

Listen Hear

Walsall & District Samaritans Newsletter . Summer 2019 . Issue 3

Remembering 'Polo'



JUST A PHONECALL AWAY: Walsall Branch Samaritans with Lou Field, landlady of The Why Not pub who raised awareness and £481 for branch funds.

LOCALS at The Why Not pub in Essington organised a family fun day in memory of Steven 'Polo' Powell from Pelsall who tragically lost his life to suicide. A barbecue, bouncy castle, karaoke, cake sale, raffle and tombola raised a total of **£481** for Walsall Samaritans, which was presented to branch volunteers by Steven's mum Sue and landlady Lou Field. The event was organised by landlady Lou, one of Steven's childhood friends.

"We were best friends and whilst I knew he struggled with life, no one ever thought it was to that extent," said Lou.

"Today is all about raising awareness and letting people know there is always help available from Samaritans. You just need to pick up the phone and tell someone how you are feeling," she added.

Steven's mum Sue remembers her son, who was 39 when he took his life, as 'a real character'.

"Suicide is something you never expect to happen in your own family and losing Steven has left a massive hole in everyone's heart." Volunteers from Walsall Branch joined in with the day's events and handed out balloons, sweets and leaflets to visitors.

Branch deputy director, Steve Gifford said: "This has been an amazing tribute to Steven and Walsall Samaritans are very touched and grateful for this very kind donation."



REMEMBERING: Landlady Lou Field and Sue Powell with a treasured picture of her son Steven, in whose memory the event was organised.

GREAT WYRLEY Community Band performed an incredible concert in a day and helped us to raise **£585** for branch funds.

The band – made up of talented amateur musicians and conducted by Vaughan Smith – spent a day rehearsing new material for an evening performance at Penkrigge Peace Memorial Hall.

Among the many scores performed were medleys from the Beatles' Sergeant Peppers, and The Greatest Showman musical.

Following refreshments, band members joined the audience for a quiz, which included a fun Samaritans themed round along with music and general knowledge rounds.

Hitting the right notes...



Flying the Flag for Samaritans

OUTREACH is a vital part of Walsall and District Samaritans. A dedicated team of volunteers visit organisations within the local community – including schools and local businesses – to promote our listening service.

In recent months, volunteers have been flying the Samaritans' flag at Balfour Beatty, Barhale, Walsall Manor Hospital, Job Centre, DWP, CAB, Steps to Work, HomeServe, Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School Sutton Girls' School and Ounsdale High School.

Not only do these visits raise awareness, but they also form links with employers and educational institutions which often go on to support our charity and sometimes encourage people to volunteer.

Outreach Director Steve Gifford said requests for Outreach are currently on the rise and more volunteers are needed to cope with demand.

"Outreach can range from manning a stall at a hospital open day to delivering training workshops to groups of employees or assemblies to schools. People are always interested to know how to become a better listener and we talk them through some of the training involved in becoming a Samaritan. The feedback we receive is always positive and it makes you feel immensely proud of the work we do as listening volunteers," he added.

If anyone within branch is interested in getting out into the community and joining the Outreach team, please contact Steve via the branch.

Fundraising made easy!

WHATEVER the weather has in store this summer, be prepared! Whether it's a parasol to shade you from the sun or an umbrella to protect you from the rain, you'll no doubt be doing some last-minute shopping on the internet. But why not turn your summertime shopping into a free donation for your favourite cause – Walsall Samaritans!

Since becoming a member of 'easyfundraising', an internet shopping site which turns your everyday online shopping into charitable donations, we have raised more than £1300 for our funds.

If you still haven't registered, it's easy! All you have to do is log on to www.easyfundraising.org.uk, choose the option to support Samaritans of Walsall and District, then simply join for free, shopping as normal. Sainsbury's, Argos, Booking.com, Amazon, John Lewis, Ebay, and many other popular online retailers will make a donation to us to say, 'thank you' for choosing to spend money with them.

The site has more than 3,500 retailers for you to shop from and has so far raised over £24 million for thousands of charitable organisations in the UK.

It's easy, it's free and it will make a huge difference to us.



Collectors' Corner

WALSALL and District Branch extend a HUGE thank you to the following organisations and individuals who have collected money and donated much-needed funds to us in recent months. We are always grateful for any donations, no matter how small, every penny helps us to maintain our branch and keep the phonedines open.

Students at Ounsdale High School in Wombourne, who staged an end of term concert featuring the talents of current and former students, raising £137

Sea-Change Theatre Company, a women's touring theatre company based in London donated £840.

Moxley Peoples Centre in Darlaston sent us £245.

Asda in Walsall collected £500 for us from their token donations.

