



The Bulletin

November 2010 Issue

THE NEWSLETTER FOR ARTHRITIS CARE SOUTH ENGLAND

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Many members and volunteers across the south have been asking when the Bulletin is coming back, so here it is. It's in a new format to keep the costs down, and I would like to thank the Amesbury branch for generously providing the funding to pay for the print costs. Hopefully you will find plenty of information on what is going on in the South England region.

The most important thing for Arthritis Care now is sustainability to ensure that we have enough income to deliver our services. This has to involve everyone, and we can all play a part, whether it's applying for a local grant, working closer with health professionals, getting involved in next year's Amble for Arthritis or even just organising a coffee morning for friends and raising a few pounds from a raffle.

As you may know, we have recently restructured, and as we look to the end of 2010 I am confident that the decisions made, although difficult at the time, are now helping us to work closer together for the benefit of all people with arthritis. We will need your help, so if you have an interesting story to tell or information that can help others, please send in your news and pictures to Suzanne, our new fundraising manager for the south (details on back page).

Pippa English-Penfold, Director of Operations, South England

South England going from strength to strength

Reaching out across Cornwall

In September an event which brought together all health linked charities and organisations in Cornwall was held in Truro. Co-ordinated by Arthritis Care and the Truro Library outreach worker through the libraries project, the exhibition was aimed at increasing awareness on what is available in the county for anyone living with a health condition or impairment. It also gave residents the opportunity to discuss and influence health policy by talking to local authority representatives, Members of Parliament, health professionals, commissioners and the media.

Writing Competition winner from Cornwall



Arthritis Care ran a competition earlier in the year, asking people to write 'A letter to my pain', and we were delighted to learn that one of our very own volunteers in the South England region, Marusia Forshaw (left), won first prize. Marusia lives in Launceston, Cornwall, and is an Arthritis Care training volunteer, delivering Challenging Pain

workshops across the county. Competition judge and author Alice Peterson, who has Rheumatoid arthritis herself, described the winning entry as: 'Absolutely beautiful . . . For me this entry was outstanding.' Marusia's prize was a £500 open university voucher which she is sure to put to good use!

Bristol contract hits target in 2010

We were contracted to deliver self-management and pain management courses for NHS Bristol and NHS South Gloucestershire over three years. There were certain targets that we had to meet, and this we have done, so congratulations are due to everyone involved who made this happen. The three-year project consisted of 36 workshops with attendance of 360 participants. As at June this year, 27 courses had been delivered with 264 people attending. 82% of the participants had found the course useful, with comments including: 'The course helped me to come to terms with my illness, and I feel more confident now, knowing that I am not on my own'.

Libraries Project – a success story

Where do most of us go when we want information locally? It has to be the local library, and that is why since 2008 we have been providing drop-in sessions at more than 100 libraries across the south of England, where people have been able to take home a selection of Arthritis Care booklets. What started as a very successful project in London headed up by Sasha Barnes, is now being developed in the south west and south east coastal areas. By providing this service anyone can now get information about arthritis, and find out where to go for further support.

We are always looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help with this vital service, so if you enjoy meeting people and have access to your own transport please contact your local area development manager who will be delighted to tell you more about this vital role.

Branch News



Members of the Amesbury branch enjoying the sea air in Blackpool

Lighting up Blackpool

The Amesbury branch headed up north for its annual break this year, hitting the bright lights of Blackpool! Organised by Chris Knight, South West Region Committee representative on the Arthritis Care board of trustees (when she is not knee-deep in branch paperwork), these breaks are usually the only opportunity for many members to get away. Their favourite coach driver whizzed them all over the north west, including Lake Windermere, and Southport for a spot of shopping.

Christmas Cards



We have some lovely packs of Christmas cards available for branches to use for fundraising purposes. Just contact the South England office and let us know how many packs you would like. Sell them to branch members, friends and family, and all profits go to branch funds.

Bath members keeping busy

There is good news from the recently formed Bath branch which is growing in leaps and bounds. Under the chairmanship of Tracey McFall, the branch meets on a Saturday morning once a month, and activities have included pilates, homeopathy and table-top sales. Members have also been encouraged to join other groups which have included cookery classes with a healthy eating programme. Tracey had juvenile rheumatoid arthritis from the age of 18 months, and although she no longer has arthritis she has undergone multiple joint replacements as a result of having had the condition more than 40 years ago. And, because of what she has undergone she is able to empathise and give support to branch members who may be facing the same thing now.

The branch has a full programme of events planned for next year, including lots of fundraising activity. At present the branch has Arthritis Care collection tins at a number of

regular raffles. From the money raised, a proportion is sent to the South England office to fund workshops and training days across the region.



Up, up and away

Members of the Plym Arthritis Care self-help group took a well-earned break in Bournemouth recently, staying at the Suncliff Hotel. Plans are already underway for 2011!

New Regional Manual

A new Arthritis Care manual has been under discussion for a number of years and during 2010 we have worked hard to develop one. For branches there will be two handbooks, the Arthritis Care Branch Handbook and the Treasurer's Handbook, and a separate book for national and regional committee members.

