CONTACT VOLUNTEER LINK UP
YOUR LOCAL VOLUNTEER CENTRE!

www.vlu.org.uk
Tel: 01993 776277

Christmas
2011
Volunteer Link Up is a volunteer centre serving the West Oxfordshire district. Our aim is to link people who have some time to spare with those in our community who need some help.

The meaning of volunteering

**Volunteering** means an involvement, activity or commitment that a person chooses and gives freely.

**Volunteers** are people who contribute their time, energy and skills to benefit people in their community.

**The value of volunteering**

Volunteering is not just a means of helping individuals or causes, it is also very rewarding to those taking part and benefits society as a whole.

**Value to the individuals or organisations helped:** This is achieved by offering your services, skills, time, initiative and creativity in a positive way. Befriending, transporting, fundraising or getting involved with organisations are all examples of the value that volunteering can give.

**Value to the volunteer:** Volunteers get a lot out of giving their time. Among the benefits are personal satisfaction, learning new skills, meeting new people, work experience, training, achievement and enjoyment.
Welcome to the Link! - News from the Office

Well, I suppose it’s because I’m getting older, but it seems like only a few days ago I was writing about our news from the office for the summer edition of the Link! It could also be that we didn’t really have much of a summer, did we? Never mind, the clocks have gone back, the nights are drawing in and Christmas merchandise has been in the shops for at least three months, so it must be time to write our news for the Christmas issue!

It seems like a long time ago, but during National Volunteers Week in June, we held our Awards Evening, where we say ‘Thank you’ to our volunteers and present certificates to those who’ve been offering their services in the community for many years with long service awards. This year, they were presented by Wing Commander Robert Williams, of 4624 (County of Oxford) Movements Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force (the largest Reserve Squadron in the RAF), who gave a most interesting talk about the RAAF. It was a good evening and was thoroughly enjoyed by all!

The summer was spent, as has been the norm in recent years, with VLU having stands at events around the area. This summer, we had a stand at a county-wide networking lunch in Kennington, at the Witney Carnival and at the Wychwood Fair – it was good to talk to people, to let them know what we do, and raise our profile in the area – and we have recruited new volunteers too!

Our staff do get out and about to help local voluntary organisations. In May, Ruth, Catherine and I spent a Saturday at Cogges (formerly Cogges Manor Farm), interviewing potential volunteers and helping them with the completion of their application form. Over 100 people came to the Open Day and over 60 people applied to become volunteers. Cogges opened for the summer in July and although there have been a few ‘growing pains’, I think that the Trustees of Cogges found it a very successful start and they plan to reopen next March. We hope that they continue to be a great success!

In June, too, we co-hosted (with West Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership) a ‘Celebration of Volunteering in West Oxfordshire’, where local voluntary organisations came together to discuss the barriers they faced and what help would be of use to them. Lively discussions ensued (!) and West Oxfordshire District Council is now planning to act on some of the suggestions. Watch this space! (Continued)
Our website, which was activated in April 2010 (www.vlu.org.uk), now also includes a ‘News’ tab which houses our newsletter, making it available to anyone accessing the site. So if you want to refer to something that’s been reported in a previous newsletter, you can now find it online!

A new project that we’re about to start is to help people back into employment via volunteering. We’re working in partnership with OCVA (Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action – the umbrella organisation for the voluntary sector in Oxfordshire, based in Oxford) and Cherwell Council for Voluntary Service (based in Banbury). The project will run for two years and Liz, our volunteer co-ordinator, will be working with the staff at Witney Jobcentre, to offer advice and discuss opportunities with people who are currently out of work. Alison Baxter, Chief Executive of OCVA and I met with the Prime Minister in August and spoke to him about the project. He was very pleased to hear about what should be an exciting venture!

I’m sure it’s not news, but like most charitable organisations, we’ve spent a lot of our time in the recent past bidding for the small pots of funding that are still available to allow us to keep Volunteer Link Up functioning. Our current ‘service level agreement’ (contract) with Oxfordshire County Council is due to end in March 2012, so we’ve also been bidding with three of the fourteen ‘Locality Boards’ that have been set up as part of Oxfordshire County Council’s transformation of Social Care to request funding for our three in-house projects. We’ve been told that our services are highly valued (and we have our volunteers to thank for the ‘services’ we are able to provide), but we are currently waiting to hear if our bids have been successful. I know what I’ll be asking Santa for this Christmas!!

And so I’ll close for now and wish you and yours the happiest of holiday seasons – and once again, thank you all for what you do, which makes Volunteer Link Up the sort of organisation that everyone wants to emulate. We are very grateful to you all for all your efforts. If you’re travelling this Christmastime, please drive safely, and we look forward to speaking to you in 2012!

