



Hello everyone,

In the first year of the project – it seems a long time ago – community projects were often viewed as a way of cutting costs by getting volunteers to “do the work” instead of paying professionals. A year or so later the Government suggested that the “Big Society” would create an army of volunteers to provide the time and money needed to meet the projected shortfall in the funding in health and social care funding. We resisted this by saying that we were not about “helping the County Council to meet its budget” but rather to work with the professionals on the ground to provide a new model of care provision. We realised that there was a critical dimension of dementia care which could not be provided by remote clinics and services – families that are having to cope with the impact of dementia on their lives need more than the NHS and the Local Authorities are able to provide. They need to be supported by knowing that their community “cares” – that despite feeling alone there are so many who understand what they are going through and want to be “there for them”. This is not something that the statutory authorities can provide, yet it is probably the most important element of support in a family carer’s life. The project places great emphasis on supporting the carer and cared-for together, and on recognising that the primary determinant of quality of life lies in maintaining family, social, and community relationships – “Interaction is the chemotherapy of dementia” (Henry Simmons of Alzheimer’s Scotland). So we hope that project has become not simply a service or a set of clubs / activities but a “family” in which friendships are made and in which we can always turn to each other for support when we need it.

In this respect there are a couple of families who have recently been brought to my mind who have been a part of the project since its very beginnings. Mary Rouse and Brian Wood have passed away, but the way that they were cared for by their families were examples of how we should care, and how much difference the “right sort of care” can make in the lives of not only those with the illness but also those who are caring for them. Thank you Mike, Lyn and Mary’s family for all you have done, and given to help the project, and for Carole and all her family, and all the generous donations made in Brian’s memory. Sadly Mary and Brian were only two of several of “our family” who died over the past year – we remember them all with deep affection.

Please remember that you can donate your Co-op “divvy” to the project simply by asking for it to be given to The Debenham Project – Number **609313**.

Lynden

Phone 01728 862003 or visit our **Website:** www.the-debenham-project.org.uk