost a lot of money to gather such a large group of both professionals and carers together, I wonder if it will make any difference – somehow, I doubt it. However, on the good side, there was a very nice lunch and if I heard the expression ‘lived experience’ once, I heard it a hundred times! The other good thing was that we were sitting on the same table as some interesting people and it was helpful to hear about the challenges they faced in their own experience of ‘caring’.

Golf Club lunch – Friday, 27th October 2023

Wells Golf Club. 12:00 – 2:00 (ish)

In September we had a very enjoyable meal of Ham, egg and chips. Alan was very short staffed and it was the easiest thing he could rustle up for us. But as always, it was good, home-cooked type of food and excellent value. It was wonderful to see so many people there, all having a good chat as well as eating. I think we all get so much out of it, whether we are still ‘carers’ or not. Thank you so much for the support.

The next meal will be, as always on the fourth Friday of the month, in this case, 27th October and we start to gather at midday. I’m not sure what food we will be eating but, I’m sure it will be as good as always. I’ll be beginning the list of names at the next meeting. Usually gradually people contact me if they wish to come. Alan needs to know a few days before the lunch so that he knows how many he is catering for. But there’s plenty of time for that yet. We are also aware that, in the life of a carer, things can be quite uncertain sometimes, so occasionally plans have to be cancelled for one reason or another.

Cathy Kingston

I expect many of you already know that Cathy has recently been in Southmead Burns Unit following an accident with a cup of hot black coffee. (I have her permission to let you know). She has been quite seriously injured with a lot of pain. She is probably being released on Wednesday and will be resting at home with nurses coming in to do dressings etc. I have to confess that I had absolutely no idea that scalds simply from a hot drink could have such a devastating effect. I, for one, am being much more careful now. I’m sure you will all join me in wishing her well for a speedy recovery so that she is able to join us at the Bishop’s Palace in due course. Cathy reminded me that the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents are able to advise on safety in the home and, to this end, I have asked them for some general home-safety and falls prevention leaflets. I suspect we’ve all heard this message numerous times, but it never hurts to be reminded every now and again. I’ll bring them with me if they arrive in time. In the meantime, they have sent me a couple of links to their internet leaflets.

<https://www.rospa.com/home-safety/advice/older-people>

<https://www.rospa.com/home-safety/advice/falls-prevention>

Visit from the Duchess of Gloucester – 17th October 2023

I know most of you will know the Duchess of Gloucester is going to visit Heads Up on Monday, 17th October, between 1 – 3pm. I am going to have a brief word with her about our group of carers, Heads Up Connect. Most of her visit will see her escorted around the whole of the Heads Up building and grounds where there will be a number of activities planned. I’m sure there will be a great air of excitement on that day. Apparently, Bridget tells me that there have been two separate visits from groups responsible for the Duchess’s safety and security, to see the layout of the building and what the plans are for the day. So, I shall have to brush up on my polite conversation! I am delighted that Bridget and Heads Up are receiving recognition for the wonderful work they all do. I, for one, would have been lost without their support when I was looking after John.

Tea and Talk on World Mental Health Day – 10th October 11 – 1pm.

I’m afraid that this is slightly short notice – but everyone is invited to a gathering at Heads Up for a hot drink and some cake up to help to celebrate World Mental Health Day. All welcome, just turn up. It could be fun, just to have a good chat.

Decoupage Taster session, Heads Up, South Horrington – Tuesday, 17th October 10:30am – 12:30pm

Just a quick reminder that if you’re interested in the above session, please contact Heads Up. I’m sure it will be fun. I sent out the poster recently.

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I think that is all I can think of for now. I think I might award medals to those of you who have got to the end of my ramble without either falling asleep or shutting down the letter in despair. Not that I will ever know. If anyone ever has anything that they would like included in the newsletter, please let me know. In the absence of any actually relevant photos, I attach photos of my cat before and after supervising my writing.

A cat sitting on a cat tree

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