

Veterans are mobile

WE HAVE gained a set of wheels thanks to a Ministry of Defence grant, which has paid for a crew van to help with projects.

VIC organises outreach sessions, community projects and social inclusion projects across East Lancashire, Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale.

Hundreds of veterans have already been helped by our organisation and the crew van, funded by a grant of £21,200, will help us assist even more.

David Fishwick, from TV's Bank Of Dave fame, supplied the vehicle from his Colne-based minibus company and incorporated the veterans' modifications and VIC livery.

Manager Bob Elliott said: "This is the third grant we have received from the Ministry of Defence through the Armed Forces Community Covenant – so far we have been able to secure £65,000.

"This shows that the covenant is very real in Rossendale and we have more than matched that MoD funding through donations, fundraising, other grants and veterans freely donating their own time.

"The van has 11 seats and the back has been modified so we will be able to use it to transport items for projects we are carrying out.

"We will be using it for more social inclusion work and also to assist our community projects. It will be taking



veterans fishing and walking, will be used by the art group and for day trips."

Roger Chaney, Business Development Manager, said: "We approached David Fishwick to supply the vehicle primarily because of his focus on helping the local community which has strong links with the projects delivered by VIC."



Rossendale Hospice very kindly allowed us to use their minibus when it was not required but having our own transport opens up a whole new world.

"Our first social inclusion trip will be to a quiz night organised by Bacup And

Stacksteads Carnival Organisation at the Rose 'n' Bowl in Stacksteads on February 4," said Bob.

Dave said: "Here at David Fishwick, we are passionate not only about minibuses' but also in supporting a wide range of charitable initiatives.

"Upon learning about Veterans In Communities in detail, we were delighted to be given the opportunity to provide a vehicle specially adapted to fulfil their requirements and aid the valuable work VIC do in the local community.

"We are also pleased to be utilising the team at VIC to perform some maintenance work at our dealership in Colne, Lancashire - and look forward to working with them in the future wherever possible."

David Fishwick will be blogging the van's trips through social media and on the company's website.

SINGERS from VIC joined international opera star Sean Ruane's community choir to celebrate Christmas in Bacup town centre and at The Whitaker in Rawtenstall.



OUR very own PR officer appeared on the TV Quiz show Eggheads with a team from Stacksteads in Rossendale. Although Catherine, centre, got all



her history questions right and the team knocked

three Eggheads out, the brainboxes won in the end.

Busy behind the scenes

VIC carries out some amazing work behind the scenes.

In the last year we have helped to re-home a number veterans who were in unsuitable accommodation or homeless. In December alone we helped re-house three veterans.

VIC outreach and community development worker Suzanne Preston, **pictured**, is a whiz at filling in forms and uses her past experience and training in, housing and income maximisation to help veterans apply for benefits they are entitled to and homes that are more suitable.

She said: "Over the last 12 months I have been regularly completing housing and benefit application forms, supporting them through the process and attending assessment

hearings with veterans and their families as their advocate.



"When a new home is found for a veteran, we also facilitate organising removals and help them to acquire any furniture or household items that they need. We could not achieve this alone but do it in partnership with the network of statutory providers, organisations and charities that we have partnered with each of VIC's operational areas. We should also take this opportunity to say a big thank you to everyone who supports this endeavour through giving their time up to donating items that are needed.

Suzanne said: "Veterans have an incredibly strong work ethic, but sometimes to the point that it becomes negative.

They think if they are not working, they have no self worth."

VIC runs a number of courses to help veterans prepare themselves for the world of work and provide use of the computer room for job searching and CV writing.

In the last year more than 100 veterans have taken qualifications through VIC on courses as diverse as information, advice and guidance, to mental health awareness, sign language and dry stone walling.

"What we need to do now is build up a relationship with local employers, organisations and businesses so that when the veterans are ready to return to work they can go on and secure employment," said Suzanne.

If you need help, or you are an employer that wants to partner with VIC, contact Suzanne on 01706 833180.



Festive fundraisers

CHRISTMAS collections raised more than £1,200 to boost the work of VIC.

Members spent two long days in Rawtenstall's ASDA and Haslingden's Tesco supermarkets.