Pat, Ruth, Liz and Catherine

Christmas Volunteering
If you are thinking of volunteering at Christmas contact OCVA, 01865 251946 / admin@ocva.org.uk
Or look on the internet for the charity in which you’re interested eg Salvation Army, Shelter, Crisis at Christmas and find out the local contact.
Do this as soon as you can as there will be a registration process to go through
VLU is not made aware of local seasonal needs at Christmas
TOAD needs your help!

A chair, trustees and new volunteers are needed for this successful Chipping Norton charity for people with learning disabilities

TOAD (Trips, Outings and Activities for the Learning Disabled) is a successful charitable company set up in 2004 by Chairman Norman Dunn and a group of volunteers. MP David Cameron is their patron. The charity is properly constituted, has a Group B affiliation for Mencap and has reserves from successful fundraising in the past.

Over 100 members with learning disabilities from Chipping Norton, West Oxfordshire and Banbury pay a small annual subscription and then sign up for monthly social evenings, discos and quiz nights at Chipping Norton Rugby Club. The other valuable service is a whole range of interesting visits and trips for members and their carers eg the London Eye, river boats, Cotswold Wildlife Park, Cadbury World, tenpin bowling, Marwell Zoo, Birdworld and more.

Chairman Norman Dunn, who founded the charity after many years volunteering and working with people with learning disabilities, still provides much of the energy behind the work. Everything is done by volunteers, some of whom serve as the charity’s trustees. There are currently no paid staff, which allows the charity to give terrific help to its members for a very reasonable cost.

Norman, who is approaching 70, has told everyone that he is hoping to step down in 12 months. He and the team would like to hear from anyone interested in either helping lead the work or in joining the trustees and volunteers.

If you are interested or would simply like to find out more, please contact Norman on 01608 645293 / ndunn@btinternet.com

Feedback from VLU’s quality standards survey

Below are some of the comments that clients who used our transport scheme made about the help they received.

- An extremely efficient, friendly and helpful scheme. The drivers are always punctual
- We find everyone is most helpful
- A wonderful service…very efficient and reliable.
- It’s a pleasure being driven by them (the drivers)
- VLU has been a godsend to me.
- Like all drivers…very helpful. Makes going to the hospital less stressful.
- Very satisfied with the service provided. I have met several drivers and find them all helpful.

So, if you are a driver, be assured that you are greatly appreciated by the people you transport, as well as by us in the VLU office!
We’re on Lion Hunt in Witney!

No, not the four legged African variety, the two legged Witney Lions Club type. Witney Lions Club was established in 1969 and is a part of the largest completely voluntary service organisation in the world, Lions Clubs International. There are 45,000 clubs in 192 countries with 1.4 million members, of which 944 clubs and 20,000 members are in the UK and Ireland.

Each club is independent as to how it is run and how funds are raised and distributed to whatever needy cause or person they feel they should support. The vast majority of the funds Witney Lions raise are from events such as the Carnival and our Christmas street collections. These are distributed within the local community and surrounding areas. Witney Lions currently has 26 members and would like more. There are no restrictions to becoming a member. All that is required is a commitment to be prepared to help those less fortunate than ourselves. We also have a very active Social Events Calendar.

The club president, John Pole said the following on taking office this year.

‘To encourage service-minded men and women to serve their community without personal financial reward.

This is the key objective that I have decided to adopt during my year in office. Although we have 26 members, our average age is over 60 – a problem that we share, I’m sure, with many other clubs both in this country and abroad.’

Alongside the important welfare and fundraising functions of the Club, a good number of social events are organised with the intention of developing fellowship and good relations between members.

Certain key events are fixtures in the calendar. Our Charter Dinner held at the end of the Lionistic year in June is our ‘black tie’ event – an opportunity to celebrate the anniversary of the Club’s foundation in the company of partners, friends and representatives of other Lions Clubs. In the spring, the Lions Weekend Away takes us to a hotel for a relaxing two or three day stay.

As no Lion has to attend any event, it is up to the Social Secretary to offer as varied and interesting a programme as possible.

If you would like to find out more about Witney Lions Club please contact:

Rod Attewell – Publicity & Recruiting Officer
publicityandrecruiting@witneylions.org.uk / 07527 559020
www.witneylions.org.uk
Reminders...

