

INFORM

VOLUNTARY
ACTION
GWEITHREDU
GWIRFODDOL

Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil • Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Merthyr Tudful

December 2022

As we approach the end of another difficult year for individuals, communities and organisations, we want to assure you of our ongoing support now, and in the year ahead.

Our team offers a breadth of information, advice and support covering volunteering, governance, funding, development, community support and much more.

Over the festive period our office will be closed from **Friday 23rd December** until **Tuesday 3rd January 2023**.

VOLUNTEERING • FUNDING
ENGAGEMENT • TRAINING

MENTAL HEALTH • GOOD GOVERNANCE • TOGETHER
KNOWLEDGE • LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

HEALTH AND WELLBEING • DEVELOPMENT
INFORMATION • BEFRIENDING • SAFEGUARDING

SMT

Supporting Safe and Confident Communities
Cefnogi Cymunedau Diogel a Hyderus

25 MLYNEDD • 1997–2022 • 25 YEARS



Feel Lonely & Isolated – Want to Venture Out?

Are you or do you know someone who is desperate to get out and meet people but may have lost their confidence and are afraid to venture out? Don't know where to go?

Reconnect Can Help You!

The Reconnect project aims to tackle loneliness and isolation and offers support to those who are aged 50+ with a desire to be reconnected within their local community. We provide individual mentoring support on a 1 to 1 basis and encourage participation at local groups of interest. We help individuals regain their confidence to move forward and improve their wellbeing.



Referrals can be made by agencies and by individuals themselves.

What's on the menu at our Activity taster sessions in Treharris & Bedlinog?

Various crafts, card making, knitting, pyrography, quizzes, games, woodwork, puzzles, glass painting, embroidery, design – model making, planting, making birdboxes and much more!!!

Respect
Accredited

We are always looking to recruit more volunteers to join our team, full training is given and out of pocket expenses paid. For more details contact **Korene** on **07495549891** or email **kt@smt.org.uk**



Business in the Community

Access to free business expertise for community organisations

Does your organisation have a strategic or operational challenge that could benefit from free business expertise and support?

Business in the Community's (BITC) Skills Exchange Match platform is the easiest and most efficient way for community organisations to access free one-to-one support, consultancy or pro-bono services from our network of 600+ business members across the UK.

BITC's business volunteers have a range of skills and expertise that could be utilised to support your organisation; whether you need a marketing expert to help with your digital marketing strategy, would like support with writing that important bid, or need guidance with your business planning and beyond.

For further information or queries, please contact Skills-Exchange@bitc.org.uk



The Prince's Responsible Business Network
Cymru

WcVA
CcGC



EFFRO

Effro is a Welsh Government funded project, established to support people living with dementia and those who care for them.

Over the past couple of months Effro, in conjunction with the Gellideg Foundation Group, has been running a weekly activity group for those living with dementia at the Gellideg Wellbeing Centre. These activity sessions are multi-sensory fun environments and include activities such as painting; card making; music bingo; arts and crafts; seasonal activities and games.

Following on from this, early in January 2023, (again in conjunction with the Gellideg Foundation Group and Effro's partner organisation 'Breathe'), Effro will be running a 'Carer Connect' group at the Gellideg Wellbeing Centre.

These groups will be led by a qualified counsellor and provide an opportunity for the carers of those living with dementia to discuss shared experiences, the positives and challenges of being a carer and to share tips and coping strategies. To assist carers in attending, in parallel to these sessions Effro caseworkers run an 'activity group' in a separate room which the person living with dementia can also attend.

Effro has also developed its own in-house training and information services team and as a consequence is able to offer free Dementia support & information sessions for carers & family members.

For more information about the upcoming groups at Gellideg (or any other queries about Effro's work) please contact us at effro@plattfrom.org



Changing perceptions of dementia
Newid canfyddiadau o ddementia



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust

The Heritage Convention held recently at the Rhydyar International Bowls Centre was a welcome chance for local volunteers involved in heritage issues to come together for talks about new projects and future events.

There was representation from a number of voluntary organisations. Discussions ranged across music, culture, the on-going value of our historic buildings and the restoration of heritage sites as well as the growing importance to everyone of green open spaces.

Edward Dawson of community run Nantllwynog Park in Bedlinog, gave a talk on the potential for green open spaces and their benefits for volunteers and the local community.

