

# THE WEE BLETHER

## Winter



### EXCITING TIMES

In our summer edition we were pleased to announce that we had been awarded funding from the Big Lottery to continue to develop Distance Befriending and that we had appointed Sally Mackintosh to be our new Distance Coordinator along with Yvonne. What a difference having an extra pair of hands can make! Yvonne and Sally are turning into the dynamic duo and already many jobs that were on the back burner have been tackled and are progressing well – take a look at the website to see improvements. Thank you Sally, your tenacity at this task has impressed us all.

We had hoped to be in new Inverness premises by now, however we are still negotiating the lease, so it may be after Christmas before we finally make the move. This means that we are living on top of each other in Inverness, a less than perfect situation, but one which we hope will resolve soon. Our new money has allowed us to buy a couple of new laptops and a power point projector. This will allow us to go out to other organisations and talk about Befrienders with a more professional presentation and help when we are training volunteers.

Although last year was a difficult one, ensuring that we have funding in place to continue to develop our services, we are still managing to support a large number of friendships. We currently have 82 friendships: - 35 in Inverness, 34 Distance and 13 in Nairn. Having an additional co-ordinator will allow us to support many more and we hope over the next five years to develop practices that will allow us to support more friendships without the need for additional resources.

### CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

We have a Christmas competition running to win Big Ted, the gorgeous bear donated and clothed with the fantastic knitting skills of Sandra on Skye. To win Big Ted in all his glory simply pay £1 and guess his birthday. You can either phone or email your guess and send us your money or drop in to the office to have a go in person. Competition closes on 18 December so do not delay – CALL US TODAY in the Inverness office. 01463 235675.



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[www.befriendershighland.org.uk](http://www.befriendershighland.org.uk)

## From the Management Committee, with Season's Greetings to you all



As we approach the end of another year, I would like to say how much all of us on the Management Committee appreciate and value the contribution which all of you make to the success of this wonderful organisation. Every one of you – friends, volunteers and staff – contributes to this success and it is, as always, a pleasure to hear of all that you are doing. You are the service and we hear, time and again, of the real happiness you bring to each other. Thank you all.

With Christmas and the New Year approaching, this is a time of year when the picture on the TV is of people joined together in families and relationships, celebrating together. But, for so many people, we know that it isn't really like that. Being on your own at this time of year is harder than it is at almost any other. And it's cold, and dark most of the time, too!

So we really must celebrate the love and the friendship which is at the heart of Befrienders Highland. It is much more precious than the gifts which money can buy. We wish you all a Happy Christmas and New Year and look forward to working together with you all again in 2010. Best wishes.



David Stallard, Convenor, on behalf of all of the Management Committee

### Inverness



The past few months have seen a few new matches and a few friendships coming to an end.

It is a busy time in Inverness with a large number of people showing an interest in becoming volunteers and six people recently deciding to go forward for our training. We also welcome two new trained volunteers... Lizzy and Mags. We hope to have them matched up in a friendship soon.

The past year has seen an unprecedented number of referrals. We do not know why this is, but speculate that because both the Council and NHS Highland are having to make budget cuts, and so would like to use our service more. Inverness is currently funded to support 24 friendships, but is supporting 35. We have many more people who would like to use our service and so will have to find extra funding in order to support the need for friendship in Inverness.

### Nairn and Ardersier

We in Nairn have now settled into the office in Barron House and it is great that you can all pop in and see me, so if you haven't been in yet, pop in for a chat. Just a wee reminder that we will still require to find new accommodation before January 2011, any ideas are welcome.

Nairn would like to welcome two new volunteers, Betty and Nick, who have just recently completed their training, increasing our number of volunteers to 17 and giving a much needed boost to our male volunteer numbers making them now 3. Finding male volunteers is not that easy, so it is brilliant when even one comes along. Nairn has also had 6 referrals since the Spring two of whom are now matched with volunteers.

This December sees one of our friendships celebrating 10 years of befriending and we would like to wish David and Andrew all the best in their continuing friendship.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from Nairn



## Distance

It was great having Sally join the team in September. She has fitted in so well and done such a lot already that it seems like she's been here for ages!

We have been out and about doing lots of networking - letting people know what we do, how to refer to us and how to become volunteers. It's been fun and in general people are very interested and enthusiastic about Distance Befriending. We had a stand at the Eastgate Centre in October and stopped passers-by with a mini survey on people's attitudes to Mental Health. We gave out sweetie lollies as a wee 'reward' for completing the survey - and people were very 'sweet' to us! Even better, we had 5 people sign up as possible volunteers on the day as well as lots of others who were interested and took our leaflets.

We've visited mental health teams in Wick, Invergordon, Aviemore and Fort William and that has resulted in a few more referrals coming our way which has all been very rewarding.



The WISH group will be getting their third newsletter in November and that issue has a few contributions from the members. We are hoping for more of that in the coming months as folk get more confidence to ask questions, or give tips, or let each other know what piece of stitching or knitting they are working on. It's a fun and non-threatening way to be part of a group.

We are looking forward to expanding the numbers of Friends and Volunteers with Distance Befriending in the coming months - that is the sort of busyness that we enjoy!



## Introducing Sally



As the baby in the team I joined Distance Befriending in September after a 10 year plan to move to the Highlands. I am married to the lovely John who is originally from Forres and we have finally fulfilled our dream and now are settled in our lovely wee hoose in Sutherland. I have been living and working in Fife for the past 12 years in a couple of different roles, running a social action research charity for disabled people and latterly as a Disability Employment Co-ordinator with Fife Council social work department. Both great jobs and I was very happy in them but they weren't in the Highlands! Joining Distance Befriending has been the icing on the cake and when I read the job description I thought it had been written for me, I was so excited. I shall work hard and try my best to make sure I do a good job for everyone. I am really enjoying being part of a great team and look forward to meeting volunteers and friends over time. Best wishes for a very happy and peaceful Christmas to you all x



## Management Committee

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we are looking for new people to join the management committee.

We are keen to have people from a business, legal or marketing background who could help guide Befrienders.

We currently do not have anyone who is a user of our service or a volunteer befriender on our committee and would welcome interest from people who feel that they have something to contribute to the good running and development of Befrienders Highland. If you are interested, please contact Graeme for an initial discussion.



VOLUNTEER & FRIENDS NEWS



Celebrating 10 Years of Friendship

David and Andrew



Andrew (right) presents David with a top performance certificate

Come the 7th of December Andrew and I will have been befriending for 10 years. After a bad start with my first befriender, I wondered if it was me, but I was re-matched with Andrew and have reaped the rewards of being a friend over the last 10years.

We do all sorts of things together, we go for long walks, cycle runs, car runs, swimming, support our local football team and the best thing so far is going to the Edinburgh Tattoo. My friend is now like part of my family and has also struck up a great friendship with my dog, Misty, whom he has known since a puppy, sometimes I wonder who is her master! Misty accompanies us on most outings and is not happy if we don't take her. As our friendship has grown we have built up a trust and we can share all things in our lives and have a great two way friendship.

Thank you my friend, Andrew, for being there in good and rough times.

David.

David has been my best friend for the past 10 years, and I can't forget his lovely dog Misty.

We have travelled all over the place such as — Dingwall, Alness, Elgin, Forres, Invergordon, Cromarty, Buckie, Inverness and Edinburgh.

Every year on the 1st of January we go to Jimmy Chungs in Elgin for our New Year Dinner.

We have been to 3 Edinburgh Tattoo's and we are planning our 4th one. David has given me the confidence to organise the Tattoo myself. I would like to thank him for being my Best Friend over the years, and long may it continue.



Fireworks at the Tattoo

Andrew

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR HOLIDAYS

All staff will be having some time off at Christmas and New Year:

- Graeme Christmas Leave = 21 Dec - 4 Jan.
- Yvonne Christmas Leave = 23 – 28 Dec and 31 Dec – 7 Jan
- Heather Christmas Leave = 23 Dec – 11 Jan.
- Sally Christmas Leave = 18 Dec - 4 Jan

Yvonne will work between 28 – 31 December and will pick up any phone messages left for Inverness and Nairn during that time. If you want to contact Befrienders over the Christmas holidays it is best that you call the Distance Befriending number 01463 235675.