Neath Port Talbot Stroke Group (NPTSG)

Quarterly Newsletter – October 2019

A warm welcome to our quarterly newsletter

My Stroke Journey:

In January 2013 I took early retirement after working 37 years in the NHS not thinking that in 6 months I would be back in the NHS but as an inpatient after I was admitted as a stroke case.I had undiagnosed hypertension and had a haemorrhagic stroke-not a clot but a little bleeder! The stroke was in the left part of my brain which affected my right arm and leg, I ve lost sensation on my right side to this day.After 10 weeks in Morriston and Singleton Hospitals I was discharged and then the really hard part of rehab began.

Each stroke is different-affecting right or left sides, possibly your speech, movement, cognition, sight, emotions, mental health and so on and what works for one person may not work for another - there's no "one size fits all". All I'm going to do is share with you what I did-somethings worked, others I got badly wrong!

The underlying cause of my stroke was high blood pressure,I was worried that I might have another stroke so I changed parts of my life style to reduce the risk-got my weight down through exercise ,improved my diet, drank responsibly and the blood pressure came down(and I wasn't too miserable).Actually its quite a laugh at the gym where we have lots of banter ,strictly no lycra, its a good social occasion, and we get a bit of exercise too!

As you press on with your rehab you inevitably get good days and bad days.Go easy on yourself,listen to your body, sometimes it just isn't working so take a day off and come back stronger and more determined next time. There's no crime in having a day off .Rest and plenty of sleep are equally important to help healing during stroke recovery.

Accept offers of help-my pride and stubbornness led me to decline offers of help, I thought I could do it all, what a big mistake I made there.I said I was determined, my daughters said I was like a pig headed mule, and they were probably right, but you didn't hear that from me! For example ,now I do get assistance when travelling,it has enabled me to use the train service to stay with friends and family around the UK and go on holiday to various resorts in Europe using the help at airports. I even accept the occasional lift as well.

As time goes by progress seems less easy to identify and this can be a bit dispiriting, sometimes its called reaching a plateau .I was advised to keep a diary or journal celebrating each success, each new initiative I started etc.Its amazing how things add up over time, how you can look back at what you did a year or two ago and see how far you have come. If you' re are bit down you get a boost to appreciate how far you have grown in your life. Results come over time not overnight. Be patient but persevere ,and isn't it sweet when you prove people wrong.

Unfortunately in 2016 my wife died suddenly and it was like being on square 1 again ,the one thing I promised myself was every time I had a setback I was to brush myself down and start all over again if necessary. My daughters have been very supportive but I have had to realign chunks of my life to compensate for the loss of Hazel. Its been a case of trying to ensure that there's a purpose and structure to my life .I love listening to music of all types and can find music to suit my mood and this is a superb form of relaxation and satisfaction to me.

It's a big asset having the chance to go to the NPTSG each week. It provides a safe environment where stroke survivors, their family and carers can meet, where they can talk freely about their condition or concerns, where they can pool their collective knowledge and expertise, where they can support each other in finding a meaningful life after stroke. It's a resource greatly valued by its membership who are supported by a very hard working committee and volunteers.

Being part of the group gives you access to a great set of friends and a wide range of different events, social, educational, recreational; which other group would you find on the agenda samba drumming, designing pottery mugs, carving pumpkins, choir singing, petting cockroaches, directing films to name a few? I'm glad I found the Group, long may it flourish! Huw Williams

Goodbye ☹

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to our treasured treasurer Suzanne and all-round fantastic organiser & fundraiser Lee. They have both been with us since our early beginnings, (when sometimes there were only 4 group members at a meeting). They selflessly gave their all to us for 5 years and helped us grow into the massive success we are today. Thankfully it's not a permanent goodbye and they will still both be coming along to group meetings and our events…but this time to enjoy!! Thank you both so much for all you have done for us. You have changed the lives of so many stroke survivors and their loved ones.

Hello ☺

Please give a wonderfully warm welcome to NPTSG's newest Trustee, Maureen! Maureen has a wealth of skills from her extensive work and voluntary past. We can't wait to start learning from her. Recently, Maureen has been looking after our Facebook Page and if that's anything to go by…she's going to be amazing for us all. She also runs our savings club, so if you want to save for Christmas, a holiday or a rainy day, she can help you. Feel free to chat to her and pass on any ideas you may have.

This is what this busy NPTSG bunch has been up to.

Longleat

On a beautiful sunny day in July. A grand total of 89 NPTSG members with families and friends caught 2 coaches to Longleat. We enjoyed the Safari (even though one coach had a hiccup and didn't want to join in), We had the stunning Longleat House, animals, the train, the boat. There was so much to do and not enough time. We will all have to go back again.

Curry Night Fundraiser – Cinnamon Kitchen

Our 5th annual fundraiser curry night was held at Cinnamon Kitchen Indian Restaurant on Aberavon Beach. We had 47 attendees, the food was once again fantastic and a superb time was had by all. A very big thank you is deserved by Ram and the rest of the staff. Very accommodating as usual and nothing was too much trouble. We also raised a brilliant £380 from the meals and raffle

Aberavon Beach Walk & Lunch @ Four Winds
One Wednesday after group nearly 40 of us went for a lovely stroll along Aberavon beach some of us stopping for a coffee along the way and some going down and playing on the sand with their children. Then we had a lovely carvery at the four winds I must say it was wonderful. I think everybody enjoyed we look forward to going down to Aberavon beach again in the spring when we will have a game of crazy golf and maybe a bag of chips.