Mog Chambers gave an update on the community campaign 'Protect Pontsarn' and possible alternatives to the Welsh Water 'mega' water works proposals that would cost Merthyr Tydfil a huge area of green countryside.

Dilwyn Roberts of Canolfan Soar spoke about the ambitious organ restoration at Theatr Soar and the music making activities and festivals that the project would generate in 2023.

There was also a brief report on the exodus of volunteers from Ynysyfach Engine House.



Rob Thomson said that the Hughesovka display panels at the engine house were being replaced in a Hughesovka 2022 renewal project.



A new Wales, steel and Ukraine:

Hughesovka 1870 – 1917 exhibition banner based on the Hughesovka booklet published by Glamorgan Archives in 1992 was unveiled by 'Ukrainian guest' Lidiia.



Lidiia, who was raised in Donesk, told representatives that the name of John James Hughes, an ironmaster, engineer and entrepreneur from Merthyr Tydfil was revered in the Ukrainian city as he was the founder of the Hughesovka / Yusovka steelworks and coal mines.

On arriving in Merthyr Tydfil a few months ago Lidiia was surprised to find that hardly anyone knew of Hughes, his Welsh venture or Hughesovka.

Carolyn Jacob of the Merthyr Tydfil Family History Group provided a written presentation on the 'Six Railways to Merthyr' project based on the book of the same name by John Hodge published in 2014. Her research work has solved the mystery of who Angus Lewis was – but not the motivation for his pioneering photography of steam locomotives running on the 'Six Railways to Merthyr' a century ago.



Left to right; Morgan Chambers, Lidiia Tkachova, Hefin Jones and Edward Dawson

For more information please contact the Heritage Trust Projects Officer Rob Thomson at buzzards.pr@gmail.com

Osteoporosis Support Group Merthyr

The Osteoporosis Support Group started in September 2007.

It began with a small group of people and over the years has grown in numbers with now approximately 60 members registered with an attendance of between 25-30 at every meeting with that increasing to 50 when special events are organised such as fundraising and shopping trips.

Part of our aims and objectives are to raise awareness and give information on Osteoporosis, lobby for equality of provision of care throughout our local Health Board and generally have fun!

Our success over the years has largely stemmed from a hard working Committee of 10 people, who all come together to plan out an annual programme for the Group.

We have had regular medical updates with local Professionals within Cwm Taf and neighbouring Health Boards where discussions and information is shared to try and combat the loneliness and isolation that deteriorating bone health brings.

Our Chair, Judith Smallwood was asked to attend the All Wales Inaugural Fracture Liaison Service Conference alongside 3 other representatives from Wales, it gave them an opportunity to tell their story and also take part in various workshops.

It was the first of its kind in Wales.

We realise that older people have more than one chronic condition so chronic pain sufferers with other conditions that haven't got a local support group in Merthyr are welcome in our group.

We are all volunteers and all suffer with muscular skeletal conditions. As we age our bone health is so essential in avoiding hospital stays, and fractures.

Our group is all about trying to change behaviours and attitudes whilst spreading the word that prevention and simple exercises can help with mobility.



This poem was written by Val, one of the members of the Group.

MEMORIES

What is it I am looking for?

We mutter with a frown.

*We all share the frustration,
when our memory lets us down.*

*Memory is something over which
we have no sway.*

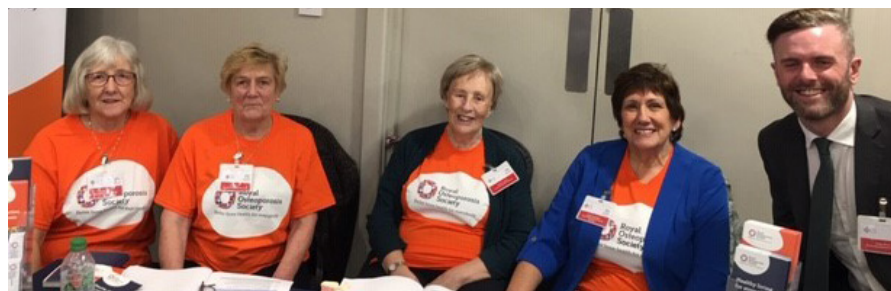
*No choice of happy ones to keep
and those to throw away.*

*Yet memories can help us in the
darkness of the night –*

*Remembering those teenage
years of laughter and delight.*

*We've lived our lives the best we
can, the good times and the bad.*

*So, now we count our blessings,
and remember and be glad!*



Right to left: Craig Jones - Chief Executive of the Royal Osteoporosis Society. Judith - Merthyr Tydfil Support Group. Wendy - Cardiff Support Group. Sheila - Gwent Support Group and Delyth - Carmarthen Support Group.

