



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

THE THIRD AGE TRUST

WELCOME

Since the first regional newsletter in January several new U3As have started in our region so, if you are one of them, welcome. One of my duties as the regional trustee, and one I always enjoy, is to visit new U3As and present their certificate of affiliation to the Third Age Trust so if I you are a new U3A and I haven't yet visited you I hope I soon will.

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Our second regional conference will be on Wednesday 29 September 2010 at St Neot's Cambridgeshire. Thank you to those of you who responded to my request for help in finding a venue. St Neot's U3A have also offered to help with the arrangements including the catering. I am so grateful for this.

The speakers are Ian Serle, the chairman of the Third Age Trust, Mike Long who is the National Education and Development Officer and Eric Midwinter who is one of the three founders of the U3A movement in this country.

Mike's session will include an opportunity for group discussion probably around the development of a U3A. If there is a particular issue you would like to raise for discussion please let me know and we'll see if that could be included in Mike's session.

There are 90 U3As in the East of England region so only two members from each can be invited. Registration forms will be sent out soon but please note the date now.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The number of U3As nationally is growing fast and many U3As in this region have been active in starting one or more new U3As to cope with the desire to join. However, U3A membership is still available to only a small percentage of those who are eligible to join.

The Third Age Trust (TAT) wants a U3A to be available within a reasonable distance to many more people. It therefore wants us to identify towns or areas which would be good places to start a new U3A. I have spoken about this at two network meetings and at one a chairman said 'There are five members who come from a town some distance away. The town has surrounding villages which look to it. This would be a good place to try.'

Perhaps this would help you to identify an area. The members of your U3A would not be expected to leave, but they may be willing to help the new U3A to get established. You don't have to be involved but it is helpful if local knowledge can be shared with Zazia Pratt, the Education Development Officer for our region. She has set up many U3As with those members of the public who have come forward having had no contact with a U3A previously. I am full of admiration for the committees of the U3As which are formed this way.

In the Anglia, Herts and BedsPlus networks there are EDCs (Education Development Contacts) who help to guide and support new U3As. These are experienced U3A members who volunteer and are appointed by the TAT. If your network doesn't have one please try to encourage someone to find out more about the role from Mike Long Tel: 01827 269049 email: mike.long@u3a.org.uk.

NEWS FROM U3As

From Dorreen Linton, Blackwater U3A

Visitors to Blackwater U3A's open afternoon were amazed to discover the range of learning activities and interests available to older people through the University of the Third Age (U3A).

"We have more than 30 different interest groups. Each interest group organises its own activities, contributing knowledge, experience and skills from within the membership," Mrs Linton explained. "It opens opportunities to meet people and to share in each other's interests learned and experienced throughout life."

Blackwater U3A invited people and voluntary associations from around the Maldon district to the event, which was held on Wednesday 27th January at West Maldon Community Centre. We wanted to raise awareness of the U3A and encourage more people to get involved in this important stage of life-long learning.

From Shirley Hogg, Harwich Peninsula U3A

The Harwich Peninsula U3A is taking a stand at the Tendering Show, Nr Manningtree on 10th July 2010.

The stand will be in the education tent and a power point presentation will continuously show the various activities of some 30 groups. Photographs and posters will also be shown. The stall will be manned all day and members will be able give information as required.

The object is to demonstrate the aims and objects of the U3A and perhaps gain new members. The show itself is a public event and there will be an art exhibition, a country affairs tent, dog shows and all the usual stalls selling various wares.

Congratulations to Blackwater and Harwich Peninsula U3As for organising these events and raising the profile of U3A. The TAT is now offering £100 grant toward similar events. Information was in a recent business mailing.

From Peter Tasker, Dunstable U3A

It is all change on the Trustee's Committee at Dunstable after the AGM in May. Gill Hayward the Chairman for the last four years has stood down. We thank her for all the hard work and contribution she has made over the last 10years.

The U3A has nearly 1000 members at the end of March and is still growing. We have 89 groups with 66 leaders and are looking to hold our Leaders day in the early part of 2011. At the recent first meeting of the new Committee some good ideas came out so things are looking very positive for Dunstable.

I was invited to attend the 10th anniversary celebrations at Dunstable and it was a wonderful occasion. Every room in the building was filled with exhibitions and demonstrations.

Many U3As find the size of their hall becomes an issue as their numbers grow. When I visited Thorpe Bay U3A to present their affiliation certificate they were considering moving to a church.

From Paul Mardon Thorpe Bay U3A

Today we had our first meeting in our new venue, the Baptist Church. It is an excellent modern facility with seated accommodation for 250+ with built-in audio-visual and other services. The complex was designed as a community centre as well as a place of worship. Our meetings take place in the church itself but it is converted into a meeting room. Today we had 167 attendees which was our largest group ever. Our membership now stands at 286 including 37 signed up today.

From Maureen Huntley, Rayleigh U3A

In response to my email asking if U3As were doing anything for Adult Learners Week Maureen wrote - As far as furthering learning we are in negotiations with Essex University to work with them and the students to the better of both. More news on that as it happens. This was as a result of Marian and I going to the conference at Lancaster University earlier this year.