Car Treasure Hunt
July the 27th saw this year's Treasure Hunt. All 58 courageous participants met at Aberavon Rugby Club, with the first car leaving at 11.30 and at regular 5-minute intervals until the last car had left with all the directions to follow to get them to the final destination and questions to answer on route. Most adventurers took around 2 hours to get to the Ty-Risha public house in Bridgend where food and drinks and laughs were aplenty. The winners were Stuart, Gemma and daughters. Looking forward to next years event, which will be run by Georgia and Paul Thompson.

Bikeability Ride Out & Lunch @ Dunavnt
We paid a thoroughly enjoyable visit to Bikeability. Some spectated but the majority of members tried out the various adapted bicycles suitable for all abilities and disabilities. There were big beaming smiles everywhere as we took advantage of the different bikes available. From recumbent bikes to side by side tandems to electric bikes, all types were tried. A fantastic place we can't wait to visit again. This followed a visit to The Dunvant restaurant, somewhere new for some of the group. A wide choice of meals was offered which everyone very much enjoyed.

Comedy Night

This year has seen us celebrate 5 years of NPTSG, our yearly comedy night was on the 14th of September at the Aberavon Beach hotel. The evening started off with guests being serenaded by the lovely tones of Afante Ladies Choir. The rest of the evening we were entertained by the larger than life Gary Le Vell and his entourage of comedy impressions. Where else could you pay £15 and get to see Take That, 2 Kevin Costners and Baby from Dirty Dancing. OH what a night.

What's coming up for you to enjoy

9th October @ Weekly Group. Give a Hand & Bake
Are there any Mary Berry's who fancy bringing along their delicious delights? Please feel free to bring your own made or shop bought cakes. We will sell them all and raise vital funds for the Stroke Association. What could be better than, cake, cuppa and a good old chat? This week Alison from NPT Carers will be coming along to tell us what amazing work they do and we will be enjoying, cake, cuppas and a chat. Please bring a few £1 coins to buy some cakes.

A do it Ourselves…Murder Mystery. @ St Cakes Public School. Friday 8th November
We are looking for budding actors/actresses to take part in our interactive night of **MURDER!!**
We need 8 main characters, 8 Heads of House, 8 Prefects, 8 Swots. Public School Fancy Dress Essential.
£7 includes meal – See Maureen 07880-257125

Blackpool – 28th October

On 28th October 7 intrepid adventurers have booked to spend a 5 day vacation in a foreign country. There are still spaces available to join the expedition to Blackpool, imagine, the northern lights, the famous tower including strictly's ballroom and all the fun of the fair. If you find yourself interested have a chat with Lee Ashford for all of the information.

Brecon Mountain Railway Train Ride & Lunch 30th Oct
This half term please invite your friends and family to join us at Brecon Mountain Railway for an incredible ride through the beautiful Brecon mountains. Lunch is at 12.45pm then all aboard the train @ 2.30pm. The station and train are fully accessible. For a full list of prices and menu choices please see Rob 07392-060305

Nataly Churchill Psychic Medium – 7pm Tuesday November 19th @ Aberavon Beach Hotel

We are hosting our 4th incredibly popular evening with the mind blowing Psychic Medium, Nataly Churchill. Please tell all your friends that Nataly will be in Port Talbot and buy tickets ASAP. This event has sold out every time. Tickets are just £8 and are only available in advance and not on the door. Please see Emma for tickets. 07456-451073

Birmingham Christmas Market – 1st Dec

On Sunday, December 1st 20 odd of us are going on our annual trip to the Christmas markets. This is a two-night trip where we have a full day at the Birmingham Christmas market and the following day, we will stop at Cheltenham Christmas market. The cost of this trip is £110 and there are spaces left this is for dinner bed and breakfast. We normally have a blast and try to make use of the 2 for 1 bar we have also enjoyed some evening entertainment. If you are interested in joining us, please see Paul

Cardiff Christmas Market – 7th December

Annually we hold a Christmas shopping trip with the coach provided free of charge. This year to maximise on shopping time and to support all things Welsh we are visiting our fantastic capital Cardiff, which has an incredible Christmas market. The coach maximum capacity is 49 so we will be reserving seats for group members first. If there are any available seats we will then be opening it to friends and family.

Christmas Lunch -12.30pm Thursday 12th December @ Manor Park Clydach

This year we are trying a new venue for our Christmas lunch. After much searching and negotiating we finally decided on Manor Park which is in Clydach. Full payment and food choices will be needed in advance. The price for the meal will be £18 per person. This will include a starter, main, dessert, mince pies and tea or coffee. I hope you can all make it and we have a lovely Christmas time please see Paul

We're for life after stroke

Dates for Your Diary:

2nd Oct – Autumn Bulb Planting

9th Oct – Give a Hand & Bake. Please bring your gorgeous cakes, enjoy a cuppa & natter.

16th Oct – Singing with Strike A Chord

23rd Oct – Captain David Jones – Talk

28th Oct - Blackpool 5 days 4 nights trip

29th Oct - World Stroke Day - information event

30th Oct – Pumpkin carving (Half Term, so bring the kids)

30th Oct – Brecon Mountain Railway. Train ride & Lunch. Family & friends very welcome

6th Nov – Fire Service Information Talk

Friday 8th November - Murder Mystery – Four Winds £7 per person - Actors wanted!!!

13th Nov – Christmas Crafts with Helena

19th Nov – Nataly Churchill Psychic Evening £8 per person

20th Nov – Poinsettia Decorating

27th Nov – Dotty Spotty Pottery Christmas Crafts

1st Dec - Christmas Trip to Coventry 3 days & 2 nights

4th Dec – Buffalo Bill in Swansea Talk

7th Dec – Christmas Shopping Trip Cardiff

11th Dec – Christmas Crafts - Working with Nature NPT

12th Dec – Christmas Lunch @ Manor Park £18 per person

18th Dec – Christmas Celebration Group, Buffet & Karaoke

New website: nptsg.org.uk

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