The group meets the second Tuesday of every month, 1:30 pm at the Indoor Bowls Club at Rhydycar, Merthyr Tydfil.

For more information please email Judith Smallwood at jasmallwood47@gmail.com

Dathlu Cymraeg Pontsticill / (Celebrate Welsh)



Pontsticill Community Group is a registered charity whose aims are to conserve our local environment and culture through community engagement and to provide facilities and social events for those within our community.

The Dathlu Cymraeg project has been organised by our community group with the aim of celebrating the Welsh language locally. It has been made possible by grant monies from the Ffos-y-fran community benefit fund which has been administered by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

The Welsh language is at the heart of our culture and our community group is committed to promoting the language through our work. The Dathlu Cymraeg project has been an exciting opportunity to raise the profile of the language within our community through a range of events and activities.

As part of this project, we have introduced Welsh language signage to our local play park and have also commissioned a book which interprets the meaning of local place names.

There are many who want to learn or revise and improve their use of the language. In response to this need, we ran a series of Welsh language lessons and this group continues to meet on a regular basis and learn together.



We held a 'Noson Lawen' (joyful evening) on October 14th. This was an evening of songs, music and readings which celebrated our Welsh language and culture.

Please contact Anthony Pritchard at ajp.cymru@gmail.com if you would like further information.

SAMARITANS

SAMARITANS SAMARIAID

South Wales Valleys Cymoedd De Cymru

South Wales Valleys branch of Samaritans is, above all, an outreach branch charged with taking our service into the community where it is most needed. Throughout the week our volunteers may be found in Police custody suites, local libraries, hospitals, schools, colleges and universities, supermarkets, fetes and sports events or simply on the streets, raising awareness of our service and where necessary lending emotional support to those who need it.

Additionally, nearly every week, either online or in person, we give talks and run workshops for businesses, housing associations or hobby clubs.

We are really pleased to have developed a partnership with GP Clusters in Merthyr who are raising awareness of some of our services and resources and, when restrictions allow, we will be providing support sessions in GP surgeries. Likewise we have been working with Merthyr Cynon Foodbank to ensure people who need us have our details should they need someone to talk to.

Should you want face to face support from Samaritans we are in the atrium of Prince Charles Hospital fortnightly. Throughout December and January we will be there in the evenings on the 22nd of December and the 5th and 19th of January and this pattern will continue throughout the year.

We are also in Merthyr Town Centre on the 21st of January from 10am till 1pm.

You can call our free helpline on 116123 at any time of the day or night.

Our volunteers do several shifts a week in their office based in the Voluntary Action Centre in Merthyr manning the Samaritans national helpline and giving emotional support to distressed callers from all over the UK and ROI.

We are always looking for opportunities to reach more people and high risk groups throughout the South Wales Valleys.