For drivers

- Remember to always claim 45p a mile from your door and back again. If you don’t, for whatever reason, it can make it difficult for a subsequent driver to ask for expenses.
- The minimum charge for a drive is £4
- If you ever have any problems with getting payment, perhaps because your passenger is a little deaf or confused, simply leave it and call us in the office. We will pay your expenses and sort it out!
- You can continue to accept green and silver travel tokens. If a client gives you tokens and you cannot use them yourself, bring them into the office and we will reimburse you. We can do this until the end of March 2012.
- Drivers are no longer allowed to park in staff car parks at the JR
- The JR, Churchill and Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre now all accept OCTA badges. You can use the ambulance car spaces if you display the badge.
- If somebody asks you to do a drive directly e.g. when you’re dropping them back home, tell them that you cannot arrange drives yourself as that invalidates your insurance and ask them to call us in the office. If people arrange drives directly with clients at short notice it can mean that somebody who requested transport weeks before loses out. Of course you can always tell people to say to us that you are willing to do the drive and, if appropriate, we will call you.

For drivers, befriencers and gardeners etc

- It is advisable not to give your telephone number to the individual you are helping, at least initially. This can lead to you being contacted directly and being put in a difficult situation. If the client calls us we will always pass messages on to you. If people are concerned about how to reach you out of office hours, you can call the client to confirm arrangements etc.
- Don’t agree to do anything beyond what we have asked you. If you are asked to do something extra, say that you have got to talk to us first.
- Do keep us informed of any changes in your own situation and that of the client e.g. changes in contact details, health that affects your volunteering.
- Do let us know if you would like to cease a volunteering arrangement – we really don’t want you doing anything you’re not happy doing! Don’t just let it fizzle out or wait until we call you for an update.

Remember we are always available in the office to talk over any queries, issues or problems relating to your volunteering. Please don’t hesitate to call!

For organisations

- Do keep volunteers informed as to what is happening and what they can expect and when, particularly when they are registering.
- Do reply promptly to queries from potential volunteers – or you may lose them! If there are no current volunteering opportunities, let people know.
Looking back over the last thirty five years to write this article, I surprised myself to discover how much a part volunteering has played in my life. Starting from when I was at Henry Box school, listening to younger pupils read, then going on to volunteer to accompany a group of children and staff from a children’s home on holidays to Pembrokeshire, I have found that not only have I hopefully given something positive to those I have tried to help, but through these experiences I have gained so much knowledge, pleasure and eventually a career in the ‘caring services’. A major factor in my volunteering has been the influence of my parents; my mother was a Girl Guide District Commissioner for many years and also ran the Elms Day Centre, which I helped to renovate before it first opened. My father was Child Care Director for National Children Homes and my sister has kept up this family trait and works for Barnardo’s, with children with disabilities.

Having found two old diaries which cover some of my volunteering experiences, I share with you below, some of the times that have convinced me of the value of being a volunteer. The first is from my time as a CSV (Community Service Volunteer). Following school, I lived in a boarding school for partially sighted children, in East Sussex. This describes one of the regular lessons in independence.

**Friday 18th November 1977.**
Road safety session today. Over fifty children out and about around the town. Start from school and then in groups of twos and threes, they set off on a route that takes them on a round trip of a mile. Some of them have large print maps and others Braille instructions and white sticks. Staff and the two CSV’s meanwhile, are stationed around the town at various junctions and crossings to assess the children and step in if needed. This has been going on for some years and the locals pay no attention and rightly do not try and help. I took my place at the bottom of Blatchington Hill, right by the junction and the pond, happily nobody got wet!

My second diary entry is from my time as a VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas), working as a CBR (Community Based Rehabilitation) Co-coordinator in Guyana, South America. During this time we ran teaching sessions at schools and recruited local volunteers to enable children with disabilities to attend school and take part in community activities. Whilst I was based on the coast between the capital Georgetown and the Venezuelan border, I was involved in series of workshops for Amerindian teachers in a remote region called the Rupanunni near the Brazilian boarder.

**Wednesday 15th February 1995.**
Staying in the guest hut in Karasabi. A brick built building, where we strung hammocks from the rafters and covered them in mosi’ nets, a bit like sleeping in a cocoon. Malaria is very virulent here, with many people getting it and some dying. Dr Ajoun has it and looks exhausted. This is of great concern to the
locals as he is very well thought of and the only Dr in an area twice the size of Oxfordshire. The local teachers and assistants seem very motivated to develop CBR here; many of them have walked for two or three days to get here from various villages. Tonight was a full moon; it looked beautiful rising from behind the mountains. Pit latrine not so beautiful, full of the biggest cockroaches I have ever seen. Must remember to check boots for scorpions in the morning. People seemed somewhat bemused that I am a vegetarian, this, is to put it mildly, very unusual in the Rupununi, unique in fact. With cattle ranching, meals are beef for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Below, the Church at Karasabai, population when I was there, around 300.

