



## Rotary club of Farnham

### Newsheet October 2023

#### Events through September

##### Supper Evening Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October at Farnham House Hotel

Not only was a delicious meal enjoyed by Rotary Members and friends at the above, but they were also treated to an entertaining talk by Malcom Wells entitled 'So Far So Good!'. He told about his 16 years at the Canine Partners (a charity who train assistance dogs for people with disabilities), where he was National Speaker giving presentations countrywide, worked with Sir Terry Wogan and saw how a dog can be trained to use a washing machine. He also treated us to light hearted stories of things that went wrong when he was medical assistant in the first Golf War and finished with a 'behind the scenes' story

of him receiving the MBE at Buckingham Palace when he was mistaken as a member of the Royal Household.



For the last 5 years Malcolm has been a volunteer for the charity Literacy in a Box, raising over £18,000.

#### Talks Through October

**Disability Challengers** by Becky Cox Community & Events Manager, introduced by Ann Foster

Becky thanked us for our donation saying that our support is hugely valuable to them as an organisation.



Disability Challengers Farnham is at 2 St James' Avenue in a converted school opposite the Fire Station where they have been for 20 years. A generous donation in 2001 enabled the conversation to take place. It is open 7 days/week 51 weeks/year. Their vision is a world where all children and young people can play together freely. In a nutshell, they give disabled children and young people opportunities to play, have and make fun from 2 – 18 years of age. They see play as critical – building motor and communication skills, and confidence.

Disability Challengers was founded 43 years ago by a paediatrician and a leisure centre owner. These two individuals recognised that there were no opportunities for children with disabilities to play in the local community, so they started a swim club. They are now spread across a broad area with the main centre in Guildford offering so much more than swimming. They have satellite teams working at weekends in various locations within the south east. Their dedicated buildings in Guildford and Farnham she told us are amazing as they have so many opportunities within them - soft play area, sensory rooms, cookery rooms, outdoor space and more. In Farnham there is a preschool for 2-4 year olds during term time - 5 days/week – for both disabled and non-disabled children. It is expensive for them to run as they have specially trained people and teachers supporting them. For 4-12 year olds there are play services during weekends and holidays and youth services for 13-18 year olds with age appropriate activities – maybe magicians, reptiles for younger ones or visits to the cinema, lunches out and other activities for the older ones. They also offer respite services for children who might be excluded from school because of complexity of needs. This is a very important part of the service, and provides education for 12 weeks whilst they sort out something more permanent.



Play is a part of everything they do and includes craft, ball games, rock climbing, baking, music, everything and anything. Becky said all their staff are wonderful and trained appropriately. They always ensure each child is well cared for, well looked after and is safe, so that families

can feel secure to do what they want or need to. Things the rest of us often taken for granted.

Last year 340,000 children and young people attended – about 10% of all relevant children and young people in Waverley – representing about 750 families.

What makes them unique?

- Don't exclude any child that comes to them eg They don't necessarily need a medical diagnosis;
- Have no geographical boundaries – allow families/children/young people to travel distances as necessary and support every single child that comes to them. They recognise that similar services do not exist everywhere;
- Passionate about breaking down the barriers around play – disabled and non-disabled in same space ie inclusive

They have a waiting list – on which for every one there are three, illustrating the need.

She quoted a Mum about her 4 year old daughter who goes to the Farnham Centre – “Celia is like any other 4 year old – curious, energetic and loves to play. She has Downs Syndrome and when she joined Disability Challengers in November 2019 she couldn't walk, communicate or play. With the help of the highly trained team there she is now able dance, to walk and has become independent. Her communication has come on leaps and bounds and she has made friends. Challenges has given her and our family so much.”



**Hale Community Centre** by Melissa Salisbury Centre Manager, introduced by Norma Corkish



Melissa began by telling us a little about the Sandy Hill estate, immediately north of the Centre and which is the focus of much of their work and activities. The estate was built in 1960 by Rushmoor for overspill from the East End of London. It was based on the Radburn design which aimed to separate cars and pedestrians but ended as a disaster. Houses were turned round so they fronted onto the pedestrian network with cars relegated to the rear of the properties behind high fences. It was acknowledged that the design was unsuitable for concentrated public housing estates as it resulted in confusing neighbourhoods with unsafe walkways, poor car access, and poor surveillance of open space. Whilst there had been plans to demolish part of the estate and rebuild, this has not happened.

There are a little over 500 properties on Sandy Hill, with half of them owned by the Housing Association, VIVID, with the rest owner occupied or rented.

The index of Multiple Deprivation for 2019 shows it to be an area of deprivation nationally, within Surrey and Waverley with relatively low levels of education, skills and training and high levels of unemployment, poor health and disability, and low income affecting in particular children. Surrey County Council's Local Insight Profile for 2022 showed that 20% of the children 0-19 were in relatively low-income families compared with 9% across Surrey, that 26 % of the people have no qualifications compared with 16% across Surrey, and 22% of the household have no car compared to 13% across Surrey.