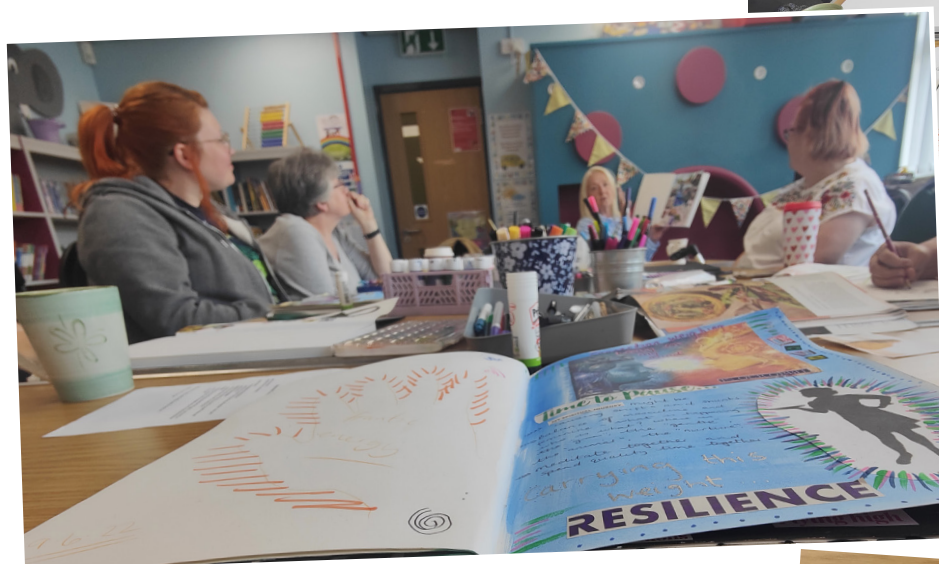
If you have an event you think we could attend or bring our trailer to please make contact with us at director@valleys-samaritans.org.

We are a thriving branch of like-minded individuals giving our time freely for a cause we believe in. We are always looking for new members. If you are interested in joining us go to <https://www.samaritans.org/wales/branches/south-wales-valleys-samaritans/>

Trinity

Women's Wellness and Community Networking

Trinity Childcare and Family Centre has been delivering the Tackling Loneliness and Isolation (TLI) project, funded by Invest Local Ynysowen.



One of the key TLI initiatives has been the Creative Journaling and Women's Wellness activity delivered by Liz Thomas from Soul Creative Circle, which has just come to an end. Discussions are underway to look at follow up funding opportunities through the newly formed Wellbeing and Health in Ynysowen (WHY) group. Liz says:

"Overall, sessions have shown a huge, positive impact upon mental health and wellbeing of the women who attended. Outcomes meet all areas of the 5 ways to wellbeing and provide a possible addition to social prescribing, taking strain off public services. 100% of participants who completed the survey expressed that they would continue to attend these sessions or recommend a friend"

TLI Project Lead, Brendan D'Cruz, says that working with Liz has been really beneficial in terms of linking in with other initiatives such as the 'Community Networking' sessions funded by Merthyr Tydfil CBC's Community Cohesion fund. This looked at community themes such as Wellbeing & Health, Culture & Language, Diversity as well as Future Generations/ Environment that were highlighted in the recent population needs and wellbeing assessments undertaken by Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership.



Brendan says: "As a community charity, Trinity is at the heart of promoting wellbeing and health initiatives, so collaborative and partnership working is an essential part of what we do. Hopefully, our ongoing work on WHY will develop confidence and belonging, help in tackling loneliness and isolation, and make the community of Ynysowen and its more vulnerable residents much more resilient."

For more information, please contact:
info@trinitychildcare.wales



Rotary Club of Merthyr Tydfil

The Club, who meet in the Castle Hotel at 1pm every Monday, continue to support local and International projects. Locally they continue to support the Merthyr & Cynon Foodbank. This year they have donated over £2,500 in goods and finance.



Rotarians Peter Brill & Dr. Ganesh promoting "message in a bottle" and "end Polio now" together with Gwenda Griffiths, who works for the NHS and a member of the Rotary Club of Swansea. This was at the Eisteddfod in Tregaron.



Dr. Ganesh presenting a cheque for £100 to 'Shelter box' for disasters in areas of the world.

If you need more information or wish to join us contact the Secretary Ian Hopkins on **01685 384413** or **07920 131582**. You will be welcome.



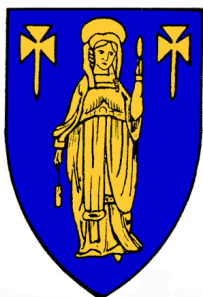
President Huw Williams presenting Cleide Correia, Manager of the Foodbank with boxes of toothpaste, donated by Church St. Dental Practice.



Rotarians Peter Brill & Dr. Ganesh collecting for the foodbank in Tesco's.



The Club continue to maintain the gardens of the Macmillan Unit at Prince Charles Hospital. Rotarians Keith Jones & Tony Williams having a well earned rest after a shift in the garden.



The Merthyr Mendicants

The Mendicants is one of the oldest charities in Merthyr and was formed on 29th January 1962, when seven people met in the Mayor's Parlour in the old town hall to discuss the aims of the new organisation. By May of the same year the society reached its full strength of twelve members.