Branches will receive their copy with a covering letter by the end of January, and this should be discussed between members. During the first quarter of 2011 we will be holding information days which everyone will be invited to attend to give feedback.



The Arthritis Care Young People's Project is very grateful to the Wells Branch for its generous donation of £2,000. The money is essential to ensure that young people with arthritis and their families receive the support we offer in so many different ways. This includes workshops, family days, raising awareness in schools, online forums and training young volunteers themselves.

The Great Wall(k)

By Elaine Curno

Well, as they say, it pays to be patient and so, after a long struggle with my health and a desire to achieve my greatest goal, I have finally done it – walked the Great Wall of China!

I can remember vividly the day I was in hospital 11 years ago when the consultant sat beside me to explain that I had ME/Fibromyalgia and that I might experience these symptoms for the rest of my life. I was devastated as I had been so active and now was barely able to move and feeling total exhaustion everyday. This wasn't how I had planned my life, but nothing was going to stop my dreams.

So, I set myself a goal which would break all boundaries for a person with ME. I wanted to do something really challenging when I felt ready. However I was then diagnosed with osteoarthritis which affected my hips and knees . . .

I had to leave my lovely job and I started to do voluntary work as a tutor for a self-management course. While checking my work emails one day there was one that struck a chord, asking if anyone was interested in trekking the Great Wall of China in September 2010. This was it – my challenge, the goal I had been looking for all these years. I just had to sign up!

I exercised religiously, counting down the weeks until 11 September, and the day finally arrived for me to catch a coach from Plymouth to Heathrow where I was to meet up with the 15 other people on the same challenge. After an 11 hour flight we reached Beijing and our challenge started . . .

Day one saw us at Badaling Wall in 35° heat with an immediate ascent up hundreds of steps. Within the first 20 minutes, sweat was pouring from every part of me, I was feeling sick and hardly able to catch my breath. I then fell down a steep bank which shook my whole body to the core, before having to face the steepest incline I had ever had to negotiate. Nobody in their right minds would choose to attempt it, but there



Elaine, posing in her Arthritis Care t-shirt at the start of the Heavenly Steps on the Great Wall of China, raised a magnificent amount of money for us by undertaking this incredible personal challenge in September

we were slipping and sliding our way to the bottom.

The next day was just as hot and just as tough but I got through it, completing 13km in six and a half hours. We visited Black Dragon Pool, a spectacular area of outstanding natural beauty, and it was like a jungle expedition fighting our way through the dense undergrowth. Day three was an even harder day but at least it was cloudy and cooler.

It rained on days four and five which made the wall very slippery. We climbed our highest tower at 610m and the views were spectacular. We managed to cover a staggering 19km, which was a massive achievement. On the final day we faced a steep ascent to the Heavenly Steps, and this turned out to be a very emotional climb for me. The realisation that after almost 11 years of pacing myself, working on a small exercise routine, eating healthily and facing endless knockbacks, I was about to achieve my greatest goal.

I feel immense pride that I was part of this challenge. I know I will have to live the rest of my life with long-term health conditions, but I learned so much about myself on the journey and hope that on reading this, other people might be able to set themselves a small achievable goal and have the same sense of satisfaction when they reach it.

Fundraising News

What a view!



Graeme Draper, pictured above attached to his instructor, who was diagnosed with arthritis at the age of seven, has recently raised a huge £950 for the Young People's Project by very bravely undertaking a sky dive. Well done and thank you so much Graeme.

