



Newsletter – October 31st 2011

Hi everyone, it doesn't seem to be two years since **The Debenham Project** was launched. When I look back it is difficult to imagine that October evening in the Debenham Community Centre when over 150 members of the community and professionals came to hear about what we were seeking to do. With all their tremendous goodwill and support the project has now become well established and recognized throughout the county for its approach to the problems that dementia presents. The project is a dynamic thing – it has continually evolved and will continue to do so – responding to the local needs by “getting on and doing”. The latest activity is the “Exercise Club” providing a programme of chair-based exercise therapy. It has proved so popular that we are now running it weekly. As with all our activities it is in collaboration with a local professional – Zoe George of “FitClub and VibroClub” – who is keen to specialize in helping those with dementia, and other older persons. It has shown just how important the social aspect is and how much it is needed.

Looking to the future, we now have sufficient funding to try out some of our ideas to do with improving how paid personal care and other services can be improved. We hope to use our award of £10,000 from the Suffolk Foundation to try to develop a team of local professional carers, and reinforce our mission of “Caring in the Community, Caring for the Community, Caring by the Community”. I am aware that this will be another big challenge which will need the County Council to support us, but if we can achieve it, it will create a new model for the care of those who need help but don't want to be moved into a care home 7, 10, 14 miles away.

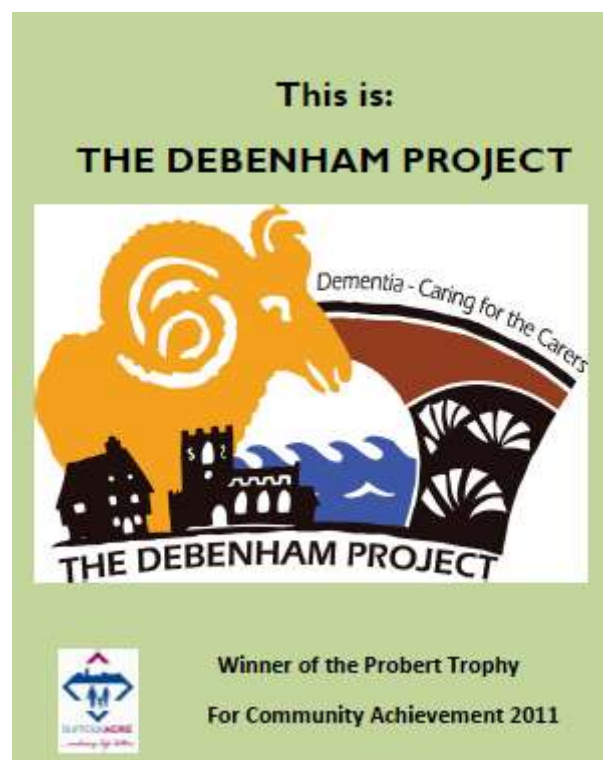
I know that I have mentioned our delight that The Debenham Project has been recognized for its community-based approach to the problems that dementia presents. I want to say how important to us all has been receiving the awards from Debenham, Mid-Suffolk, Suffolk ACRE, and the Suffolk Foundation. I have realized that the success of community projects is dependent on two things – the confidence that we can “make it happen”, and being “thanked and praised” for trying to “make a difference”. None of this would have been possible without the commitment of our volunteers but also, particularly, the involvement by all our family carers and those they care for.

Summer has moved on into autumn and with it the season for harvest festivals. Here in Debenham, at the beginning of October, we had a very special event – “Harvest through the Ages”. It was a 2 day exhibition of the most wonderful scale models of farming wagons, carts, and tools which was

combined with a magnificent harvest flower display, and displays of “Olden Foods” and locally made traditional walking sticks. Over the 2 days we had more than 500 visitors from across Suffolk. So many thanks to everyone who helped create it, steward it, provide refreshments, publicise it, and everything else. Of course the exceptional weather made all the difference. Our aim was to celebrate harvest by displaying one of our carer’s (Nic Cass) models for one last time before we try to find them a home in a museum. We did not set out to make it a fundraising exercise so all we did was to put out a basket for donations to Dove Cottage and the project. Imagine our delight when upon tipping the money out we found that it amounted to almost exactly £500 which when added to the donations for refreshments organized by the church and the W.I. gave a grand total of £590. We have put some photos of the models on our website.

Just a few days later we were again unexpectedly delighted when we learnt that the Debenham Group GP practice had decided to support The Debenham Project with a donation of £316 from the refreshments and raffle on “Flu Jab Day”. I am aware that I am always saying how generous our community is, but it deserves to be said – it is true. Once again we are most grateful to the Woolpack Quizzers for their very generous donation this month – we are truly blessed.

Two years can be a long time, but it can also fly by so fast that we don’t realize how much has been achieved. In September we invited those, in the local authorities, the NHS, the charities, our local community, and other agencies who have helped us to celebrate our 2nd year with a garden luncheon. It was a very special occasion when we launched our latest publication –



“This is: The Debenham Project”. Now that we have “survived” and become

“respectable” we felt it was time to describe our project, what we do, and what our hopes are for the future. You can download our booklet by clicking on <http://www.the-debenham-project.org.uk/downloads/leaflets/booklet.pdf> or by copying the link into your internet browser. Copies are also available at Debenham Post Office and Debenham Library Resource Centre.

If you would like to know more please see our display in the Post Office, ring 01728862003, call in at the Library Resource Centre, or visit our website at <http://www.the-debenham-project.org.uk/>.

With my best wishes and kind regards,

Lynden