The term mendicant comes from the Latin word: *mendicans* and refers to begging or relying on charitable donations. The aim of the charity has remained unchanged over the years. That is:

To relieve persons in the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil, who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress.

All requests for support need to be made via the secretary and are subsequently discussed by the full committee, which meets once a month apart from December.

- In the early days the charity raised funds by staging concerts, raffles and jumble sales, which brought in regular amounts of money.
- Thirteen cases were discussed in the first year, ten of which were given help.
- £18 was paid for repairs to a roof and chimney in Penydarren. A lady in Troedyrhiw had her TV licence paid for and in Dowlais the victim of a stroke was provided with an oil heater for warmth.

From the early days to the present time, Mendicants have worked tirelessly and devoted numerous amounts of effort raising vital funds to relieve hardship within the County Borough. Although the types of fundraising activities have changed over the years, that work continues today throughout the year and culminates in December with the annual Brecon Mountain Railway Santa trip, which is organised for school children. In the weekends leading up to Christmas the Mendicants can be seen working in partnership with the Shopping Precinct Management team and staff in Santa's grotto.



Our iconic Christmas sleigh, which is usually located at Tesco Extra on Sundays, also tours selected areas of the Borough during the final two weeks before Christmas. Our volunteers are dedicated and proud of their efforts to alleviate hardship in Merthyr Tydfil.

Membership is open to anyone eighteen years and over, so if you feel you have what it takes to be a Mendicant and would like to support the work of our charity or require further information, please contact the Secretary on 01685 722350 or email merthymendicant@gmail.com

We are Merthyr's Helping Hand.



• Merthyr Tydfil •

Hope

Hope Church has joined Warm Welcome Spaces, with Hope registered as a warm space and a friendly face this winter.

Join us on a Monday from 10am-11.30am, for a cuppa & chat.

Participate in craft, art, board games or jigsaws if you wish.

We have Wi-Fi, Street level access, with lift to the basement area.



NEED A PLACE TO WARM UP?

Out for an Hour
FRIENDSHIP CAFE

MONDAYS 10AM TO 11:30
HOPE CHURCH MERTHYR
HIGH STREET CF478UG
07790801686

- ✓ Hot drinks
- ✓ Arts, crafts, board games and jigsaws
- ✓ Free Wifi
- ✓ Sit and chat
- ✓ Charging Facilities
- ✓ Accessible lift and toilet

hope church merthyr
CROENIA DYHUNEDDOL
COMMUNITY FUND

WARM WELCOME SPACE

FREE • WARM • WELCOMING • SAFE

visit www.warmwelcome.uk

Please give Heidi a call on **07790 801686** for more information.

Stephens and George

Merthyr Tydfil Children's Literature Festival 2023.

The Festival is now the biggest event in the UK celebrating World Book Day.

It is taking place on **Thursday April 20th 2023** from 9am until 3pm with over 5000 children in Merthyr Tydfil and is based in 21 town centre locations. Renowned children's author Michael Rosen will be attending, delivering workshops to school children.



Michael Rosen

The event is hosted by the Stephens and George Charitable Trust this year in partnership with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and is in its 7th Year. It is being opened 10am at St David's Church, Merthyr Tydfil and many prominent figures from across the youth field will be in attendance.



The whole ethos of the Festival is to inspire young people to read and write and this year the event theme is **"Shakespeare: Past, Present and Future"**.

The Festival will come alive with flash mobs, living statues, acts, music, animals and fairground rides.

At 9.30am a parade of over 2000 children will see the town coming to a standstill with all participants dressed as Shakespearean characters.

- Over 60 stalls selling foods including chocolate, bath bombs, and lots more.
- There will be 200 Workshops on the day in 21 venues across Merthyr Tydfil.

If you would like to get involved then please contact charity1@stephensandgeorge.co.uk to find out more.