She told us that the Centre works with the following values - Community led, Respect – for all, Inclusivity, Integrity – honesty, openness,

transparency, fairness, Excellence and Agility. Its Vision is to 'create lasting positive change' with a Mission to 'provide a safe, welcoming and inspiring environment where the whole community is encouraged and enabled to thrive'.



In order to achieve this they work with a number of key organisations within Farnham, Waverley and more widely eg Farnham Health Inequalities Forum, Tackling Loneliness group, Waverley Safer Partnerships, Homestart, Surrey Care Trust, Barnado's, GATE/WBC Job Club and all our local authorities.

The table below illustrates a 'typical' week and shows just how busy the Centre is:

**A typical week**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Weekend
Oxygen Clinic (NHS)	Mummas Village	Stay and Play Community	Talk Plus No Limits	Community Fridge	Parties Church on the Hill
Drop in parents support (SEND)	Job Club	Drop in Community	Safe Haven Slimming	World You're Not alone	Boogie Pumps Code Club
Community Fridge	Surrey Health & Farnham	Fridge	World Upholstery	Youth	Young Quilters
SW Access to Education	Mental Health Integrated Community	Seniors Craft for All Respiratory	7-11 youth club	Counselling service	
Craft Café	Service	Clinic		Home schoolers group	
Warm Hub	SW Access to Education	SW Access to Education		Boys Night	
Rainbows	Illusion Dance	'm' 'll ears			
No Limits Safe Haven	11-14 youth	Upholstery			
Junior Girls Club	14+ youth	Youth Club			
Senior Girls Club					

An estimated 1,500 people and more use the centre each month.

She described some of the key activities in more detail:

**Youth Centre** – this is doing tremendous work and is really making a difference to the lives of young people within the community, with help from a number of funders, a key one of which is the Lottery Fund, Reaching Communities. The Youth Centre itself – a specially renovated building by Surrey County Council – is seen by the young people as a safe haven and a place of their own. Feedback includes: 'I have learned

about all different things, like how to treat people with respect'; 'Girlz Club and Youth Club has made me feel so much better'

From this September the Centre has run sessions for those who have struggled to return to full-time education following COVID. This is going extremely well and Heath End School, who is our main contact for this, are already seeing positive changes.



**Food Cupboard & Fridge** This started out as a way of saving food from supermarkets (11 are involved) that would otherwise go to waste, but is now a vital source of food for many. A recent survey showed that up to 50% of those who use this support say they would go hungry without it.



There is a popular weekly **Community Café** where hot lunches are provided – cooked by a volunteer using food collected from the supermarkets. Those making use of it are asked to contribute what they can afford.

There are a number of activities to help people live more healthily – exercise classes for

balance and strength and more recently **slow cooking courses** with free slow cookers, which has been very popular; provision of support that has not been available locally – eg health vaccination catch up clinics, 'Stop Smoking' clinic, mental health support services and a visit from the hypertension bus.

**A weekly Senior Group** run by a volunteer provides support to those who are simply lonely and want some company, as well as a meeting place for those who enjoy meeting people and a respite for those whose partners are suffering from dementia or similar. Most of the members make use of the Wednesday lunches and some are also regular users of the larder.

Two weekly **craft groups**. One, Opportunities and the second a Craft Café.

**Stay and Play**, which is funded and led by Homestart, provides early years' support to local families.

And the **community Garden**, which is supported by volunteers and provides colour and food.

And Melissa referred to a new project where there will be a community development worker with specific responsibility to work with local residents and strengthen what is called the 'Sandy Hill Inclusive Partnership'.

All of this is achieved with a small staff – all part time – and equivalent to no more than 4 full time employees. And so the importance of our volunteer team of over 40. Funding is from various sources – grants from Trusts, local authorities, Surrey Community Foundation, hiring out of space – but has to be continuously applied for. She said the Board is looking at how we can diversify and make our income streams more sustainable such as through increasing individual donations.

She ended by saying the Centre has just been selected as a finalist for Outstanding Customer Service via Surrey County Council's Star Awards.

## Events in November

### Lunchtime Talks Through November

**Thursday 2nd November** George Alford - The Bank of England

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November** Patricia Parker on Kids for Kids, Darfur, introduced by Sarah Moss

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November** Iain Lynch, Town Clerk, Farnham Town Council on History of Farnham Chapels

**Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November** Michael Nicolls - 'the Beautiful Valley'

If, as a Friend, you are interested in coming along to any of the talks and for lunch (£20) please email [lunches@rotaryfarnham.co.uk](mailto:lunches@rotaryfarnham.co.uk) on the Monday before, saying whether you'd like, fish, meat or vegetarian, pudding or fresh fruit. We start gathering at The Bush, Farnham from 12.30 for lunch at 1.00 and the talk at 2.00, finishing at 2.30 pm.