



Hello everyone,

Autumn is well and truly with us and it is exactly 6 years since the public launch of The Debenham Project at the Community Centre. I don't suppose that any of us imagined then how it would evolve to become recognized as a leading example of what a community can achieve by simply wanting to "get on and do something". So thank you everyone – volunteers, carers and those they care for, private donors, professional support workers, the local authorities, local organisations, the GP surgery, funding agencies, etc – who have made it possible. If you would like to know more please ask for a copy of our booklet in the Post Office or the Library. Alternatively it can be found on-line at our website. Our aim is to do whatever we can to support those families and individuals who are trying to cope with the impact of dementia (in all its forms) on their lives.

Since the inception of the project there has been much in the media about how big a problem dementia presents to us all and in 2012 the Prime Minister launched his challenge to increase understanding throughout the UK by recruiting and training up to 1 million "dementia friends" - the latest figure is one and a quarter million and growing! Well done indeed. These are local people who through their training have a much better awareness of the illness, its symptoms and the impact it has on carers and those they care for. The second strand of the challenge was to create 20 "dementia friendly communities" – the latest figure is 110 and growing – in which those with dementia will always be treated with respect, understanding and kindness and helped if they are having difficulties whether it be in a shop, a business, a community group, or the street. Debenham was one of the very first accredited dementia friendly communities over two years ago. I imagine that you have noticed the window stickers.

Whilst, 1.25M dementia friends and 110 dementia friendly communities is a wonderful achievement, the real challenge is to translate that friendship into volunteers and active support as demonstrated in Debenham over the last 6 years. The Debenham Project provides about 200 person sessions per month (a session is when someone participates in one of our regular activities, carers and info café, fit club, lunch clubs, etc). However, across the whole of Suffolk the estimated total number of sessions is only about 1100 and there are an estimated 11 thousand families living with the illness. So you will see that there is a long way to go until we can say that "Suffolk has truly become a Dementia Friendly county" – a challenge indeed. Somehow, every village and town must be encouraged to play their part.

To end, I would like to express my many thanks to the family and friends of Kath Cass for their generous donations made in her memory; and for the large tin of Roses chocolates, the various cakes and other goodies that regularly appear at our doorstep. Please remember that we have a wheelchair that is available for loan.

Best wishes, Lynden

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