CALL FOR ENTRIES

The High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan Youth Community Awards 2022/23

Awards made up to:

First Prize £1000

**Other Prizes
£500 • £100 • £50**

GUIDELINES

1. Entries are invited from young people aged between 11-21 on 31st January 2023.
2. A Group must include 3 or more members, aged between 11-21 on 31st January 2023.
3. Entrants must live in Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil or Rhondda Cynon Taff County Boroughs.
4. You must be nominated by someone who is 18 or over at the date the entry is submitted.
5. There must be two people, 18 or over at the date the entry is submitted, to provide a reference. We just need their name, telephone number, email address and if required we will get in contact with them, to help us decide whether you are a winner.
6. We need your parent or guardian's permission for publicity. **SHOULD YOUR CIRCUMSTANCE CHANGE REGARDING PUBLICITY, PLEASE LET US KNOW IMMEDIATELY.**
- 7. Closing date for entries is 31st January 2023**
8. Judging will take place in February 2023 and there will be an Awards Ceremony on the evening of Thursday 9th March 2023.

Click on the following link for application form.

► ► [**High Sheriff Youth Awards 2023 nomination form.pdf**](#)

Send entries to:

High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan Awards
Rickyard House,
Longlands Farm,
Pyle CF33 6PU

or email them to [**midglamorgan@highsheriffs.com**](mailto:midglamorgan@highsheriffs.com)

Make a new friend while attending gigs and events – volunteer as a Gig Buddy!



Gig Buddies is a befriending scheme that pairs up adults with a learning disability and/or autism with a volunteer who shares the same interests so they can go to gigs and events together.

Many people with a learning disability find it difficult to attend events, especially at night, because of lack of support and no one to go with who loves the same things as they do.

As a Gig Buddy you can use your love of music, the arts, sport and culture to help somebody else in your community to socialise and enjoy new experiences. 'Gigs' can be anything from concerts, festivals and nightclubs to sports matches, museums, or a countryside walk.



Gig Buddies is about fun, friendship, and enjoying new experiences. But it also addresses serious issues such as loneliness and isolation, whilst improving people's confidence, independence and wellbeing.

Gerome Jackson has had a Gig Buddy for nearly a year, and in this time they have enjoyed trips together to the British Motor Museum, Shakespeare's Birthplace, visits to garden centres and nights out at Cardiff's LGBTQ+ bars.

Gerome said: *"Gig Buddies is good because it helps me to access things that I previously didn't do before I had a Gig Buddy".*

To find out more and apply to be a Gig Buddy visit www.ffrindiaugigiau.org.uk. You can also email Kai Jones at gigbuddies@ldw.org.uk or phone 07538 886509.

Being a Gig Buddy is summed up well by volunteer Gareth Pahl: *"Volunteering as a Gig Buddy doesn't feel like volunteering at all. It's like being given a new friend!"*

Cancer Aid

Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil was one of the organisations nominated for the Queen's Award in 2012. This is in recognition of the outstanding commitment and dedication that our volunteers give to their local cancer charity. At present we have over 60 volunteers, whose age ranges from 20 to 84.



Volunteers make such an important contribution to their communities, so often without any recognition for the outstanding work that they do. In such difficult economic times that the country is facing now due the pandemic, their volunteering efforts are even more valuable. Tracey Burke, Principal Manager of Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil said "the amazing work that all our volunteers give to the organisation to help those whose lives have been touched by cancer and their families is outstanding, they have stood by us through the most difficult times the country has faced. They truly are a lifeline to some of the most vulnerable people in our community. We are so grateful for their on-going support and cannot thank them enough".

If you would like to join us as a volunteer driver, volunteer receptionist, charity shop volunteer or a volunteer who likes to fundraise, we would love to hear from you please contact us on:

Tel: 01685 379633 Email info@canceraidmerthyr.co.uk

You can also keep up to date with us via our face book page  Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil.



welcome
friends
cyfeillion
croesawgar

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

Could you support someone over 50 who is feeling isolated and lonely?

Our Welcome Friends project urgently needs telephone befriending volunteers. Could you spare an hour a week to telephone a lonely, isolated elderly person? We provide training and regular support.



“I can't wait for my volunteer to ring and I always feel brighter after our chat!”

- Jeffrey, 86

For more information call:
Rhian Taylor,
Engagement Manager,
07823 413283

Greyhound Rescue Wales



are looking for volunteers in their Merthyr Tydfil shop.

No experience necessary, just a willingness to help.

Contact the Volunteer Centre on **07958 132822** or email **frances.barry@vamt.net** for more information.



