



Summer
2023

FRIENDS FOR LIFE NEWSLETTER

Welcome

Dear Beautiful Volunteers

I am blown away by how great you all are in your role and how much you as a volunteer team are enabling us to make a difference for some of the loneliest people in Bedford, helping us to increase the impact of Friends for Life.

Residents in care homes can be hidden away, unseen by the community "rather like inmates in jails", as someone said the other day, (no criticism of the homes!). It can be convenient for them to be forgotten.

Thank you for remembering them, connecting with them and bringing a richness into their lives.

I have been a qualified nurse for 35 years and the compassion I see today at Friends for Life from you, is second to none!

We cannot pay you, but I will buy you an ice cream or coffee when we meet in Bedford Park on Friday 28th!!

See you there. Be ready to embrace and welcome new members of the team!

Pauline xxx

Pauline Carter, Volunteer Lead

Thank you to our volunteers

As part of Volunteer Week, we hosted volunteers for coffee and cake to say thank you for all that you do, we wouldn't exist without you! We also put on a dementia tour, using the Dementia Bus for 20 interested volunteers, staff and trustees. Feedback included:

"thank you for a really insightful day...The dementia bus stayed with me all weekend. It was very thought-provoking."

"didn't enjoy the dementia bus experience, but it was very thought provoking and made me realise how difficult it is to communicate effectively with our residents."

"I wish I had done this sooner."



Activities to do with your resident

Did you know Friends for Life have a resource library, where you can borrow equipment and books to help with your visits? We have a selection including, books, craft and arts materials and games. If you would like to come into the office and borrow any of these, please arrange this with [Alison](#).

We know that it can be difficult sometimes to engage with our residents, because of the many challenges they face. We are planning on adding a new volunteer section to our website soon, which will include ideas and activities, as well as information on some of the most common conditions. We will let you know as soon as it is up and running!



Simon's Bike Ride



We are grateful to Simon Henry who used his volunteering days at East West Railway Company to cycle 140 miles to fundraise and raise awareness for Friends for Life on 21st June.

If you know anyone who might wish to use their volunteering days with Friends for Life, either for a sponsored event or one-off project, please ask them to get in touch via hello@friendsforlife.org.uk.

Our Impact



Thank you to everyone who completed the recent online survey. We received feedback from volunteers, care homes, trustees and FFL staff. We will share a summary report with you shortly, including ways in which we can improve our service. Key findings were:

- Over 90% would recommend volunteering for FFL to others.
- Volunteers are happy with the level of support provided and have given some useful suggestions about how to continue to improve this, which will be developed by the team.
- All of the care home managers who responded said the 121-befriending organised by FFL has a positive impact on the residents involved.

Among the comments made by care home staff was:

"The volunteers are wonderful and should be praised for giving up their time to help and support others".

FFL Volunteer Buddy Scheme

One of our lovely volunteers (Sara) has been in contact to suggest a scheme that would match volunteers to cover each other's holidays and other periods of absence. Please see below for her idea:

"Whilst planning a longer than usual holiday this coming autumn, I realised that my committment to visit my "friend for life" in Kimbolton Lodge was going to be considerably interrupted.

I asked Pauline if there was any kind of 'Buddy Scheme' in FFL that could be tapped into, to ensure that visits to our friends are not left to the whims of our holiday / social arrangements!

I found out that although there isn't such a scheme at the moment.....there could be - if us volunteers were interested in working something out!

So, this is just an opening suggestion to see what other volunteers think...and whether anyone else has any ideas.

Initial thoughts are that a 'Buddy Scheme' could be fairly informal - perhaps getting together with another volunteer you know well, or one who visits someone in the same residential home etc and that we just arrange, between ourselves, to introduce each other to our friend, when we know we will be missing some visits due to holidays, sickness etc."

This is not something that all volunteers would want to do and some volunteers won't be in a position to take on any additional visiting, even in the short term, but if you would be interested in joining a scheme like this, please let [Pauline](#) know.

JOIN US FOR COFFEE

We hold regular coffee meet ups around Bedford and would love to see you at the next one.

10.30am, Friday 28th July 2023

The Pavilion, Bedford Park



Goodbye and good luck to Alice

We are very sad to be saying goodbye to our Outreach Worker Alice, who is moving on to a full-time role. We wish her lots of luck for the future.

We will continue working on our Outreach Service and would welcome any volunteers who would like to take part. Please contact [Jane](#) for further information.



And finally ...

Dementia is one of the most difficult conditions our residents face, we thought we would share this poem with you.

If I get dementia

If I get dementia, I want my friends and family to embrace my reality. If I think my spouse is still alive, or if I think we're visiting my parents for dinner, let me believe those things. I'll be much happier for it.

If I get dementia, don't argue with me about what is true for me versus what is true for you.

If I get dementia, and I am not sure who you are, do not take it personally. My timeline is confusing to me.

If I get dementia, and I can no longer use utensils, do not start feeding me. Instead, switch me to a finger-food diet, and see if I can still feed myself.

If I get dementia, and I am sad or anxious, hold my hand and listen. Do not tell me that my feelings are unfounded.

If I get dementia, I don't want to be treated like a child. Talk to me like the adult that I am.

If I get dementia, I still want to enjoy the things that I've always enjoyed. Help me find a way to exercise, read, and visit with friends.

If I get dementia, ask me to tell you a story from my past.

If I get dementia, and I become agitated, take the time to figure out what is bothering me.

If I get dementia, treat me the way that you would want to be treated.

If I get dementia, make sure that there are plenty of snacks for me in the house. Even now if I don't eat I get angry, and if I have dementia, I may have trouble explaining what I need.

If I get dementia, don't talk about me as if I'm not in the room.

If I get dementia, don't feel guilty if you cannot care for me 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It's not your fault, and you've done your best. Find someone who can help you, or choose a great new place for me to live.

If I get dementia, and I live in a dementia care community, please visit me often.

If I get dementia, don't act frustrated if I mix up names, events, or places. Take a deep breath. It's not my fault.

If I get dementia, make sure I always have my favorite music playing within earshot.

If I get dementia, and I like to pick up items and carry them around, help me return those items to their original places.

If I get dementia, don't exclude me from parties and family gatherings.

If I get dementia, know that I still like receiving hugs or handshakes.

If I get dementia, remember that I am still the person you know and love.

Rachael Wonderlin - rachaelwonderlin.com