

## Opening Doors – Widening Horizons for people with physical and sensory disabilities

Spring 2015

### UNLIMITED OXFORDSHIRE has had a very active year

We have gained charity status, enjoyed many events including our three coffee drop-ins and the Christmas party. The Lord Mayor of Oxford, Councillor Mohammed Niaz Abbasi chose *unlimited* and *restore* as his two charities, for his term in office which, not only provides us with donations but also, includes us in his activities and celebrations, we feel really honoured to be chosen. The Mid-counties Co-op and Sovereign housing have funded and supported some of our projects, with their staff visiting to meet us and learn more about our organisation. We are thrilled to welcome Rosie, from Withy Kings solicitors, as our new trustee and committee

member, Rosie and her colleagues from Withy Kings have been supporting unlimited for two years. If you would like to join the committee do contact us, we are a small, dedicated group who really enjoy being part of a caring team. Several unlimited members have been volunteering to help out with numerous tasks, we are very grateful to all volunteers. You could have fun with us, we are all volunteers and we love 'opening doors, widening horizons, for people with disabilities, to promote social inclusion and equal opportunities.



### Charity Champion at No. 10 Downing Street

It's not the sort of opportunity that comes your way every day. Early in January, I received an invitation to go to 10 Downing Street to attend a Charity Champions reception hosted by Samantha Cameron. I had been forewarned that my name had been put forward to represent Unlimited; one of two charities nominated by Nicola Blackwood, the other charity being *My life My choice*. I chose to take my daughter Kyla with me as carer. She is an Unlimited member and much better able to represent the organisation than my professional carers. Nicola's PA was very helpful in making all the necessary arrangements and obtaining clearance for my car to park in the Houses of Parliament and later in Downing Street.

At 5 o'clock on the 13th January we met two of Nicola's PAs at the Houses of Parliament and two representatives from *My Life My Choice*. We had coffee in the Member's lounge then went through to view the historic Westminster Hall. By 6 o'clock we had moved quarter of a mile and were inside No.10. Interestingly, I did not go in through the front door at number 10 because the ramps were outside number 11 and the building is joined up inside. It is like a tardis on the inside opening up to many rooms all beautifully decorated and furnished. There were about 40 people there from many other charities of all types all over the UK. We were all introduced to Samantha individually and she then gave a short address to the whole gathering stressing how important charities like ours are to the whole social structure of the country.

A few nibbles and a glass of wine helped two hours to pass remarkably quickly and we only had time to chat with just a few of the many interesting people there. A few photographs were then taken outside of number 10 and we headed back along the M40. It was an evening to remember for which I will be always grateful to Nicola and to our committee who asked me to represent Unlimited.

Peter Hindshaw Chairperson.

Promoting Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion

Email: [membership@oxfordshireunlimited.org](mailto:membership@oxfordshireunlimited.org)

Tel: 0845 12 141 12



## Lord Mayors Carol Service for his two charities

The volunteers for Unlimited were Dave & guide dog Jez, Stephanie, Sara, Lilian and Ruth. Hannah from Restore had two volunteers with her and Jane Stubbs, the Civic secretary, rallied seven volunteers from City council staff. We all had programmes which we sold at 50p each but most people paid extra and even put donations in our collection boxes. We had a presentation table set up with literature for both charities and we greeted the guests as they arrived. Then we all positioned ourselves in the hall at the ends of the rows of guests, when the Lord Mayor announced the collection time for his two charities we passed collection trays along the rows until everyone had been approached. Then the Lord Mayor announced the total raised for the two charities to share was over £2,450, an amazingly generous amount. It was a long day and hard work but we all really enjoyed it, everyone was so friendly, the Carol singing was enjoyable and the overall atmosphere was great.

Ruth J.

## Swim with Dolphins

Kennington and Abingdon Dolphins are a swimming group for people with disabilities and their carers who meet every **Saturday morning from 11am – 12pm at Radley College Sports Centre, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 2HR**. This friendly group with a variety of disabilities have been supported by John Hutchison, who runs the club with his wife Pauline and Jane Hall the Chairperson. John says "come along and have a chat with us, give our swimming group a try, it is only £2 a session, you will be made very welcome, see the facilities and go for a swim." If you decide to join our club we only charge £10 for a year's membership which helps to cover the insurance costs but you do not need to think about that yet, just come along on Saturdays and enjoy swims for only £2 then after 2/3 weeks if you want to join the club you can pay the £10 yearly membership fee.