So in conclusion I would recommend volunteering to anyone of any age. Thankfully not many of our voluntary jobs involve checking for scorpions! But you will get a lot out of the experience and hopefully help to enhance someone’s life.

Facts and figures:
from the Institute for Volunteering Research

- £18 billion – the estimated volunteer time to the UK economy in 2010
- 22 million people volunteer each year
- In 2008-09, 71% of adults in England volunteered at some point with 47% doing so more than once a month
- 96% of volunteers say they ‘really enjoy it’
- 62% of volunteers started volunteering because they wanted to improve things / help people
- 73% of volunteering organisations would engage more volunteers if they could secure more resources
- 86% of Volunteer Centres have seen an increase in the numbers of enquiries in the last year
- 87% of employers think that volunteering can help career progression

You can find more statistics and studies related to volunteering at The Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR). IVR is a research and consultancy agency specialising in volunteering. You can visit IVR’s website at www.ivr.org.uk
Carterton Day Centre

Carterton Day Centre is looking for all sorts of volunteers.

• Drivers to be at the centre for 8.45am to pick up the minibus, then collect the clients from Carterton and the surrounding villages and be back at the centre for about 10am. Then return at 1.45pm to collect clients and take them home and return the minibus to the centre at about 3pm. The vehicle is a 10 seater minibus and no special licence is required.

• Volunteers to help with the washing up and some cleaning are also required, as are people to sit and talk with the elderly people who attend the centre and engage with them in activities.

• An escort to assist the minibus driver is also required. Training will be provided.

The Day Centre is based in Edith Morehouse School grounds off Lawton Avenue in Carterton and runs Monday to Wednesday 9.30 – 2.30.

For more info call the manager on 01993 840162

Thames Valley Mentoring Project - SOVA

SOVA – Supporting Others through Volunteer Action – is a leading national volunteer mentoring organisation working with socially and economically disadvantaged people. The service was set up in 1975 by a small group of volunteers in the Inner London Probation Service and SOVA now manages approximately 67 projects annually across England and Wales.

The primary aim of the project is to enhance rehabilitation, while reducing re-offending through various methods of volunteers mentoring. SOVA believes that the work of local volunteers is vital to the resettlement of offenders back into the community. Following induction and training, volunteers predominantly work with offenders on a one-to-one basis and in some circumstances will be required to volunteer within group sessions. Volunteers are expected to be available for a minimum of 2-5 hours per week and mentoring will generally take place at the local probation office.

Each mentor can bring their own skill and experience to a mentoring relationship. SOVA match a mentor and mentee according to their support needs and skill set. Mentors can help offenders with all kinds of issues such as:

- developing new skills – filling out forms, obtaining ID and confidence building
- getting into work – help with CVs and job searching
- training/education – college applications, seeking advice, literacy, numeracy
- attending appointments – medical appointments and court appearances
- finance – budgeting, benefits, setting up bank accounts
- housing – looking at options, making applications

If this is something for you or somebody you know contact Vanessa Butt, Support Officer for Oxfordshire, on 07809 587034 / vbutt@sova.org.uk
Can you help?

Local people wanted to join new study groups aiming to transform Charlbury and Enstone into dementia-friendly communities

When Alison gets up in the morning she isn’t sure who she is or where she is. Roused by a loving voice, guided gently through her breakfast and daily routine, she later goes out for a walk along roads long familiar but hard to place. She is greeted by friendly voices. She is shown across roads and into the local post office. She chats and laughs - especially if the conversation turns a bit unusual. Alongside her are neighbours who understand what she can do for herself and what she needs help with. She is happy. She is living independently and well with her dementia.

Barbara Dunmore, who cares for her husband, invites people in Charlbury to join a new group aiming to transform Charlbury into a dementia-friendly town. The group is going to explore practical ways in which each of us can make a difference. People affected by dementia and the people caring for them can lead a full everyday life in the community with the support of people who understand what the condition means.

In addition, in Enstone, there is a project group which has been promoted by the church and the local WEA coordinator.

Good Neighbour Scheme volunteers interested in learning more about the condition and how they can help are very welcome to join either group. Please get in touch.

This project, led by Oxfordshire Adult Learning and supported by Guideposts Trust, Age UK Oxfordshire and the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, aims to bring together local people of all ages and backgrounds to learn from specialists all about living with memory loss and dementia. During the six free sessions participants will be able to share their experiences and together create a local plan to transform their area into a dementia-friendly community.

Resources are available to enable people living with dementia and their carers to attend.

If you are interested please come to

**Charlbury Information Event**

**Thursday 8 December 10.20 – 12 noon**

Garden Room, Memorial Hall

Refreshments and things to do and see. All ages are welcome and no experience is necessary. There are also volunteering opportunities.

Interested? Call Barbara Dunmore 01608 810002 or project worker, Catharine Arakelian 01865 849768 / catharine@newdementiacare.org.uk

*This project has been funded by the Skills Funding Agency*
More Local Opportunities

There is a new Sobell House charity shop in Carterton. It is based at Unit 10 in the Tower Centre, Alvescot Road, Carterton OX18 3JG. If you are interested in helping in the shop and want to find out about their current need for volunteers please call 01993 844632 and ask to speak to Hannah.

The West Oxfordshire branch of Cats Protection is looking for people to join their Friends of West Oxfordshire fundraising group. Cats protection is the UK’s largest cat welfare charity and they find homes for around 60,000 unwanted and abandoned cats and kittens every year. Friends of West Oxfordshire is a new group of volunteers who meet monthly and help organise events and activities to raise much needed funds for the branch. The events organised range from fun days to coffee mornings to quizzes and anything in-between. It’s a great way to meet new people, have some fun and to help the branch look after and care for more cats and kittens.

Call 08707 708 649 / cp@cats.org.uk / www.cats.org.uk

Adventure Plus
Inspiring the Next Generation

This local Christian charity needs some help with graphic design. Would you be able to offer your skills to design some new leaflets? This will help get children enjoying outside adventure activities.

For details please contact
Andy McCulloch, andy@adventureplus.org.uk / 01993 703 308.
Unit B, Hill Grove Farm, Dry Lane, Witney, Oxfordshire OX29 0NA
Tel: 01993 703308 / www.adventureplus.org.uk

Help!
Where can I go if I’ve got a corn?
Do you need to access foot care in Oxfordshire?
The ‘Standing Firm’ booklet has been created by Oxfordshire LINk to give people advice on every aspect of foot care, helping you to get the right care at the right time.

It contains specific information about where to go to get the services you need.

For a copy of the booklet please contact the LINk:
01865 883488
www.oxfordshirelink.org.uk / link@oxonrcc.org.uk
Benefits of Volunteering

If you see someone who is drowning and throw him a rope, he gets a benefit, no question about it. But you might, too. Your body might flood with feel-good chemicals that have a deep evolutionary heritage. You might get a little extra buffer from life’s stresses. Your heart might beat a little healthier. Your immune system might perk up. Your mood might lift. Do this kind of neighbourly thing on a regular basis and, studies suggest, you may live longer. There’s only one caveat: ‘You have to genuinely care,’ says Stephanie Brown, Ph.D., associate professor of preventive medicine at Stony Brook University in New York. ‘We consistently find that volunteering and helping behaviour is associated with a reduced risk of mortality,’ says Brown. ‘We see this over and over again in prospective studies that control for other variables, such as baseline health and gender.’

To help someone you don’t know you have to overcome the natural impulse to avoid risk. Every time you help a stranger, you are reaching out a little, and that can make you feel vulnerable. The theory is that to overcome those fears, your body releases a hormone called oxytocin, which helps you buffer stress while increasing social trust and tranquility. This ‘compassion hormone,’ it turns out, is very good for your body. ‘You are limiting exposure to stress hormones’ says Brown. ‘That may be one reason why helping behaviour is related to longevity.’ It’s not that taking care of others always puts people in a good mood. It’s more complicated than that. Taking care of a chronically ill child, for example, is terribly taxing on a day-to-day basis, but it can still strengthen the emotional health of the parent. Volunteering helps those who are mildly or moderately depressed. It may not be as therapeutic for those with severe depression. In one study of alcoholics going through the Alcoholics Anonymous programme, those who helped others were nearly twice as likely to stay dry a year later, and their levels of depression were lower, too.

Not all volunteering makes you healthier. Reluctant, bad-faith efforts might even be bad for you; they certainly won’t be beneficial to your health. Just because you’re not sure at first how you feel about volunteering doesn’t mean you won’t get benefits over time. This delayed benefit is especially common for teenagers. When adolescents are forced to volunteer, many of them are disgruntled, but once they start, a light goes on. Says Brown, ‘If a helping situation puts you in close contact with people who you end up caring about, that may have long-term benefits for your physical health. My advice is expose yourself to a genuine need for help, and your body will take over.’

‘Writing a cheque has benefits, too,’ says Brown. In several studies, subjects who use money to benefit others feel happier than those who use it for themselves. ‘Even an online contribution may create well-being,’ says Brown. Give to others, but give to yourself, too. Your health won’t be served if you push yourself past your capacity. The advice to those routinely involved in helping others is to be empathic, but realise that the person’s suffering is not your suffering and accept that you cannot fix everything. Various sources
Current Needs for Individuals
Call us on 01993 776277 if you would like to know more

**A befriender is required for an elderly lady living in Shipton-under-Wychwood. She has very limited speech following a stroke but understands everything. She has a love of literature and would particularly like somebody to read to her.**

**An elderly man living in Stonesfield would like a volunteer to visit once a week for a cup of tea and a chat. This would provide some respite for his wife, who is his main carer. He has mild Alzheimer’s but can hold a conversation and enjoys playing card games and Scrabble.**

**An elderly lady who lives with her husband in Milton-under-Wychwood, has been feeling ‘worthless’ and ‘depressed’ and would benefit from a regular visitor. She has Alzheimer’s and is totally deaf. She enjoys looking through old photographs and reminiscing about her early childhood.**

**A man in his 90s living by himself in Chipping Norton, with no family nearby, is seeking a ‘mature’ befriender to visit every week. He enjoys playing Scrabble.**

**A vulnerable single mother with three children, one of whom lives at home, needs a volunteer to do minor DIY jobs, straightforward painting and help with her garden. She lives in Witney.**

**A woman in her 90s living by herself in Witney would appreciate some company. She is mobile, alert and sociable, but is very deaf and communicates by writing and hand gestures. She is lonely and would also like to go for walks.**

**A woman in Leafield would like a volunteer to paint her living room, kitchen and hallway. She is doing what she can for herself but has three young children and is expecting another child soon. She has all the paint and equipment.**

**A man with physical disabilities living in Eynsham would appreciate some help with his garden. He has a very big lawn with very long grass and hedges that need trimming. He has a mower and electric hedge cutters.**

**A woman in her 80s living by herself in Eynsham would like a volunteer to visit for company and perhaps trips out in the better weather. She is very forgetful and has the beginnings of dementia but converses well. She is intelligent, chatty and was a professional musician.**

**A man in his 40s living in Witney would like a female volunteer to visit him. He uses a wheelchair most of the time due to spinal problems. He also struggles with depression. Any time on Tues/Wed would be preferred.**

**A woman in her 80s living in Kingham requires help with her garden, either regular mowing or a one-off tidying session. She has a daughter who lives locally but who is unable to help due to her own poor physical health.**

**A woman in her 50s living with her daughter in Bampton would very much appreciate a befriender to visit and perhaps go out to garden centres or for a coffee. She has poor sight and is lonely. Her husband died about ten years ago.**

**A woman in her 90s living by herself in Long Hanborough would benefit from a visit. She is quite eccentric and can be challenging. She walks her dog daily.**
**A man in his 90s living in Begbroke would very much appreciate someone to talk too. He cares for his physically disabled wife who also has Alzheimer’s and has very limited communication. He enjoys talking about the past, life in Oxford and World War 2. He would feel more comfortable with an older volunteer.**

**A couple in their 70s living in Eynsham would benefit from a befriender visiting any day except Tuesday. The husband cares for his wife and needs a break and his wife would benefit from some different company. She has dementia but is pleasant and sociable. She enjoys singing along to the radio/CDs.**

**A man of 80 living by himself in Witney would like some company. He is difficult to get to know because he is shy but he is amenable to a volunteer.**

**An elderly couple in Hailey would appreciate a visitor to sit and chat with the husband and so give time for his wife to garden, walk the dog etc. The man is blind and physically disabled, but his speech, hearing and understanding are fine. He enjoys audio books and sitting in the garden.**

**A couple in their 70s living in Witney would benefit from a volunteer to provide respite for the wife who cares for her husband. The husband has had several strokes and his speech is impaired. His wife is finding it difficult to cope. The husband likes showing and talking about photos. A visit on Wednesday afternoons is preferred, but any regular visit would be appreciated.**

**A woman in her early 80s living in Witney would like a female volunteer to accompany her in her wheelchair to the shops in Witney for various items. She is very deaf and has a speech impairment but can converse if a person speaks to her face to face. She is composses, has no family and is very isolated.**

**A woman in her 60s living in Carterton would like a female befriender to visit, perhaps on a reciprocal basis. She would enjoy doing arts and crafts with the volunteer, although this isn’t essential. She can’t walk far or stand for very long.**

**A woman in her 70s in Witney would like a volunteer to visit and perhaps go with her into Witney in her wheelchair. She is quite deaf but can converse. She does smoke. Any day except Wednesday/Thursday.**

**A very elderly man in Filkins would like a volunteer to visit for conversation and perhaps play cards. His wife recently died. He was a farmer and really enjoyed his garden until poor health meant that he had to stop tending it.**

**An elderly man living in a care home in Carterton would benefit from a befriender. He is physically frail and recovering well from a stroke. He is mentally very sharp and needs stimulation, but communication can be difficult.**

**A woman in her 50s living by herself in the centre of Witney would appreciate a volunteer to visit weekly on a weekday and perhaps walk with her to the shops. She has some health issues and has had panic attacks in the past.**

**A man in his 70s living in a care home in Carterton would benefit from a visitor to increase his confidence. He has schizophrenia, which is well controlled. He enjoys sport, especially football and doing puzzles.**

**A man in his 30s living in Carterton would like some help with his garden. He has learning difficulties and lives on his own. He enjoys his garden but would benefit from working alongside a friendly volunteer.**
Witney Lions’ Christmas Float - December 2011

The float leaves the starting point at 6pm and finishes at 8pm. Please see www.witneylions.org.uk for any late changes. If you go to the starting point, please allow time for Santa to get ready!

Santa hands out bags of sweets to the children as well as collects money for welfare activities in the local community.

Thursday 1. Starting at **Witney**, Cogges Hill Road (Junction Stanton Harcourt Road) Visiting: Oxlease, Cogges Hill Road, Manor Road, Stanton Harcourt Road, Hollis Close

Friday 2. Starting at **Witney**, Stenter Lane (Jacobs Mill Estate entrance) Visiting: Stenter Lane, Stenter Rise, Stenter Mews, Meadow Lane, New Mill Mews, Springfield Park, Springfield Oval, Davenport Road, Park Road, Wilkinson Place, Union Way

Saturday 3. Starting at **Eynsham**, Spare Acre Lane (Lower Road end) Visiting: Shakespeare Road, Stratford Drive, Marlborough Place, Green’s Road, Marlborough Close, Hanborough Road

Monday 5. Starting at **Freeland**, Wroslyn Road (Witney Road end) Visiting: Wroslyn Road, Broad Marsh Lane, Church View, The Blowings, Walkers Close, Blenheim Lane

Tuesday 6. Starting at **Witney**, Blakes Avenue (Cogges Hill Road end) Visiting: Blakes Avenue, Elton Close, Larch Lane, Church Lane, Meadow View


Thursday 8. Starting at **Witney**, New Yatt Road (Near to Sycamore Close) Visiting: New Yatt Road, Vanner Road, Chestnut Close

Friday 9. Starting at **Witney**, Early Road (New Yatt Road end) Visiting: Early Road, Tarrant Avenue, Viner Close, Maidley Close, Woodstock Road, The Crescent, Woodlands Road

**Saturday 10. Sainsbury’s Supermarket - 8am to 4pm Static Location**

Monday 12. Starting at **Witney**, Thorney Leys (Curbridge Road end) North to South

Tuesday 13. Starting at **Witney**, Apley Way (Curbridge Road end) Visiting: Cornfield Close, Elm Close, Mirfield Road, Fieldmere Close, Vale Road, Fettiplace Road, Wenman Road, Wychwood Close, Windrush Valley Road, Lancut Road

Wednesday 14. Starting at **Ducklington**, Felden Close (Aston Road end) Visiting: Lovell Close, Peel Close, Standlake Road, Church Street, Back Lane, Witney Road, Pound Close, Curbridge Road, Manor Road, MacRay Road, Park Road, Beanhill Road, Moors Close, Dale Walk
Thursday 15. Starting at **Long Hanborough**, Millwood Vale
Visiting: Hurdeswell, Churchill Way, Marlborough Crescent, Church Road, Millwood End, Ablewood Road

**Thursday 15. Sainsbury’s Supermarket - 8am to 4pm Static Location**
Friday 16. Starting at **Witney**, Ducklington Lane (Bramley Heights end)
Visiting: Ducklington Lane, Walnut Close, French Close, Burwell Drive (to shops), Colwell Drive, Wilmot Close, Gordon Way, Kingfisher Drive, Mallard Drive

**Saturday 17. Waitrose Supermarket - 8am to 4pm Static Location**
Monday 19. Starting at **Witney**, Valance Crescent (Deer Park Road end)
Visiting: Valance Crescent, Broadway Close, Stanway Close, Painswick Close, Campden Close, Tetbury Drive, Snowshill Drive, Edington Road, Chedworth Drive, Stanton Close, Farmington Drive

Tuesday 20. **Witney**, Burwell Meadow (Thorney Leys end)
Visiting: Burwell Meadow, Haden Way, Burwell Drive, Colwell Drive, Wilmot Close, Ducklington Lane, French Close, Walnut Close

**Thursday 22. Marriotts Walk - 9am to 3.30pm Static Location**

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**Postal Scam**

The Trading Standards Office is making people aware of the following scam:

A card is posted through your door from a company called PDS (Parcel Delivery Service) suggesting that they were unable to deliver a parcel and that you need to contact them on 0906 661 1911 (a premium rate number).

Do not call this number as this is a mail scam. If you call the number and you start to hear a recorded message you will already have been billed £315 for the phone call.

If you do receive a card with these details you may be asked to contact Royal Mail Fraud on 020 7239 6655.

**However:** This scam first came to the attention of PhonepayPlus, the UK’s premium telephone services regulator in 2005 when it originated as a chain email scam. PhoneplayPlus shut down the service in December 2005 and it is no longer running.

So, if anybody receives a leaflet or email warning about this alleged scam the regulator asks them not to forward it to others. If you receive a delivery card through your letterbox which you do not believe is genuine and which asks you to dial a premium rate number contact PhonepayPlus on 0800 500 212 Mon-Fri 9-5 for further guidance.
Accidents at Christmas

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents warns that Christmas is a dangerous time of year. A staggering 80,000 people in the UK require hospital treatment for Christmas related accidents every festive season.

If the statistics are anything to go by, it seems your Christmas tree is very dangerous. 1000 people each Christmas require hospital treatment as a result of a tree related incident, whether caused by fairy lights, falls while decorating or it toppling over. The RoSPA advises enthusiastic tree decorators to use step ladders when decorating (presumably only for the taller trees) and to purchase a tree at the right height that you will not personally have to saw down yourself.

But your festive fir isn’t the only danger lurking in your home this Christmas. A further 1,000 injuries requiring hospital treatment occur as a result of other miscellaneous Christmas decor. Some of these are made up by adults falling from lofts while seeking out the decorations. Assuming you do get your decorations out without injuring yourself, there’s further risk too as many of the festive season’s patients include children who have bitten into glass baubles and adults who’ve fallen from wobbly chairs when performing balancing acts while decorating. RoSPA advises that a step ladder should be used and all decorations should be kept out of the way of children. They also advise that the stuffed Santas and other decorations that might look child-friendly often do not have to pass the same rigorous safety tests that actual toys do.

And kiss under the mistletoe, by all means, but the RoSPA warns that the berries of mistletoe are actually poisonous. They contain toxic proteins that can cause hallucinations and slow the heart rate down. The orange berries of the Christmas cherry are mildly toxic and can cause stomach pains and the Christmas rose causes such violent diarrhoea that the ancient Greeks used it as an early chemical weapon!

And while we may be able to raise a seasonal smirk about the more bizarre festive incidents, precautionary measures should always be taken to prevent your Christmas celebrations being interrupted by a trip to the hospital. It’s also worth remembering that dangers that are present in the home all year round can often be potentially more hazardous at Christmas. For example, you’re 50% more likely to be killed in a house fire over Christmas. Tea lights and candles combined with other decorations can be a lethal concoction if precautions are not taken. The RoSPA recommend using appropriate containers for tea lights, to never put candles on or near to the Christmas tree and never to leave an open flame unattended.

The kitchen is also a more dangerous place to be on Christmas Day. With more people around the house (particularly children) and more activity, more caution is required in the kitchen to avoid a trip to A & E!

Perhaps somewhat predictably, a high proportion of accidents over Christmas occur while people are under the influence of alcohol. Experts warn that moderation should be employed (yes, even over Christmas) when it comes to drinking to avoid accidents.

You have been warned!
Volunteer Link Up is a volunteer centre serving the West Oxfordshire district. Our aim is to link people who have some time to spare with those in our community who need some help.

The meaning of volunteering

Volunteering means an involvement, activity or commitment that a person chooses and gives freely.

Volunteers are people who contribute their time, energy and skills to benefit people in their community.

The value of volunteering

Volunteering is not just a means of helping individuals or causes, it is also very rewarding to those taking part and benefits society as a whole.

Value to the individuals or organisations helped: This is achieved by offering your services, skills, time, initiative and creativity in a positive way. Befriending, transporting, fundraising or getting involved with organisations are all examples of the value that volunteering can give.

Value to the volunteer: Volunteers get a lot out of giving their time. Among the benefits are personal satisfaction, learning new skills, meeting new people, work experience, training, achievement and enjoyment.
CONTACT VOLUNTEER LINK UP
YOUR LOCAL VOLUNTEER CENTRE!

www.vlu.org.uk
Tel: 01993 776277

Christmas
2011