

Mark's theatrical road to recovery



'Mark has always been dramatic,' says his mum, Jane. 'He's got a dressing-up box bigger than his wardrobe, full of hats, costumes and masks!'

Mark's theatrical nature has been key to his recovery after a bout of illness - along with the dedication of his support team at Larchfield Community.

Illness had left Mark feeling low. Knowing his love of theatre, the Larchfield Community support team suggested that joining Backstreet Theatre group in nearby Grangetown might lift his mood. On his first visit, Mark was reluctant to get

out of the car. 'At that time he didn't want to engage with anything,' says Jane.

Building confidence gradually

Mark began by making short visits to look around the theatre. Over the next year, Larchfield Community support workers accompanied him every week, at first staying with him for the entire session and gradually withdrawing as he started to feel at home. 'He loves it now. And he's quite happy if we drop him off in the morning and pick him up later,' says Debbie, one of Mark's support workers.

The Larchfield team and Mark's family were there to cheer him on at Backstreet's recent rock and roll performance. 'He was centre stage, encouraging the audience to sing along,' says Jane.

'I can see a huge difference in Mark now. His confidence has built up so much,' says Jane. 'Going to the theatre group has really speeded up his recovery, and I'm so grateful to everyone at Larchfield Community who helped him get there.'



Mark (centre) is using theatre to help overcome his illness.

Shaken, not stirred!



Owen and his friends at Croft Community have been learning to mix the perfect cocktail. With the help of professional mixologist Ricky, the housemates recently enjoyed an afternoon creating delicious alcohol-free concoctions.

Alcohol-free tastes just as good!

Ricky showed the housemates how to create stylish cocktails that taste sensational without the need for strong spirits or liqueurs. 'There are lots of ingredients you can use,' says Owen. 'We used berries, caramel, lemons and limes and even sweets!'

With Ricky's help, the housemates learned the tricks of the cocktail trade. 'We used cocktail shakers - you have to turn them upside down as well as shake them,' explains Owen. The right glass is important too - some drinks were served in martini glasses, others in jam jars. The Passion Fruit Cosmo and the Caramel Chaos were the two most popular drinks. 'They tasted really wonderful, especially the Caramel Chaos,' says Owen. 'I'd definitely like to try that one again!'

Owen and friends enjoyed their session gathered round the dining table and learning something new. 'It was fun to do something different,' says Owen. 'I think we'd all like to do it again.'

Creative corner

In this edition, we celebrate the talented team behind the 'Community Chronicle', a newsletter written by and for members of our Gloucester communities - Grange Village, Oaklands Park, Taurus Crafts and the independent living service, Lydney Community Support.

Just like family

'For a lot of us, Camphill Village Trust is like an extended family,' says Brian. 'And the newsletter keeps us in touch with each other.'

Brian is enjoying his role as one of the roving reporters for the Community Chronicle. He recently interviewed Amanda, who runs the Hospitality School at Taurus Crafts. 'I planned the questions first, then after the interview I wrote it all up and gave it to Karen for typing,' he says. 'I'm not great at IT, so we're lucky that Karen helps with that side.'



Open to all abilities

Karen supports people to produce something interesting for themselves. 'I help some people to plan their interviews,' she says. 'For others it's just a little typing and editing.'

And as the quarterly newsletter gains readers, more people are keen to join the team. 'Just today someone new asked me if they could write an article about their holiday,' says Karen. 'People are showing an interest and getting involved.'

A dozen eggs? We've got thousands!

The hens have been busy at Grange Village Social Farm. At the last count, Farm Manager Kate calculated the flock has laid 14,000 eggs since they arrived in November 2018.

The hens have an outdoor life overlooking the River Severn, and their eggs are delicious. 'We deliver them to all the houses at Grange Village and Oaklands Park,' says Kate. 'And staff buy them to take home too.'

Happy hens and happy customers

'It makes people really happy when we bring the eggs,' says Cherry. 'They smile and say 'wow, brilliant!''

Cherry even gave some fresh eggs to her mum for Christmas. 'We had boiled eggs for breakfast on Christmas morning. They tasted beautiful!'



But eggs aren't the only benefit. 'There's a routine in farm work, so people we support can take ownership and responsibility,' explains Kate.

Cherry has been helping at the social farm one day a week, but she's keen to get more involved. 'I'm going to ask about doing more days at the farm,' she says. 'I like looking after all the different animals, and I've learned to do all sorts of things.'