We are always in need of volunteers at our swimming sessions to assist those who need help in the pool, can you give a little of your time so that someone else can enjoy a swim. It would mean so much to them, it is beneficial to their mental and physical well-being and I am sure you would enjoy being part of this happy group. Give John a call on **01235 522843** or just call in at Radley college swimming pool on Saturday morning, 11am – 12pm. We look forward to meeting you.

John.

## Working Dogs; Look but please do not touch

After 14 years of struggling along with my visual impairment and only having a white stick to aid me in getting about, I have finally got a guide dog, Alf. It is like a new beginning for me without the constant struggle, having Alf has given me a better quality of life, more independence, a faithful companion and eased the worry and responsibilities for my dear husband Peter. Working dogs are highly trained in the skills they need for the person's specific requirements who they will be a guide/assist dog for. We all love to see a working guide/assist dog and greatly admire the work they do to make life easier for their handler, I really appreciate it when people ask me about Alf and show interest in our experiences together but it is so important that Alf is not distracted from his guide duties when he is working. So PLEASE, no matter how tempting it is to make a fuss of a working dog, '**Look but please do not touch**'. Remember, they have a very important job to do and they do it really well, give them a smile and let them get on with their work, thank you for caring and understanding.

For more details on  
**Guide dogs for the Blind:**  
**Tel: 01189 835555**  
**Email: [guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk)**



Stephanie. (registered blind and guide dog user)

## Lord Mayor's and Councillors' Reception

My son Jon and I attended this event on behalf of Unlimited. The Lord Mayor introduced Unlimited and Restore and made sure that Hannah, James, Jon and myself were in view of everyone. There was a high turn-out of guests, it was a very friendly gathering and we were easily able to spread the word (and literature) of Unlimited. Jon knew most of the people which gave him a willing group of listeners; he is a Trustee on the same board as the Lord Mayor, the Elder Stubbs Charity Allotments, which also supports *Restore*. This was a very good opportunity to speak with leaders of resident's groups as well as councillors and officers from City council.

Lilian.



Contact Dave Holmes (Membership secretary) for membership details and events  
Email: [membership@oxfordshireunlimited.org](mailto:membership@oxfordshireunlimited.org) Tel: 01865 773840

## Leys Pools and Leisure Centre

We have heard many concerns and seen much about it in the local news. Unlimited committee always take pride in keeping an open mind, visiting the places with issues and talking with users and providers of services. Dave, our membership secretary, is one of the most experienced and knowledgeable members of our committee concerning access issues, he dedicates a lot of time and effort to it, so he volunteered to check out the Leys centre himself. This is his report on his experience, which he has sent to the service provider. We urge you to try the facilities for yourself, every person has individual needs and it is important for each person to have the experience themselves, enabling them to form their own personal opinions.

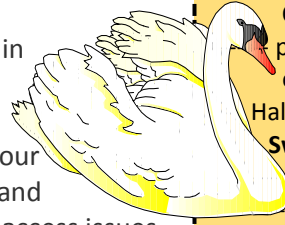
Do send your feedback about your visit to Oxford City council to help them assess any difficulties you may have at the Leisure centre so they can accommodate your needs but if you are happy with your visit do tell them so. Tel: 01865 249811 write to: Leisure services, Oxford City council, 109 St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1DS

**I visited the Leys Leisure Centre** at Pegasus Road, Blackbird Leys on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> January at 1pm. (With my dog). The leisure centre was very busy. I went to the reception desk and I spoke to a lady and asked her about facilities for disabled people at the leisure centre. She was very polite, informative and very helpful. After talking to her for 15 minutes she offered to show me around the centre to show me some of the facilities offered to disabled people. These included a portable ramp with hand rails on each side into the main pool. A pool side hoist in the main pool. Two disability changing rooms, one with a hoist and both with toilet facilities. Two disability toilets. An accessible sauna. An accessible weights room. An accessible café' area. All of these were situated on the ground floor level. I spoke to four staff at the leisure centre about disability matters. I concluded my visit by having a swim in the pool, using the portable ramp with hand rails. I also checked out the dropped kerb access from the bus stop in Pegasus Road to the leisure centre and the wheelchair entrance into the leisure centre. It was fine. My conclusion is that the Leys Leisure Centre has first class facilities for disabled people. I congratulate Fusion and Oxford City Council for this development and especially for the facilities for disabled people which are included.

Dave Holmes. (Registered Blind Person and Guide Dog User)

### Thank You

The Lord Mayor's Charities have received donations from: Oak Furniture Land Store, Skipton Building Society, Oxford City Council Fleet and Maintenance team, Oxford University Newcomers Club, Showman's Guild (St Giles' Fair), Curry's Superstore, Paul Bakery, DFS, Vodafone and Waitrose. We are extremely grateful for these donations which are shared between Unlimited and Restore.



**Oxford Swans** is a swimming club for people with disabilities and for the elderly. We teach swimming using the Halliwick Concept. Members of **Oxford Swans** are called 'swimmers' and we focus on ability in the water and not disability. One of the main aims of Halliwick Concept is to help the 'swimmer' to become confident and happy in the water. We do not use flotation aids and 'swimmers' may work with an instructor individually or as part of a group. We always work towards the 'swimmer' becoming more independent. We rely solely on our helpers, who are all fully trained, and are unpaid volunteers. We always need more helpers, as they form a crucial part of the club.

We run two sessions per week:

**Tuesdays** 18.00 to 19.00 at the Leys Pool, Pegasus Road, Blackbird Leys, Oxford, OX4 6J  
**Saturdays** 10.00 to 12.00 at Ferry Pool, Diamond Place, Summertown, Oxford, OX2 7DP

**How often have you heard someone say 'pavements/ roads/ bus or train services should.....' - here is your opportunity to make that difference.....** Oxfordshire Transport & Access Group (OXTRAG) need your local knowledge to ensure services and facilities continue to improve. By 'Mystery Shopping', advising on access to local facilities, replying to consultations, attending exhibitions or just walking a countryside route you could improve future provisions for everyone. No experience is needed – just an interest in making things more inclusive. Membership is free and others will support you. You will meet a friendly group of people, gain experience which could lead to a career path and appreciation for your knowledge and skills.

**OXTRAG - Our aim is to make Oxfordshire a county where highways & transport are easily accessible by all and where everyone can be confident as they travel.**

Deborah.



## Christmas Party



The Unlimited Christmas party at Abingdon United football and Social club was a lovely event, we all enjoyed it and we were reluctant to let it end. John Hunt the entertainer was brilliant, I would recommend him to any small group event (01235 835568). Shirley the landlady of the venue did us really proud with the buffet, she had set out tables, chairs and xmas decks, I would highly recommend the venue, Shirley and her friendly caring staff (01235 856076.) Our regular volunteer helpers Richard, Karen, Michael and Ruth J. were great as usual and a huge thank you to Rosie and Ben who shared the responsibility with me and helped to make it a success. Lance, our web-site manager, helped set-up and spent time with every guest, Dave, our membership secretary and his guide dog Jez, socialised and enjoyed the entertainment. The Lord Mayor of Oxford, Mohammed Obassi, and Committee members, Ruth and Martin, deserve thanks for the effort they made to come to the party even after a long day at the Multi-faith festival. The Lord Mayor spent time talking with each guest and expressed his admiration for the voluntary work Unlimited are doing. We look forward to next year's event.

Lilian.

### Supporters of Unlimited Oxfordshire:



The Lord Mayor elect  
Cllr Mohammed Abbasi



Withy Kings Solicitors



Sovereign Housing  
Association



Midcounties Co-operative



Oxfordshire County Council

## Events List

**Member's meetings** are open to all Unlimited members and carers, join us for a free cuppa and a good chat. Unlimited Membership Project Meetings at: Peace House, 19 Paradise Street, Oxford OX1 1LD. 12noon - 2.30pm on Wednesdays -  
**28th January, 25th March, 29th April, 17th June, 29th July, 16th September, 18th November.**

Come and join us at the **Coffee Caff**, Peachcroft Christian Centre, Lyndsay Drive, Abingdon, OX14 2RC. 2pm - 4pm on the second Thursday of each month in 2015:

**8th January, 12th February, 12th March, 9th April, 14th May, 11th June, 9th July, 13th August, 10th September, 8th October, 12th November, 10th December.**

**Annual General Meeting.** Unlimited Oxfordshire's AGM will be held on **27<sup>th</sup> June 2015** at Wesley Memorial Hall, New Inn Hall Street, Oxford. OX1 2DH. 1pm - 4pm. Annual reports and the voting in of the trustees and committee. Invitations and nomination forms will be sent to all members in May.

## Contacts:

**Membership secretary:** Tel: 01865 773840.  
membership@oxfordshireunlimited.org

**Treasurer:** Tel: 0845 12 141 12.  
treasurer@oxfordshireunlimited.org

**Secretary:** Tel: 0845 12 141 12  
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**www.oxfordshireunlimited.org**

Charity: 1156718 registered in England & Wales

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