

February 2021

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Introduction from Sam Mauger

As we move out of February, we are beginning to look forward to new beginnings.

The Member Link programme launched this week. This is a collaboration of members, committees, volunteers and the Trust with the aim of renewing our energy to sustain and grow our u3a-wide community. You will hear about the programme in this newsletter and more in the coming months.

We have pulled together ideas from the past, and ideas that have evolved from u3as during Covid to share the best of what we can do.

Keep sending us your ideas too, every idea counts. I hope you all keep safe and well and I hope you enjoy this newsletter.

With regards,
Sam Mauger
Chief Executive



Member Link

This month, we launched Member Link, a new initiative to support u3as.

Member link is about the whole membership, trustees, members – online and offline –staff and u3as coming together to help and support each other to keep connecting, learning and laughing.

If you would like a member link leaflet, please ask your committee to share it with you.

Your Stories

“In the first months of the pandemic, we sent out a daily ‘Light Relief’ email to members which is now a twice weekly newsletter.

We were very mindful from the start that we have a small number of members who hadn’t given us an email, so we wrote to them asking firstly if they wanted to share an address with us, or if they would like someone to phone and calls have been made on an ad hoc basis.

A printed copy of our Christmas newsletter was delivered by volunteers to those without email addresses. This resulted in quite a few safe distanced doorstep conversations.”

– Christine, Mawdesley Villages u3a

u3a News

Cirencester u3a Walk A Mile and Smile

Cirencester u3a took part in a ‘Walk a Mile and Smile’ challenge. Members were encouraged to walk in their neighbourhoods and every mile was tracked on a virtual journey around Britain.

Vice chair of Cirencester u3a, Anne Vardy, said, ‘Over 75 members contributed miles. We walked 2,850 miles. Who would have thought that walking around Cirencester could be such fun.’

Photo, left: taken by a Cirencester u3a member on a walk.



News from the Board

Chair of the Third Age Trust, Ian McCannah

“Over 70% of u3a Committees responded to a Membership Survey at the beginning of the year. Their forecast of the impact of COVID-19 on their membership renewals over recent months was one of the key questions.

Across the movement, the indications are that on average there will be a 20% fall from the previous year. Within this overall figure, there were significant variations as some u3a committees have been able to maintain some membership activity whilst others have found online technology more challenging.

To assist u3a Committees wishing to retain and recruit members when government and insurance guidelines permit, the Trust is launching two initiatives this month: Member Link and a Recruitment Toolkit, created by the Recruitment Working Group.

In recognition of the impact the pandemic is having on the finances of a u3a, the Trust has advised committees that the membership subscription will be based this April on the number of members on the books this March 31, instead of, as previously, the highest number in the previous twelve months. The TAM Distribution Charge has also been frozen for the coming year.

With a combination of these local and national initiatives, the movement should be well placed to face a changed environment.”

Celebrations

Barnsley u3a have received an Age Friendly award for their work bringing social and learning opportunities to older adults in their community.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Barnsley u3a have been finding ways for their members to stay connected.

Chair of Barnsley u3a, Alan Swann, said, “Barnsley u3a is proud to receive this award which recognises the work that we do in promoting the need for older people to continue learning, undertaking leisure activities and ensuring regular social interaction after retirement.”



In Focus

Barbara Cordina, Trustee for East of England



I joined the u3a in 2008 and held several roles, including being a Trust volunteer, before becoming the Trustee for the East of England Region at the 2020 AGM.

The favourite part of my u3a experience has been the opportunity to learn and socialise with others, and to feel a valuable part of the movement. I have met many lovely people during my time as a member and shall always value these friendships.

To become a trustee seemed to be a natural progression. I found that as a trust volunteer I was encountering more u3as and beginning to feel a responsibility to represent them at a higher level. For me communication with the members on the ground is the most important aspect of my regional role.

I have gained a whole new perspective on life since I joined the u3a, a feeling that I belong to a successful and caring community. To be surrounded by volunteers is great because we are all making a contribution.

How would I describe u3a in three words? Invaluable, Progressive and Supportive.

Headline photos: John Horton Market Harborough u3a shared on our u3a Facebook group, Croydon u3a's virtual pancake flipping contest, Allan of Leigh Estuary u3a as part of our Winter Watch learning initiative.

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