The TAT has recently received a report from Lancaster University about the learning relationship they developed with the Lancaster and Morecombe U3A. It's a 'How to' report which tells how U3As could approach universities to discuss learning opportunities such as access to some undergraduate lectures for U3A members.

If you are working with a university in any way please let me know. If you would like the 'How to' report please ask me for it. It will be important that U3As wishing to contact a university work together so that the university doesn't get several unco-ordinated approaches.

Bogus Callers Drama

Over a period of 9 months Roding Valley U3A performed 'Feeling Good- Keeping Safe', a series of sketches which warned people about Bogus Callers. The sketches showed how the bogus callers con us and how we can be aware and take protective action. Roding Valley worked in partnership with the Epping Forest District Council Community Safety officer who provided leaflets and freebies for the audiences of older people. In recognition of this community service Roding Valley received an Essex High Sherriffs' Award in May 2010.

Two members of Hertford U3A, Ruth Ward and Nigel Pollard, came to one of the performances and went away enthused as I had been when I first saw the sketches performed by Redbridge U3A. In June they performed the sketches for the first time to the Hertford Disability Support Group and they have two more performances booked. Congratulations to them. It takes time to get a group of members together and to rehearse the sketches but there is such a feeling of satisfaction after each performance. Some members of the audience have been victims and most know of one. The performances are written to empower, not to frighten. They are humorous and memorable. Would any other U3A like to try?

U3A PROJECTS/STUDIES/RESEARCH

At the last meeting of the TAT Standing Committee on Education (SCE) a trustee mentioned a study a U3A had done on a style of chair that was made locally. It was suggested that a record should be compiled of such studies, perhaps to be kept at the Resource Centre or on the website. This would enable other U3A interest groups or individuals who were researching a similar subject to get in touch with each other. Please will you let me know if your U3A has done a study like this so I can report back at the next SCE meeting. A form to record the studies is being compiled.

EVENTS

Olympic walk

A trustee has suggested that U3As may like to organise an Olympic walk meeting up with other U3As on the way. Information has been in the business mailing.

Leigh U3A in Essex is keen to organize a costal walk with other U3As nearby. The idea is that different U3As might cover different parts of the route with Leigh walking to Hadleigh Castle Country Park which is to be an Olympic venue for the BMX bike event. If your U3A would like to join in please contact Jennifer Simpson email: jennifer.simpson1@yahoo.co.uk. A member in Norfolk is also interested in organising something there.

Study Day 'Running a U3A' Wednesday 10 November 2010 10am-3pm in Hatfield

Herts Network of U3As is organising a study day for existing committee members or those who would like to know what is involved in running a U3A. There will be discussion groups focused on the roles of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, Groups Co-ordinator and Membership Secretary. Cost £5. For more information contact Helga Willetts email: helgatuerk@tiscali.co.uk. Open to all U3As in the region.

Essex Quiz

Wednesday 22 September in Chelmsford

Essex Association of U3As is organising an inter-U3A quiz. Information has been sent out – all welcome. Please let Doug Harryman know by 30 July if you are sending a team – or contact him for details. Tel: 020 8508 3454 Email: doug.harryman@talktalk.net

Herts Quiz

Thursday 21 October in Hemel Hempstead

Dacorum U3A is organising this year's inter-U3A quiz. £15 for tables of 6. Booking forms will be sent out in August/September but please note the date.

NETWORKS

All U3As in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk are members of the East of England region because of geographical location. However, networks are voluntary groupings of U3As and a U3A can choose which network or none to join. There are some U3As who belong to networks in the East of England region although they are in a neighbouring region. This may be because transport links are easier or they feel they have interests in common.

Anglia Association Network

My name is June Welton and I am the EDC for the Anglia Association Network. The network began four and a half years ago with a small group of 4 U3As (Huntingdon, St Neots, March and Spalding) meeting 3 times a year to support each other and share ideas. It was, from the very beginning, an informal and friendly affair and has continued to be so as it has grown. We have now added Ely, Wisbech, Melbourn and Peterborough to our fold, which gives us an interesting mix of large and small, established and new, urban and rural U3As in the Network.

The Chairmanship of the Network moves every 3 years to another member U3A...the first 3 years with Huntingdon U3A, the next and current with St Neots, and so on. Over the 3 meetings per year, we try to have;

- a) a visiting speaker at one,
- b) a workshop on an important theme at another
- c) an open forum/question and answer session at another.

In 2009 we had a visit from our (then) new Regional Trustee, Janet Whitehouse and a forum with Mike Long, the Education and Development Officer. In February 2010, we had a presentation by Lin Jonas from National Office. We are delighted to see that Janet is coming back to visit us again in June. In October, we hope to have a workshop looking at the results of the U3A Survey of members, with particular reference to gender gaps and low ethnic group numbers. So, a busy and active, but not overly burdensome, group of U3As who have gained a lot of support and information from each other.

Thank you to the Anglia Association for this contribution. Would another network like to send in a report for the next newsletter so that ideas can be shared? If your U3A isn't part of a network but would like to be please contact the relevant network chairman/chairperson.

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I am sorry if I have not been able to include your item in this newsletter or I have had to shorten it. Thank you to everyone who sent in contributions.

Janet Whitehouse

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