Football Fanatics United!

Since they moved in with Shared Lives Carers Jim and Lin, Paul and Mark have been watching their favourite teams every week.

Football shirts and scarves at the ready every Saturday!

'We've got season tickets for both Wolves and West Bromwich Albion - or the Baggies,' explains Lin. 'Paul is a Baggies fan and the rest of us are Wolves. So Jim takes Paul to their home games and I go to Wolves away matches with Mark.'

Paul had always enjoyed attending football matches, but it was a new experience for Mark. 'The first time we took Mark, he thought we were going to a pub to watch the match. When we walked out of the stadium to the side of the pitch, his face was so excited!' says Lin.

Now Mark and Lin travel all over the country with a group of friends to watch Wolves play away. 'There's a group of about 11 of us who go together,' says Lin. 'We even went to Turin in summer.'



Paul and Mark both have limited communication, but their love of football is plain to see. 'Mark loves sitting in the middle of the crowd, listening to all the banter. He laughs his head off,' says Lin. 'And every week at the Baggies, Paul says 'I love it here!''

Whole life learning

Learning doesn't just happen in a classroom. Botton Village community members are bridging the gap between formal qualifications and life skills.

Botton Village has formed a partnership with Prior Pursglove College in Guisborough, offering college accreditation for the skills and experience which people gain through different aspects of community life.

Skills for independent living

'It's about things like doing your own cooking, washing and gardening,' says Max, who took part in the accredited learning. He was one of a group who met regularly to gather evidence of the skills gained through everyday life. 'We had to make notes about what we had been doing. Debbie and Cheryl helped me write them up.'

And skills for employment

'I work on the farm too, and I talked about how you need to wash your hands before and after working with the animals,' says Max.

'This aspect focused on what people learn at our workshops,' says Debbie, who coordinated the scheme. 'It's helped people who couldn't attend a traditional college course to get recognition for the skills they've gained.'

Our team of 20 learners recently attended an evening awards ceremony at Prior Pursglove College. 'I was really excited, because I had never been before,' says Max. 'We all sat in the audience until our names were called out, then we went up and got a certificate. The lady who gave me my certificate said I had done very well.'

Now Debbie is hoping to roll out the scheme in other communities. 'It's great that we can offer a more formal award - especially if people are hoping to move on to paid employment or independent living.'



We did it - with your help!

You may remember that over recent years we have asked you to support our appeal to refurbish our St Albans Art Studio.

For the last six months, we have been providing arts and crafts activities from a temporary base at Michaelmas Hall while the builders were at work in the Art Studio. But now the extension, the new staircase and the interior work is completed.

'We are just moving back in and unpacking all the equipment and materials that have been in storage,' says Alex. 'The new space is a lot bigger and brighter.'



There's more space for pottery and an IT area too. Luke, who has recently started attending the Art Studio, is enjoying using the iMac computers. 'I'm helping with scanning all the artwork,' he says. 'It's an important job.'

'Creating a digital record of all our work will help us with future displays and animation projects,' explains Gaspar, the Studio Manager. 'We've got so many exciting plans for this new space - and now more people can join us too.'

Thank you to all our supporters who have helped to create the new facilities at St Albans Art Studio!

Proud to represent Camphill Village Trust

Ian and Simon are always keen to tackle new challenges at Botton Village. So when they were invited to take part in Learning Disability England's annual conference, they jumped at the chance! They made the long journey from the North York Moors to Manchester, to run our information stand and provide a 'meet and greet' role for people arriving at the conference.

'It was very busy,' says Ian. 'I was showing people what we make with Lego in our workshop. Lots of people were keen to have a go themselves. And Simon was telling people about CVT Connect. It was a good idea to have different things for people to do.'

Keeping up to date - and sharing what we know

'There must have been over 200 people there,' says Simon. 'Some who worked in local authorities and housing, and disability charities. People were talking about government funding, and there were workshops about things like relationships and mindfulness.'

Simon and Ian both believe - and we agree - that people with learning disabilities should be actively involved in conferences about them. 'It's good to find out what progress is being made to help people with disability to get jobs or housing,' says Simon.

What's more, it's a chance to share our own experience: 'Ian and I were telling people all about Camphill Village Trust,' continues Simon. 'And how our communities help people with disabilities to have the life they want.'



Well done Simon and Ian - we couldn't have asked for better representatives!