Waitrose

shoppers show their support

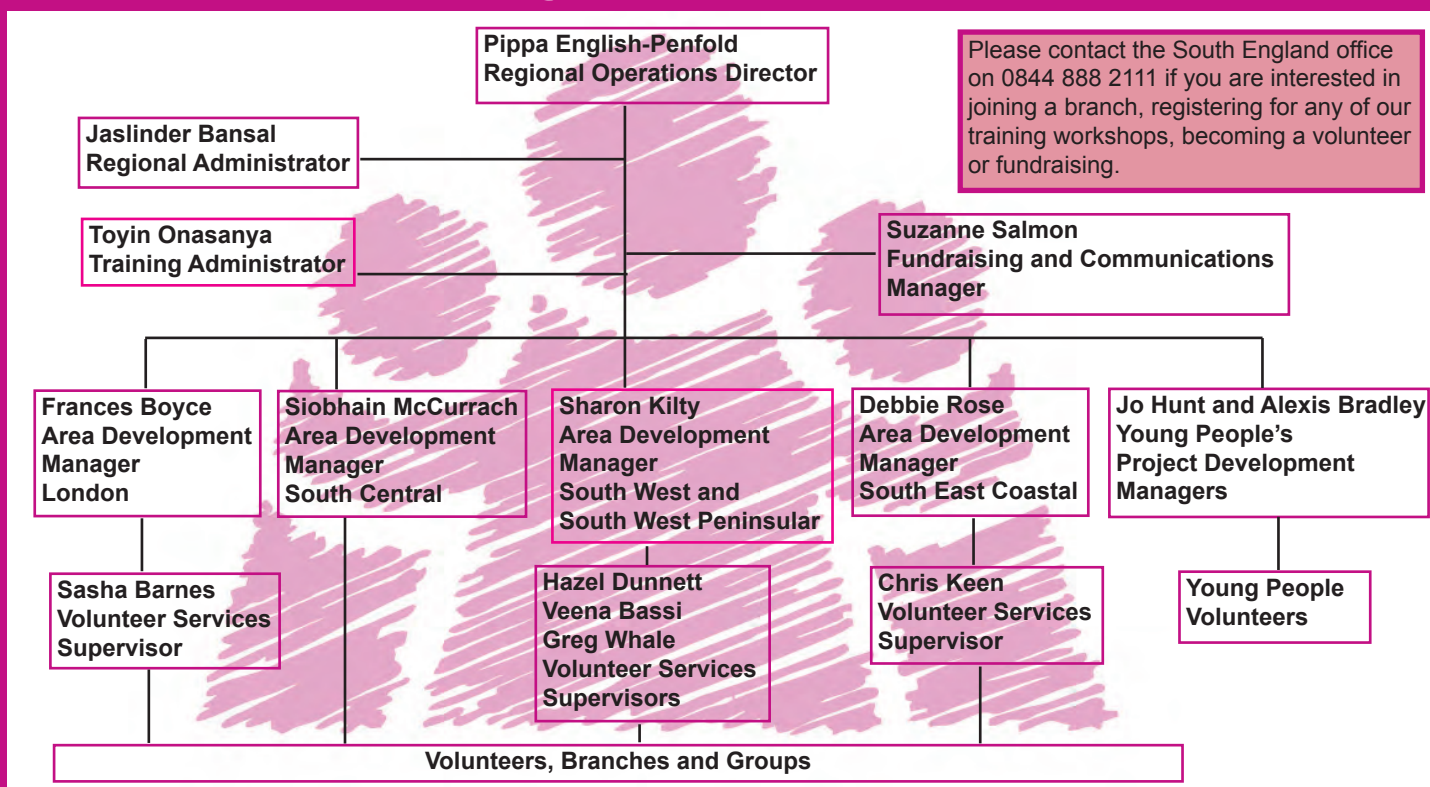
We have received donations of more than £5,000 through a Waitrose scheme in which, every month, shoppers vote for their favourite local cause. Most recently, Waitrose Kensington High Street branch has presented us with a cheque for £399! Most of the supermarkets have similar schemes or have a charity of the year, so don't forget to vote for Arthritis Care next time your local shop is looking for nominations.

Shaken not stirred



Students of Taunton School held a James Bond themed evening to raise funds for Young People's Services in South England. A big thank you to Ben Grieve who chose us as the beneficiary for all the monies raised.

South England Staff Structure



Fundraising for improved services across the region



Welcome to the latest edition of the South England Region Bulletin. We are aiming to publish this four times a year, in order to keep everyone informed about the wide range of activities we undertake.

We are currently involved in a number of exciting projects across the South of England, and are applying for funding for several more. These will enable us to reach a wider cross-section of people to help them deal with their arthritis. This funding also pays for core services such as our Helpline team which deals with 12,000 queries, emotional and practical, each year, and is a life-line for many callers.

Our fantastic team of volunteer trainers have been delivering courses and workshops across the country, from London and Kent to Cornwall. We've been out and about in libraries and hospitals providing information on our services to out-patients, many newly diagnosed with arthritis. We've been talking to health professionals, from nurses and GPs to chairmen of PCTs, informing them on what Arthritis Care can do. And we are constantly campaigning to make arthritis a health priority across the UK – for example we marked World Arthritis Day on 12 October by asking employers across the South to sign our Employers' Pledge of commitment to employees with arthritis.

We rely on the generosity of our supporters to maintain and develop our services, and it is because of the funding we receive that we are able to help and support the large number of people with arthritis that we do. Every penny is essential, and thoughtfully used.

We are grateful for the donations we receive from charitable trusts, companies, the Big Lottery Fund, local authorities, our members, community groups and the general public. We are also thankful to our 60 branches in the south, many of which have, over recent months, sent large donations to the regional office.

We've all heard about sponsored walks and swims, and even more adventurous activities like mountaineering or walking the Great Wall of China (read about Elaine Curno's trip on the previous page), but fundraising isn't limited to these activities. There are hundreds of ways to raise money, and we are here to support you in any way that you'd like.

It's not long until Christmas, so what about holding a Christmas coffee morning in a local hall where you could serve mince pies, have some stalls and maybe raffle a festive hamper? Or why not organise a quiz evening? Another simple idea is inviting some friends round for dinner and asking for a donation to Arthritis Care. If you are good at knitting, you could make some scarves and sell them. And don't forget, of course, our Ambles for Arthritis next May – organise one yourselves or join in one of the lovely walks we are currently planning across the south.



Fundraising dinner parties are a popular new idea

If you need any help with fundraising please contact me, and I would be delighted to help in any way that I can.

Suzanne Salmon
Fundraising and Communications Manager
Email: SuzanneS@arthritiscare.org.uk Tel. 01424 236326