

## CHAIR'S REPORT AGM MAY 30<sup>TH</sup> 2023

A favourite u3a mantra of mine is 'by the members, for the members.' This is because we know the more of us who help with things, the better our u3a will function and grow. I, therefore, make no apologies in this report for asking for your greater involvement.

My overall theme is to tell you that Northampton u3a is in a healthy position, poised to move deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by building on the good work already taking place. You have heard already about our healthy financial status. Membership-wise, there are now around 1000 members and 113 interest groups so we are still growing and exceeding the National u3a target of one group per 10 members. However, there is no room for complacency; groups come and go and we need to keep the impetus going towards a greater diversity of groups and leaders. Have you thought about getting more involved? How about getting together with friends to start a new group?

Of course, over and above all the monthly interest groups you belong to, there are the social events organised by the committee. Let me remind you what we have done since last year's AGM:

The Showcase event at the Guildhall was held in September – it involved an incredible amount of work over several months by Committee, interest group leaders, members of their groups and other volunteers which ensured we achieved our aim of bringing the u3a to the attention of the public. Over 50 people joined on the day!

The following month was the meeting for new members where they find out more about how we operate and the opportunities available to them.

In November we held the annual Big Quiz which, as ever, was extremely well-attended and most competitive!

November was also the Group Leader's Seminar and Lunch – issues visited involved the legal requirement of having a Risk Assessment for each interest group. The ease of using Beacon, the u3a database, was discussed and followed by a presentation about becoming a more culturally diversity and inclusive u3a.

At the end of the Seminar, Group Leaders were asked to complete and store a Risk Assessment form; to start using Beacon more and to volunteer to form a small group to consider how to build a more diverse

and inclusive u3a. It was rewarding that members stepped forward showing a willingness to become more involved in the latter.

Also in November, our walnut tree, purchased some months earlier to commemorate u3a's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, was planted. I recently checked it out – yes, it is still there, looks very healthy and has grown considerably. If you enter the park by the Abington Pub, you will see it to the left of the path.

December saw over 100 of us dancing the afternoon away to the 60's music of Back in Time. Again, another very successful and fun-filled event.

We decided to hold New Members Meetings quarterly so January was the first one of this year. The meetings are relaxed and everyone gets a chance to chat about what the u3a can offer and how members can get more involved. Have you thought about helping? Ambassadors play a major part in these meetings, could you join them? Towards the end of April, we held our second meeting of the year with pleasing attendance.

April was also the month for the Spring Fling – a barn dance – taking place with lots of very energetic members dancing to a smashing band. Again, a very popular event.

None of these would have been possible without the hours of hard work by my Team: Steve, Eileen, Nick, Marie, Jane, Tony, Jackie, Mike and Sue. We are ably assisted by Associates, Ambassadors, Refreshment providers and Group Leaders. Thank you all so much for your support.

There is more of the same, or similar, to come this year. If you have ideas for arranging the social events differently, or suggestions for different events we could hold for the membership, please let us know. You can do this face to face, email or anonymously by using the suggestion box near the entrance.

What else do the committee do, you may ask!

In addition to organising the social events, committee members:

- run the website so that it reflects up to date positive images and information about u3a, and organise the screens audio for general meetings
- run the database and provide training for Group Leaders on how to use it

- keep a rein on spending so the accounts are in good order,
- keep existing groups functioning well, sorting any problems and 'growing' new groups.
- publicise the u3a to other organisations through magazines, attending fetes and leaflet drops – you can do your bit by spreading the word.
- keep membership records up to date – new, current and lapsed
- receive and respond to communications, produce the newsletter and monthly update
- encourage members to become Ambassadors, to do teas at monthly meetings and become involved in the organisation of social functions – you could do this!
- with regard to cultural diversity and inclusion attending meetings with individuals and organisations to share the benefits of u3a and invite them to join us with their different ideas and requirements.

I need to mention succession. Marie, as you know, is retiring from the committee after 18 wonderful years of service (yes, that is what it is). Jane, is well placed to take over from her and Pat Isaacs has stepped up to be her Assistant.

Later this summer, national u3a is rolling out a new, better website for u3as to use. Mike Brown, who has single-handedly nursed the current one from its infancy will step down. He, too, will have given many years of service.

We have a well-qualified person to work on the data migration who needs a small team around her to build resilience and share the load. Are you interested? Could you get involved? Please talk to us! Thank you.

In conclusion Northampton u3a is doing fine but we will never be complacent, so here's to more involvement in Learning Laughing and Living life to the full with u3a.

Sue Shurville

May 30<sup>th</sup> 2023