Visual Impairment Merthyr Tydfil

Visual Impairment Merthyr (VIM)

VIM is a registered charity supporting people who are blind, partially sighted or challenged by failing sight.

Membership is open to all Merthyr Borough residents and those from surrounding areas including supportive non-members.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Could you be a Treasurer, help at our monthly meetings, telephone befriending or help out with our referrals?

If you like more information on any of these roles then please email Morgan Evans at morgan_evans@sky.com

Volunteering. It's Good For You.



#GoodForYou

We rely on people like you playing their part to give the young people the opportunities they need.

But volunteering isn't just about giving something back. It's also about doing something that's good for you.

Volunteering gives you career-boosting skills, improves your wellbeing and helps you make connections with friends, family and your local community.

So what are you waiting for? Get in touch!

merthyrscouts@btinternet.com
scouts.org.uk/join

Scouts
Merthyr Tydfil

What it's like to be a Volunteer

This is a new feature for our newsletter so if you would like to share a story of one of your fantastic volunteers (with their permission of course) then this is the place to do so. Our first story is about Carole who had given nearly 32 years of her life to volunteering.



Carole Thomas has been volunteering for nearly 32 years for the Friends Wednesday club.

It all started when she sat on the Parish Council for St Aloysius Church based in the Gurnos when a request was made to hold an event in the evening for the older people attending the Church.

Carole always had a passion for cooking so she decided to organise the event from start to finish. It was such a success the attendees wanted to do it again. Carole could see that there was a need for something like this in the community so she started the Friends Wednesday Club.

It took 3 ladies, Carole, Cath Prichard and Jen Hurley to set the wheels in motion and every week, out of their own pocket, they would buy tea, coffee and milk so everyone attending the club would have something warm to drink. 25 people attended the first meeting with a maximum of 120 community members attending at it's peak. Today they still have around 45 members.

They meet every Wednesday at the Gurnos Clinic to have a cup of tea, a chat and play bingo. Carole organises social activities, meals out and trips to help improve mental wellbeing and help reduce loneliness and isolation for community members. The group is open to all ages, members range from 50 – 90 at present.

Carole said *"the group has had a big impact on community members over the years, it has given them a routine, they know that every Wednesday they have somewhere to go. Seeing people happy, enjoying themselves, making friends and putting their worries aside even for a couple of hours has given me no end of pleasure."*

The group has given me a purpose, it's kept me busy and I've enjoyed every minute of it, I couldn't have done any of this without the support of the ladies who have helped me run things so smoothly over the years and also our lovely members, I can't thank them enough."



If you would like more information about the Friends Wednesday Club then please contact Carole on **01685 384246**





Farewell to Tim Carter

Tim held the role of Local Implementation Lead as part of the Lloyds Bank Foundation People and Communities' work in Merthyr Tydfil. Tim joined VAMT on secondment from MS Society Cymru for an initial 12 months' period on a part time basis and returned to his substantive role once the secondment concluded at the end of September this year.

It was a pleasure to have Tim as part of the VAMT team (albeit on a part time basis) and we wish him well for the future.

VAMT continues to support Lloyds Bank in their work locally, and is currently helping them develop a Steering Group to take forward the next phase of work commenced by Tim.

St David's Christmas Tree Festival

VAMT was happy to support St David's Church Christmas Tree Festival which coincided with the 'Switch On' of the Christmas lights on Saturday 19th November in Merthyr Tydfil. It was an opportunity for us to decorate a tree to promote what support/help VAMT can offer the wider community.



Cost of Living Crisis

VAMT have been working in partnership with MTCBC in relation to the Cost of Living Crisis that has been sweeping the nation. A summit was held in November with representation from statutory, third sector and health partners to formulate a collaborative response at a local level.



To continue to inform this work going forward, we (VAMT) would be interested to know; how as an organisation you are impacted, what support you require from us as your CVC and what support you are / planning on offering to residents. **Please get in touch with either Karen or Claire.**

AGM 2022

VAMT's AGM was held in September at the Merthyr Tydfil Football Club and was attended by 48 people.

The meeting was opened by The Mayor, Councillor Declan Sammon who gave recognition to VAMT and its member organisations and their significant contribution throughout the County Borough, particularly during the pandemic and now into the current cost of living crisis.

