



Press Release from Community Christmas

January 8, 2014

So how was your Christmas?

- “Christmas Day used to be such a sad, miserable time for me. Now, I could smile all day and enjoy other people’s company”.
- “There were quite a few moments for us this year - we heard so many stories of people facing Christmas Day alone as their partners had passed away, family lived far away or not having family. Quite a few tears were shed on the day and one lady even said that she was quite overwhelmed as no one had ever given her something for nothing!”

As the decorations are packed away for another year Community Christmas has taken a moment to reflect on the success of its campaign to reduce the number of elderly people that were alone this Christmas. The organisation's website listed over 200 locations that were able to accommodate those seeking companionship.

Caroline Billington, founder of Community Christmas paid tribute to the network of volunteers across the country who organised these events and put the sparkle into Christmas for a significant number of elderly people.

Final statistics are still being compiled from across the country but the organisation knows that it was able to point guests and volunteers in the right direction, and it received a lot of support from Volunteer Centres, along with individual enquiries from relatives who were not going to be around.

"Whilst many of us will now put Christmas out of our mind the Community Christmas team is already planning how to make more steps towards its mission of ensuring that no elderly person in the UK is alone on Christmas Day unless they want to be. We are keen to hear from both individuals or any organisation, either local or national that might be interested in working with us by providing practical support or

helping with fundraising. We are currently evaluating developing a befriending scheme and also considering the use of commercial venues for future events."

If you are interested in getting involved in any way please visit the website www.communitychristmas.org.uk or call 0844 854 9251.

Caroline's own Community Christmas experience

Community Christmas itself held a lunch on Christmas Day for the elderly in the Thatcham & Newbury area that would otherwise have been alone. Lunch was served at the Christadelphian hall to 15 guests with the support of volunteers who had driven them to the hall, a team in the kitchen, and others serving tea, coffee, companionship and entertainment. Meals were taken by volunteers to eight others who were unable to get to the hall – their 'pack' also contained all the trimmings including kindly donated crackers and goody bags. The guests all enjoyed a game of Bingo and tried to learn some of the ball nicknames before Mike and Mandy Cole, the Mayor and Mayoress of Thatcham dropped in to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and read out the answers to the first quiz round. After the Queen's speech volunteers returned guests to their homes while the hall was returned to its normal state in record time.

The day was a heart warming event enjoyed by guests and volunteers alike with new friends being made and old friends being reunited. Caroline Billington, organiser of the event, said 'This is what it is all about for me. Friendships may start or be rekindled on Christmas Day but they last all year and that can only be good for our communities.'

For more information on Community Christmas, its aims and activities visit www.communitychristmas.org.uk or telephone 0844 854 9251.

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