

The Debenham Project

(Dementia - Caring for the Carers)

DEMENTIA (often referred to as Alzheimer's) is an illness primarily of old age, and as we all grow older it will come to affect more and more of us. Most of us have had direct or indirect contact with someone with the illness. For those who care for them the cost is frustration, depression, stress, exhaustion and guilt. It has been estimated that, perhaps, 1 in 3 of the population will contract some form of dementia in their later years. It will directly and indirectly come to dominate the budget of the NHS and place severe strain on the Social Services.

On Thursday 23rd April we held a very successful meeting to further our understanding of the illness and its impact on carers and the community at large. The audience of about 62+ proved that not only is this a subject that is of serious local concern, but also that there is a strong will to initiate activities to support people with dementia and, especially, their carers. We were very grateful to have three experts in key aspects of the field.....

Dr John Gumpert	Consultant Neurologist (rtd)
Dr Paddy Fielder	Senior GP Practitioner
Sue Jackson	Mental Health Social Worker (rtd)

.....to inform and lead our discussions. All the feedback has been very positive. We have had many offers of involvement and several excellent ideas have emerged. Three main activity areas have been suggested.

1. **A get-together and activities club** to cater for a broad spectrum of clients and their carers.

2. **A telephone support line** for carers, potentially leading on towards visiting, befriending and short-time respite* if required.

3. **An information and advice centre** to help carers in understanding Dementia and in accessing support services and charitable assistance.

These are already beginning to be fleshed out with likely leadership, funding and resourcing. We look forward to getting down to putting them into practice and "making a difference". Now that these activities are beginning to be realised we have launched "**The Debenham Project**" with the mission of providing practical and emotional support to all those in and around Debenham who are caring for a relative or friend with Dementia. Not only that, we aim to show that "Care in the Community" is not just some political buzz-phrase but is a reality, perhaps expressed better as "Caring in our Community".

For further information contact Lynden Jackson on 01728 860348 or l.jackson225@btinternet.com Many, many thanks for all everyone has done so far and for all your promises of help in the future

*Short-time respite - a volunteer/befriender looking after the person with dementia for an hour or so while the carer has "some time for her/his self".