The High Sheriff for Mid Glamorgan, Maria Thomas, gave a key note speech around the history and role of the High Sheriff. The High Sheriff further commended the work of VAMT and the significant contribution it makes within the area.

Chief Officer, Sharon Richards presented the Annual Impact Report for 2021-22 which can now be viewed on the VAMT website – www.vamt.net/publications



25 years of VAMT!

This year marks 25 years since County Voluntary Councils were first introduced across Wales.

To mark this landmark achievement, the AGM this year was followed by an afternoon presentation by former VAMT Chief Officer, Ian Davy, who gave a potted historic of the 25 year history of the organisation, its work, and impact, during that time.



Future dates of Forums and Networks

Children, Young People & Families' Forum

10 am to 12 Noon and will be held on MS Teams until further notice.

The meetings for the new year will return to a Thursday and will be held on:

Thursday 16th March

Thursday 15th June

Thursday 14th September

Thursday 14th December

For further information please contact
enquiries@vamt.net

The Environment & Green Space Network

Online meeting

Wednesday 8th March 10am until 12pm

The Environment and Green Spaces Network was established in 2017 and is primarily a virtual network, however it has held meetings to showcase projects and discuss issues such as the Valleys Regional Park. It is primarily a third sector network and is made up of organisations and community groups concerned with environmental and conservation issues. Events have been facilitated jointly with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

Health and Wellbeing Forum

This Forum is open to third sector colleagues and aims to provide a platform for providing third sector services operating locally and regionally. It further serves to ensure engagement with the sector around strategic developments within both Merthyr Tydfil County Borough and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board area.

Wednesday 8th February 10am – 12 noon

It's facilitated by Claire Williams, Health and Wellbeing Manager, contact
claire.williams@vamt.net for further information.

The Food Prosperity Network is meeting

Online meeting

Thursday 9th March 10am until 12 via Teams

Merthyr Tydfil Food Prosperity Network is an emerging coalition of organisations in Merthyr Tydfil with the aim to support residents and communities' access healthy affordable food. The Network is supported through Food Sense Wales and the South Wales Food Prosperity Network and registered with the Food Power Programme which offers financial assistance for local level action around the development of food poverty alliances. VAMT is currently providing the secretariat for the fledgling group, which was established in November 2018 and includes Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association, Merthyr Valleys Homes and Wales and West Housing Association

Volunteer Managers' Forum

Wednesday 18th January 10am – 12 noon

The Forums take place at the Voluntary Action Centre.

The Volunteer Managers Forum is facilitated by Frances Barry, please contact her at
frances.barry@vamt.net if you are a Volunteer Manager and would like to find out more.

News from the Board:

Following election at the AGM in September VAMT Board are pleased to welcome Tanya Edwards, Social Enterprise Manager at Fir Tree Community Association, as a new Trustee.

At the Board meeting in October, the Board re-elected Suzanne Davies as Chair, re-elected Michael Ronan as Treasurer and appointed Dr Hefin Jones as Vice-Chair.

Chair, Suzanne Davies, confirmed that as part of their forward workplan, the Board will be looking to recruit additional Trustees in the New Year and information on this opportunity will be conveyed via the usual VAMT communication channels.



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That's all from VAMT for now. Tell us what you think of this way of keeping you up to date with what others are doing.

Don't forget, if your organisation is not a member, why not join us and keep up to date with all the latest news, funding opportunities, and other opportunities that are out there.

VAMT Blog – you may have noticed that our Blog isn't working at the moment. We are in the process of developing something new so will keep you all posted on this.

YOU CAN BE PART OF THIS MAGAZINE TOO!

If you would like to include an article, news item or Focus on your group in the next edition, contact VAMT enquiries for more information: enquiries@vamt.net.

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Karen Vowles
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Ellie Luke
Business Support Officer

Sharon Jones
Mental Health Service User
Involvement Officer

Faye Johnson
Mental Health Development
Officer

Helen Roberts
Loneliness and Isolation
Development Officer

Board Members

Suzanne Davies

Anne Roberts

Kayleigh Nor-Val

Michael Ronan

Nicola Mahoney

Hefin Jones

Tanya Edwards



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The views expressed in this edition of Inform are not necessarily those of Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil.
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