VIC Singing Group accompanied the collectors and kept spirits high. We would like to say a big thank you to the many customers who gave generously.

Painting classes

ART classes will be introduced from March for the community to learn a variety of different techniques and skills.

The Creative Community Hub at VIC will be holding special days on the first Saturday of every month from from 11am to 3pm.

The first session will teach how to paint in the style of Bob Ross and the following month there will be a session on wildlife painting.

Both will be led by arts and crafts co-ordinator Darren Horsnell.

Lessons are in 10-week blocks and cost £20, with all materials provided.

A further special arts session will be held in March with local artist Gill Fox.

Places must be booked by calling 01706 833180.

Charity of year

RESIDENTS of Helmcroft extra care sheltered scheme, Helmshore, and Westbourne, in Haslingden, have adopted VIC as their charity of the year.

A percentage of the fundraising activities held in the coming year will be donated to VIC.

The first event is an afternoon tea at Helmcroft Court on Wednesday January 28 from 2.30 when a potato pie meal will be served, with cakes to follow and a tombola, raffle and games. Admission £3.



Top honours for chairman Ronnie



CHAIRMAN of VIC Ronnie Barker now has three very prestigious letters after his name after he was made an MBE in the Queen's New Years' Honours List.

Ronnie has been a champion of VIC since its inception and has been well known for his community work in Rossendale for many years being a founder of PEER – People Encouraging Enterprise in Rossendale and a co-founder of REAL – Rossendale Enterprise Anchor Limited.

VIC manager Bob Elliott said: "It is fantastic news that Ronnie has been honoured with an MBE and it is very well deserved.

"I think I speak on behalf of all of our members when I say that we are all very proud to have Ronnie as our chairman... even if he is a civvy!"

Ronnie is a retired managing director of footwear firm E Sutton and Son in Bacup, and has devoted many years to supporting community groups and enterprise across



Ronnie and his wife Carole

Rossendale.

He said: "When I opened the letter my legs turned to jelly, it felt so strange.

"In many ways it was hard keeping the information to myself. I felt very humbled by it all.

"I have received lots of wonderful cards, emails, texts and tributes and I feel flattered that people have taken the time to send them. Even my neighbour

said it was really nice to be living next to an MBE."

Ronnie is a member of the VIC Singing Group and also volunteers with the Dementia Friendly Rossendale Steering Group. He is vice-chairman of governors at Alder Grange Community Technology School as well as being a patient representative of the East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group.

Lions support

MEMBERS of Rossendale Lions generously donated £200 to VIC from the proceeds of various fundraising efforts carried out by the organisation.

VIC member Peter Webster collected the cheque. Several other organisations were also given donations from the funds raised this year by Rossendale Lions.

Recycling

AN APPEAL to recycle unwanted presents secured an excellent array of gifts to help raise money for VIC.

Darren Horsnell, arts and crafts co-ordinator, said: "We are very grateful for all the items and will put them to very good use to help raise funds for the group."

Appeal for actors

A DRAMA based on a tragic true story of a First World War soldier shot by his own colleagues following a court martial is seeking additional actors.

Early One Morning, by Les Smith, is being staged for the first time in this area by the Rossendale Players in Waterfoot.

Some of the parts have still to be cast, in particular young men aged approximately 17-24 are needed and one girl in her 20s who plays the soldier Jim's girlfriend Lizzie.

The play will be performed at the New Millennium Theatre in April.

It tells the true story of Bolton soldier Private Jim Smith, his Court Martial and sentencing to be shot at dawn. It is set in the trenches in Flanders in 1917.

Royalties from the play will benefit Combat Stress and the Sunday night performance will be dedicated to VIC.

For more information contact director Stanley Whittaker on 01706 216185 or email tswhittaker@virginmedia.com

Outreach extends

OUTREACH has opened in different venues this month as our service has expanded.

In Bacup, for the four months while Bacup Library is closed for a refit, sessions will now be held every Wednesday from 10am-noon at Central Methodist Church, Burnley Road, Bacup.

Refreshments will be available as will bacon butties. For more information call Peter Webster on 01706 833180.

And in Heywood,



Middleton and Rochdale we now have outreach in four different locations.

