

Disability News

Summer 2019



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Knife crime survivor's story

Pictured above are volunteers Izzy, Bonnie and Jo-Anne representing Richmond AID on stage at Richmond Theatre with the Guilty Feminist crew!

We were delighted to be the chosen charity for their show in Richmond, and gained publicity and fundraising from the event.

A Massive Thank You!

We'll be writing more about this in our next e-newsletter.



What's inside

Dear Reader

I'm sure you're as delighted as us to feel more sunshine and long daylight hours!

The transition from one season to another can feel rather like a cha-cha, but hopefully by the time you read this it will be warm more often than not... Let's look back at what's been happening since our last Disability News.



Richmond AID turned 30 last year!

A glorious celebration of our community was enjoyed by around 120 people at York House in November.

In December we had the builders in, changing the shape of the ground floor to create more space.

This photo shows the creation of the wall between meeting rooms one and two, which used to be the benefits team office. Most staff are now based in the back room, which used to be the Council's Accessible Transport Unit (now called the Supported Travel Team, based at the Civic Centre).



Since February, we've been hosting a free 12 week course that trains people to become 'Community Money Mentors', resulting in a nationally accredited qualification. We also hosted training by Richmond Council and AccessAble that gave attendees the skills to evaluate the accessibility of local premises. Did you know that you can download a free app to find out the accessibility features of restaurants, cafes and theatres all across the UK? Check out the website for more details <https://accessible.co.uk/>

So what's coming up? The SPADE gardening project is back until the end of October, the peer network are busy rehearsing for a play and they're

looking forward to teaming up with the BuddyUp crew for some joint ventures as summer approaches.

We are also very happy to say that our Advice Manager Esther is making a phased return to work following extended leave. We welcome Gesine, our new Money Advisor, and say a fond see-you-later to long serving staff member Jo-Anne Atkinson (though not goodbye, as she will be back as both trustee and volunteer)! We also welcome back volunteer Mike Stevens who is assisting job club.

Did you know that we also produce a more frequent e-newsletter? If you'd like to subscribe, please email Clare at info@richmondaid.org.uk



Wishing you a very happy and healthy
summer From all at Richmond AID



Peer network news

The peer network has been busy, busy, busy!

Our members continue to meet weekly for a wide range of regular activity groups, all led by a fantastic team of peer volunteers—('peer' in this context meaning a person who also has a disability).



The weekly schedule has continued to evolve, whilst some groups prove 'evergreen' in popularity (such as art, café and choir). New groups include knit n' natter led by Izzy, and board games with Bonnie. On a Wednesday we also have regular activities based at the Castelnau Centre in Barnes, such as the craft group. We even have a cooking class there, led by local professional chef Romain Wagner!

See table below for some of our current weekly activities. For more details including the time of each activity contact our Peer Network Coordinator Christine Hill on **07927 550774 / 020 8831 6129**, or email c.hill@richmondaid.org.uk

Day	Activity	Where
MONDAY	Walking group *NEW* Knit n' natter Board games and puzzles	All at Richmond AID, Teddington
TUESDAY	Café Musical Theatre	Greenwood Centre Café, Hampton Elleray Hall, Teddington
WEDNESDAY	Job club Choir	Richmond AID, Teddington Elleray Hall, Teddington
THURSDAY	Fishing Art and peer network meeting	Anglers Pub, Teddington Lock Richmond AID

Our volunteering heroes!

Without our terrific team of volunteers, we simply couldn't do the work we do.

Bonnie, Sue, Alex, Charlie, Izzy and Jarnail help run the peer network activities, whilst Patty, Richard, John and Mike support the advice teams.

We have many more volunteers, including our therapists and gardeners, and wish we could showcase everyone! All our volunteers are the valuable lifeblood of Richmond AID.

' The Peer Network activities would not run without the support of this amazing, kind, caring bunch of people '

Christine Hill, Peer Network Coordinator



BONNIE

'I want to give back what has been given to me'

Like many peer volunteers, Bonnie was first an advice client before joining the peer network. Always cheerful and determined, she now runs the board games group and is a huge support to all with her wise wit. Bonnie has osteoarthritis at the base of her spine and gets about on an electric wheelchair. She also has neurological damage after a suspected stroke.

Why do you volunteer?

Because I want to give back what has been given to me. I enjoy it. It is great fun and I have made so many new friends.

Tell us about something memorable that's happened?

This is personal to me, but If I hadn't volunteered I would have missed the life changing opportunity of being given an electric wheelchair by a very kind person who had a spare. I have made so many special friends like me and they accept me for who I am.

What do you enjoy the most?

The laughter! We have all got a similar sense of humour and it just works. I love to hear people laugh and we all have such a variety of different laughs; they just set us all off.



SUE

'I enjoy giving back .. This makes me feel appreciated'

Sparkly Sue has been running the art group at Richmond AID for over a year. As a talented artist, Sue has helped many people develop their painting and drawing skills. She has fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis, anaemia and depression.

Why do you volunteer?

I enjoy giving back, it gets me out and helps me to meet like minded people. It can be a challenge as there are a mix of abilities to cater for, but then again this makes me feel appreciated.

Tell us about something memorable that's happened?

All the events & opportunities we have been given, for example the 30th Birthday bash where I was given the opportunity to speak in public, and the opportunity to display my art work at Orleans House Gallery.

What do you enjoy the most?

Using my skills to help others. Mixing with such different people, not feeling judged, feeling equal.

Peer volunteers



ALEX

'It helps me forget about my vision impairment'

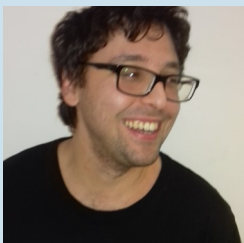
Kind and gentle Alex has supported Richmond AID for many years, particularly on our advice line. He now runs the games and puzzles group with Bonnie. Alex was born with mobility issues and has had impaired vision since 2005.

Why do you volunteer?

I love helping people and I enjoy the social aspect of it. It gives me something to do and helps me to forget about my vision impairment as I've got a purpose.

Tell us about something memorable that's happened?

Everything is memorable I cannot identify one specific thing!



CHARLIE

'It gives me a sense of self worth'

Charlie is a talented guitarist and works in the local area. A creative and empathic member of the peer group, Charlie supports the choir. He has ADHD, mild dyspraxia, OCD and dyscalculia.

Why do you volunteer?

Because it gives me a sense of achieving something on days when I am not working. It gives me a sense of self worth as to opposed to just the pay check at the end of the month.

What do you enjoy the most?

I enjoy EVERYTHING especially meeting new friends.



IZZY

'It keeps my mind occupied'

Izzy is a feisty mum with Italian roots who runs the knit and natter group. She lives with a range of conditions including learning difficulties, anxiety, depression and panic attacks.

Why do you volunteer?

Because I like meeting new people and helping them. It keeps my mind occupied. I wanted to show people I am a good person. I am the famous tea making lady :)

What do you enjoy the most?

We have a good laugh. I have met some lovely people.



JARNAIL

'It gives me an insight into other peoples problems'

Another creative, caring spirit and long standing member of the peer group, Jarnail now helps Sue to run art club. He had a brain haemorrhage shortly after birth and is hemiplegic.

Why do you volunteer?

I enjoy being the art assistant because I love art and enjoy helping people. It's also a place for me to practice my own skills.

Tell us about something memorable that's happened?

We do get to meet some people who experience real difficulties, and it gives me an insight into other peoples problems.

What do you enjoy the most?

I love having the responsibility.

Advice volunteers

PATTY

'I keep coming back as the attitude here is extremely positive and cheerful'

The dry humoured yet warm hearted Patty has supported Richmond AID for many years, and currently visits us on Wednesdays. We've started sharing relevant news that Patty finds under the hashtag #PattyPromotes. Look out for these on our Twitter page! Patty had a stroke in 2007 and since then has been using a wheelchair.

Patty says...

I like keeping busy. I love reading all the client feedback and adding it to the database.

One of my most memorable times was at the 30th birthday party being given an Award Certificate for being stoical. The office is always very lively and my colleagues are extremely helpful and understanding when I forget things.



RICHARD

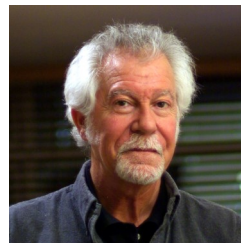
'It is very important for me to be involved in helping disabled people'

Richard may have Parkinson's, but doesn't let that get in the way of learning new things! Former civil servant and volunteer at Citizens Advice, Richard is also a trustee of Richmond AID. He helps the advice team to manage enquiries and scan documents into the database.

Richard says...

I am interested in social welfare issues and wanted to do something positive after my wife died in 2015.

Outside Richmond AID I like doing Tai Chi, and if I had to choose between living by the sea or the mountains, I think I'd choose the sea... though ideally I'd live near both!



JOHN

'Richmond AID demonstrates that someone cares'

Social science graduate, far-east traveller and self proclaimed philosopher John supports the advice team. He worked in communications and publishing, and his very first job was working in homeless hostels in London and Liverpool.

John says...

Small acts of kindness and concern can make a huge difference to individual lives, and this is amply demonstrated by Richmond AID.

In my view, part of our mission is to demonstrate to our clients that someone cares, that someone is willing to help on their behalf.

I volunteer to assist people to claim the social security which I believe is their right—not their 'benefit'. It is also full of people who share my views. Thank you Richmond AID.

MIKE

'All my colleagues and peers have been extremely welcoming and affable'

Enthusiastic and bright, Mike is a student at St Marys University. He is a buddy to a young person on the autistic spectrum, and has also supported job club and the benefits team.

Mike says...

I joined the 'Buddy Up' project and have been given the opportunity to go on a variety of expeditions and days out with my 'buddy'.

Highlights include the Natural History Museum and a boat trip to Hampton Court, whilst working in the office has given me an astounding insight into the welfare benefits system.

Truth is stranger than fiction

Back in May 2016, four innocent members of the public were attacked by knife outside Sainsbury's supermarket in Hampton. One of the victims was a volunteer at Richmond AID.

The attacker, a man aged 66 who lived locally was charged with two counts of wounding with intent to cause GBH and two counts of attempted murder.

Janet Morsy had been covering reception at lunchtimes since 2014. Janet wasn't due into Richmond AID on the day of the attack, and had only been at Sainsbury's to park her car before getting a bus to Hounslow.

Janet was getting out of her car when she heard a voice say "There's a man with a knife". She turned around to see him, but it was too late to get away. The man grabbed Janet and stabbed her in the arm and chest. Fortunately, the manager of the local YMCA heard Janet's screams. She rushed over to investigate, and quickly returned with something to stem the bleeding. Following the attack, the BBC reported that Janet thought she was going to die. Paramedics praised Ms Cadle's response and say this saved her life.

Janet was taken to St George's hospital. She looked at one of the nurses and thought "I recognise that man, I was watching you on TV last night!" He gave her a wry smile and on reflection says he must have been thinking "Yes, and now you're being filmed!"

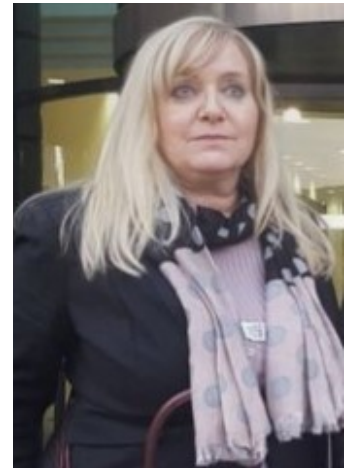
Just one day after she'd been watching the popular reality TV series '24 hours in A&E', Janet herself was being filmed for the 100th episode.

Oblivious at the time, Janet later found a slip of paper in her handbag explaining that the camera had been rolling, capturing her traumatic experience.

"Am I going to die?" she recalls asking the hospital team. "Not on our watch!" Was their cheery response. "Oh ok!" said Janet, not letting

Janet had a punctured lung and lost one litre of blood.

Pictured outside court on the day of the conviction (from BBC website).



the experience dampen her humour.

Despite her positive outlook, Janet doesn't downplay the impact the event had on her emotional health. "It has been a very difficult time." Janet recalls that only two weeks later, Jo Cox the Labour politician was murdered outside her home in Leeds.

Janet was first put in touch with Richmond AID through the job centre, and the benefits team helped her to claim Disability Living Allowance. She now claims Personal Independence Payment and her state pension. Since an incident in 2008 that Janet describes as a funny turn, Janet has struggled with balance. Medics are baffled and have not yet managed to diagnose exactly what she is suffering from.

Following her recovery, Janet returned to volunteer at Richmond AID but left last year for health reasons. Recently she contacted us to say that she's feeling better and would like to get involved at Richmond AID again.

Janet has a great zest for life and loves to keep body and mind active as much as possible. We are looking forward to seeing her at the DAAC again soon, joining in with one of our many activity groups.

Richmond AID services

ADVICE SERVICE

Advice, information and guidance for disabled people, carers and professionals on subjects including housing, benefits, aids and adaptations, support services and more.

BENEFITS SERVICE

Expert help and support from a team of Benefits Advisors with form-filling and advice on all aspects of benefit claims, appeals and general queries.

VOLUNTEERING

We have lots of volunteering opportunities, from advice, administration, editing and media to gardening and access work. Excellent training and support in a warm and friendly environment.

COUNSELLING

Therapeutic counselling delivered by experienced professionals. Cost operates on a sliding scale, depending on what you can afford.

SPADE GARDENING

SPADE provides a gardening service to disabled and older people in Richmond Borough. This popular project is staffed by a team of committed volunteers.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Helping disabled people into work, training or education. We provide a weekly job club in a calm and supportive environment.

MONEY ADVICE

Support with money and debt issues including payment plans and negotiating with creditors and applying for grants.

PEER NETWORK

We operate a range of hobby and interest groups, including art and a choir. Groups are lead by volunteers who have lived experience of disability.

BUDDY UP

Matches young people with a disability aged 14 to 17 with a buddy to go to fun social events.

If you would like to know more about Richmond AID's services please contact our Advice Team on **020 8831 6070 or email advice@richmondaid.org.uk**

Other Formats: Disability News is available in a larger format or on tape. Please contact the Advice Service on **020 8831 6070** or text **07894 215 835**.

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