Listening volunteer **Peter**, whose plant sale raised £5.

A bag pack at **Walsall Morrisons** raised £225.

Wheats Garden Centre raised £159.

Thanks a million!

IT'S EASY to forget the people who keep Walsall branch going, but as a 'thank you' to our volunteers, the Volunteer Support tea hosted an evening get-together and buffet during National Volunteer Week.

Around 20 listening and support volunteers attended the event at branch HQ and had the opportunity to get to know one another over a drink and nibbles.

Director Mandy Poulson said it was encouraging to see so many volunteers together for a social event.

"We wanted to say thank you to everyone who gives up their time for Samaritans, and also give volunteers the chance to socialise and have a chat about themselves for a change," said Mandy.

The buffet was very generously donated by staff at HomeServe in Walsall who have chosen to support Samaritans as their charity in 2019, and Morrisons in Walsall who also donated vouchers towards the food.



VALUED: Saying thanks to Walsall and District volunteers.

CRACKING PERFORMANCE

TWO heads are better than one, and that proved to be the case for the winners of our Quiz and Chips evening.

The winning team, *Two and Half Brains*, chalked up their victory against teams from Walsall Manor Hospital and other volunteers.

This was the second Quiz and Chips event organised by Walsall branch at Aldridge Social Club and raised **£725** for branch funds. Quizmaster Royston kept everyone entertained with a range of taxing questions as the 100 plus guests tucked into freshly cooked fish and chips.



EGGHEADS: The winning Two and a Half Brains quiz team, Izzy, Carolyn and Steve.

Taking to the sky

THE sky's the limit for a group of daring fund-raisers who will be taking part in a charity parachute jump.

So far, 13 charity jumpers have signed up for the tandem jump and will be leaping 13,000 feet from a plane on August 24 at Tilstock Skydive Centre in Whitchurch, Shropshire.

Up to 15 people can take part in the event and anyone interested in joining should contact the branch's fundraising lead Sharon Dicken.

Friends and family are invited to the event to support the dare devils who hope to raise £500 each for Walsall and District Branch.



Sunset feast for Samaritans

SAMARITANS volunteers joined members of the local Muslim community to break the fast – or iftar – during the month of Ramadan. A delicious feast was hosted by Naz of Black Country Innovate at Walsall Town Hall and supporters raised **£53** for our funds.

Around 150 people from the local community waited until sundown before breaking their fast which began at sunrise. During Ramadan Muslims abstain from eating and drinking between sunrise and sundown. This year's Ramadan began on May 5th and ended on June 4th with Eid al-Fitr, a festival where families get together to eat and exchange gifts. The idea behind the fast is for followers to show spiritual dedication and personal growth and often involves supporting charities.

Thank you - we couldn't have done it without you!

AS MANY of our supporters will know, the Walsall branch building was broken into and ransacked on March 1st this year. Computer equipment and various other items vital to the running of the branch were stolen, along with raffle prizes which had been donated by our supporters.

Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of the general public, local and national businesses and organisations, we were able to be up and running again within a week. This would not have been possible without the support of the wonderful people - not only from Walsall but all over the UK - who donated money via a Just Giving page, and those who donated computer and security equipment to enable us to continue to help those in crisis.

Among those that Walsall and District Branch would like to thank are: **Aisha Mosque, Black Country Innovate, Dave and Kate Coley, Great Wyrley Community Band, HomeServe, Mohammed Arif, Morrisons Walsall, One Walsall, Ounsdale High School, Chris Bramwell from Protec, Cllr. Garry Perry, Sheen Sports, Mr and Mrs Bob Slade, System Addicts, Tanzanite Jewellery, Walsall Council, The Why Not Inn, Yale UK and all those that made anonymous donations.**



Within days of the March 1st burglary, our friends from Aisha Mosque kindly donated new computer equipment which helped volunteers get back to manning the phonelines. Walsall's former mayor, Cllr. Marco Longhi, was among the guests when members of the mosque presented us with their very generous donation.

Thank you EVERYONE for supporting us to support others in crisis.

Dates for the diary

AN EVENING with Simon Weston – with all proceeds going to branch funds – has been arranged for March 11th next year.

The inspirational Falkland's War veteran will appear at the Prince of Wales Theatre in Cannock. Further details to follow.

Saturday 24th August: Charity parachute jump, Tilstock, Whitchurch, Shropshire.

Saturday 24th August: Walsall Pride.

Friday 15th November: 50th Anniversary dinner, Village Hotel, Walsall.

Talk it through

We're here to listen

SAMARITANS

Walsall & District

Call free day or night on

116 123

Email

jo@samaritans.org