Every Wednesday the service is at the Angel Project in Langley, Middleton, from 10am-noon. On the second, third and fourth weeks only outreach is at Fast Forward Café, Champness Hall, Drake Street, Rochdale, from 10am-noon.

On the first Thursday outreach is at One Riverside, Rochdale, from 10am-noon and a further outreach is on the second Monday at Crimble Croft Community Centre, Aspinall Street, Heywood, from 10.30am-noon.

An art group and drop in also started this month at Bowlee Sports and Community Centre, Windermere Road, Middleton.



ROSSENDALE

Outreach Services MONDAY-FRIDAY

11am-1pm
VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden,
BB4 5PL.

WEDNESDAY

10-12 noon
Central Methodist Church, Burnley Road,
Bacup, OL13 9AH.

Family Support

MONDAY - third week only

10am-noon
Maden Centre, Rochdale Road, Bacup,
OL13 9NZ.

WEDNESDAY

10am-1pm
VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden,
BB4 5PL.

Singing Group

THURSDAY

6.30-8.30pm

VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden,
BB4 5PL.

Art Group and drop-in

FRIDAY

11am-3pm
VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden,
BB4 5PL.

Walking Group

Walks will be held on the 2nd and 4th
Thursdays. Weather permitting.

HEYWOOD, MIDDLETON AND ROCHDALE

Outreach Service WEDNESDAYS

10am-noon
Angel Project, Langley, Middleton.

WEDNESDAY - second, third and fourth weeks only

10am-noon
Fast Forward Cafe, Champness Hall,
Drake Street, Rochdale OL16 1PB.

THURSDAY - first week only

10am-noon
One Riverside, Rochdale, OL16 1XU.

Family Support

MONDAY - second week only

10.30am-noon
Crimble Croft Community Centre, Aspinal
Street, Heywood, OL10 4HW.

Art Group and drop-in

Every other Wednesday

3pm-5pm
Bowlee Sports and Community Centre,
Windermere Road, Middleton M24 4LA.

Walking Group

Walks will be held on the 2nd and 4th
Thursdays combined with the
Rossendale walking group.

PENDLE

Outreach Service TUESDAY

10am-noon
Railway Street Community Centre,
Railway Street, Nelson, BB9 9EH.

VIC – 01706 833180

Manager Bob Elliott

bobelliott@veteransincommunities.org
07961 554 006

Business Development Manager Roger Chaney

rogerchaney@veteransincommunities.org

Outreach and Community Development

Worker Suzanne Preston

suzannepreston@veteransincommunities.org

Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth

stevebutterworth@veteransincommunities.org

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell

darrenhorsnell@veteransincommunities.org

War Graves Project Co-ordinator Peter Webster

peterwebster@veteransincommunities.org

Combat Stress Helpline

0800 138 1619

NHS Military Veterans Psychological Therapies Service (NW)

0161 253 6638

The Royal British Legion

0808 802 8080 (7 days a week 8am-8pm)

Rossendale Citizens' Advice Bureau

0844 499 4121 (from a landline)
0300 456 2552 (from a mobile)

The Samaritans

01706 830999

Mental Health Helpline

0500 639000 Mon to Fri 7pm - 11pm Sat &
Sun 12 noon to 12 midnight

Royal Air Forces Association

01772 426930

East Lancashire Single Point of Access

via GP or self-referral
01282 657116

VIC update...

HAPPY New Year – we have hit the ground running here at VIC with our extended outreach services offering more help to the veteran community on our doorstep.

We have resolved to ensure our communication is always tip top and thank you for the excellent feedback our newsletter receives. We are now making sure we continually communicate excellently with our members and have introduced a text system to remind them of activities.

Every month we are now sending a text update to veterans to make sure they are aware of everything that is happening at VIC, courses that we have planned and activities they may wish to join in with.

We also keep our social media up to date so please follow us on Twitter, log on to our Facebook page and join our group and make sure you visit our website regularly.

And please give us a wave when you see the new VIC crew van around the towns and villages of East Lancashire.

Want to help?

If you want to donate to support the work of Veterans In Communities please visit our website and click on the secure PayPal link

www.veteransincommunities.org

VIC supported by:

