



## CHAIR'S REPORT AGM 26/07/2022

It certainly doesn't seem possible that a year has gone by since I was honoured with this role. A lot has been learned in a short space of time. For instance:

### THE WIDER REMIT OF u3a CHAIR:

- I knew that I would chair Committee, New Members and General Monthly Meetings and look to ways to improve the u3a experience for us all.
- I didn't know about the wider role which involves attendance at meetings with representatives of other u3as in the county (the Network), East Midlands (Regional) and Nationally. However, these meetings have been enjoyable and productive through problem sharing. The greatest problem was numbers.
- During the pandemic, numbers across u3a nationally declined by anything up to 20% and the number of Groups fell dramatically, even though many converted to Zooming. Consequently, the two biggest messages to bring back to my Team from these meetings were to continue working on Publicity and Recruitment.

### PUBLICITY

- The Communications sub-committee had already started on revitalising our website and publicity documents. I'm sure you agree, the result of their endeavours is most impressive. Surely, it encourages non-members to think about joining.
- There is now more interest in our social media profile as more contributions are received from Groups. Of course, members enjoy seeing what's going on but so, too, one hopes, do the general public.
- The committee is planning to develop partnerships with businesses so that they can raise awareness of u3a for their employees.
- We have a contact with the NHS Social-Prescribing team so hope this will be another way to increase membership.
- As a committee we are getting more involved in publicising our u3a at various Fetes around the town.
- Publicity to inform non-members of the opportunities offered by u3a will continue to be more evident as time goes by. Help us by spreading the word!

## RECRUITMENT

If our publicity is working to increase our numbers, what are we doing to make members feel welcome?

- Well, we now have an Associate New Members Liaison Officer who acts as a personal contact to support the former over the first few months of membership.
- In addition, we have a Team of Ambassadors who meet and greet you at monthly meetings and act to make everyone feel welcomed and valued. You will also see the Ambassador team helping out at our various social events.
- Our new Associate Speaker Seeker has, and is, arranging an interesting and very varied programme of Speakers into next year.
- Enough members offered to do teas so that a Tea Rota until November could be organised. I think this has made our monthly meetings more sociable occasions.

## EVERYONE IS WELCOME:

- Everyone has different needs and we are working to make sure that reasonable adaptations can be made to accommodate all. Our monthly meetings are hybrid so that any members who feel vulnerable can access meetings from home. 'Reserved' seating at the front is for those with visual /aural needs, a hearing loop is available and there is a ramp for members requiring better access. In future months we will be looking in greater depth at how we can be a more diversity-aware organisation.

## SOCIAL EVENTS ORGANISED BY THE COMMITTEE SINCE JUNE LAST YEAR:

- We've had two New Members meetings; Group Leader's lunch and training day; Big Quiz; Christmas Party; Spring Fling and Jubilee Picnic. All were very enjoyable and well- attended.

## GROUPS:

As of July 5<sup>th</sup> 2022 our numbers have increased to 898, with 110 active groups. National's target is to have one group per ten members so we are going in the right direction.

- Groups have been offered financial help with renting rooms.
- Group Liaison Officers continue to: offer help and advice to existing groups; find out what members want; work tirelessly to find people to be Group Leaders (the job can be shared!) and then set up new groups.
- - We have been able to part-fund items for groups who needed replacement equipment. Let us know what your group needs.

## NATIONAL u3a 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

- Earlier this year National Office suggested a project where each u3a could purchase trees to make a woodland. It is located in the Brecon Beacons and will provide a lasting legacy to mark our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and to help the fight against climate change. We purchased a copse of mixed trees which will be looked after for 12 years and replaced if they die. There is an accompanying plaque which notes that Northampton u3a have planted these trees for the benefit of future generations.
- We also thought it appropriate to have a tree planted in Abington Park to mark not only the anniversary but also the Queen's Jubilee. We hope the planting ceremony will take place the week prior to our massive publicity event at Northampton Guildhall – the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Showcase – which we, and many of you, are planning for September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

- None of this would have been possible without hours of hard work by my Team; Steve, Eileen, Nick, Marie, Tony, Jackie, Mike, Jane and Eluned. We are ably assisted by Associates, Ambassadors, Refreshment helpers and Group Leaders. Thank you all so very much for your support.
- We are sorry that Eluned has to stand down due to other commitments and thank her for leading the Social Events team so well. We will miss you, Eluned.

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

Sue Shurville

