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Introduction from Sam Mauger

Dear friends,

Now that we are turning towards the Autumn and the days are getting darker, it is good to be thinking about enjoying time together in true u3a style.

Over the last week I have been at the AGM and heard about what some members are planning in the month ahead, from Harvest flower arranging to Network gatherings.

The u3a merchandise winter sale is now on encouraging us to get our beanie hats ready for those winter walks and there is also growing anticipation about the u3a Festival 2024 where a whole plethora of u3a skills and talents have been offered.

This Friends newsletter remains full of the u3a spirit of adventure and I hope you enjoy the many stories from across our movement.

With very best wishes

Sam Mauger

CEO of the Third Age Trust



You On Your Own? Not anymore!

Thornbury u3a created the YOYO (You On Your Own! Not Anymore!) group two years ago, especially, but not exclusively, aimed at members who might be on their own. The group has a monthly meeting, often with a speaker and theme, along with two get-togethers each week. Activities have included regular skittles, guided walks around Bristol,

theatre trips, National Trust events, concerts, visits to beauty spots with lunch or tea. Members have also joined with each other to attend other u3a groups.

Pictured: Recently almost 40 members of Thornbury u3a's YOYO group joined a boat trip along the Avon Gorge.

Welcome to the movement Borough Green & Wrotham u3a

The inaugural meeting for Borough Green & Wrotham u3a was a great success. The Mayor for Tonbridge & Malling, James Lark, and local Councillor Mike Taylor both attended.

73 members signed up on the day and the first meeting of the u3a will be held in November. Vice Chair, Christine says, "The future is looking bright so we all feel our months of hard work has come to fruition."



Saltburn District u3a recognised as Dementia Friendly

Saltburn District u3a have received a certificate from Dementia Action Teesside confirming that they are now 'Dementia Friendly'.

This is part of Saltburn District u3a's ongoing work to be as accessible as possible for members – the next project is a presentation to inform members how sight loss, whether total or partial, impacts on everyday life.

Your Stories

The u3a Newsletter means a lot to me. By being in contact through Newsletters or Facebook, I feel we are a family.

I enjoy the Newsletter for its good and clever ideas from members including reading their stories.

Helen, Isle of Arran u3a

News from the Board

Liz Thackray, Chair of the Third Age Trust

Last week we had our AGM where we welcomed new Trustees to the Board, said our farewells to those retiring from the Board and considered the future of our movement.

A resolution was passed mandating the u3a Trust to engage in efforts to increase our membership substantially. I am sure we all share the sentiments expressed by the proposer and seconder u3as of the resolution, that the u3a is a wonderful organisation and it is surprising that so few people, relative to the numbers eligible, actually join us.

As the u3a Trust staff and Trustees consider how to respond to the resolution in practice, two thoughts:

- To engage in a u3a recruitment campaign we will be pleased to have the support of u3as throughout the UK. That means having groups ready to welcome new members and where necessary forming new groups and being an open door.
- Being able to answer "what is u3a" by explaining to those asking that it is an organisation where we meet like minded people, share social activities and learn together and from each other as we develop our skills and interests.

We are getting ready to do our part, but we need to work together with all u3as to help us to make an open door recruitment campaign successful.

Our Impact

87% of members support having an Older People's Commissioner

A recent survey of u3a members shows that members overwhelmingly support having a Commissioner for Older People. Given the increasing numbers and diversity of older people, having an independent person to advocate on behalf of all older people was seen as very important.



In the words of one member "There is an increasing number of people living longer. We need someone, independent, with legal status, connected to each government in the UK, who promotes the needs of older people."

Members highlighted a huge range of issues that such a role could and should address. Most common was access to services (including health and social care) (85%), followed by social isolation and loneliness (83%), and ageism and discrimination (78%). Age friendly communities, access to affordable and appropriate housing, public transport, and design that included and factored in the needs of older people were some other issues identified.

Spotlight On:

Barry, East Suffolk u3a



I took an A Level in Computer Science in the late 1960's and later in my career, taught Computer Science to teenagers. It was while teaching that I first became aware of AI developments.

In the Spring of 2023 I renewed my acquaintance with AI so I could talk to family without being left behind by technology. In the summer, I developed an "AI for beginners" online library for East Suffolk u3a. It became very popular, with over a thousand reader visits in the first few months. We're hoping to make that available to u3a members nationally very soon.

If you use a smartphone, there is AI somewhere – as soon as you're using voice assistance technology or satellite navigation you're using AI.

I've started to research and meet other AI groups within u3a. There are probably a dozen or so groups discussing how AI works. My approach is to encourage members to have a go at using AI. It's convincing, it makes you think it's intelligent – it's not, it's mimicking human intelligent behaviour, but it's amazing what it can do.

I am passionate about "AI for All". We have learnt to safely use the Internet, Satnav, Smartphones. Now it is time to learn how to use AI safely.

To u3a members interested in learning more about using AI, I would say: you have to just have a go. I'd suggest talking to ChatGPT – it's great for generating ideas – or creating images using Bing Image Generator. It is great fun.

Headline photos: Cathryn from Bradford u3a submitted this photo into our nature photography gallery u3a Found in Nature; Sam Mauger and Liz Thackray before the Third Age Trust AGM this month; Janet of Balsall & Common u3as submitted this photo into u3a Found in Nature.