



MASE Monthly Newsletter - August 2018



Proud recipients of The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and The British Citizen Award for work in the Community

Let's start an epidemic with a Smile !



It is hard to believe we are once again in the month of August. Although many of us have found the sunny days quite uncomfortable, we must remember that sunshine also boosts our serotonin levels, which they say makes us happier. Also in the heat we must take things easy and not rush around as much. Please make sure you are drinking lots of water and keeping yourselves hydrated, but most importantly always remember to **S M I L E.....**

Smiling is infectious you catch it like the flu, when someone smiled at me today, I started smiling too. I passed around the corner, and someone saw me grin, and when he smiled, I realised I had passed it onto him! I thought about the smile and realised it's worth, a single smile like mine could travel around the earth. So if you feel a smile begin, don't leave it undetected, lets start an epidemic quick and get the world infected!



The Day I Lost My Voice - Written by a Carer

Something terrible happened to someone I love, and on that day, I became a Carer. This was also the day I lost my voice. I could still make myself heard and understood, but I found I had no words to describe the events and feelings that were rocking my world. Since that day I have struggled to write, and I often sit with a blank screen in front of me. In the past I always found writing easy, and often wrote for pleasure, or as a way to reflect on my experience. But lately, the times that I do manage to capture an idea I find that the words seem to lack substance by the time they reach my page.

I also found that I was losing my voice around others. Well-meaning friends and family who wanted to encourage and share their concern would ask me for updates. I found myself unable to provide more than a "doing okay", or "coming along" because I could not give them the answer that they craved, the answer that I also craved. I wanted to be able to report about a life restored to normal, to offer hopes of new developments. I didn't want to talk about the realities of a "new normal", and I certainly had enough grief of my own without taking on theirs as well.

This inability to communicate about grief, about change, about anxiety, it painted wide streaks of loneliness across my days. I desperately wanted to talk about it all to anyone who would listen, but I couldn't think of a way that didn't feel selfishly skewed to be about me. I couldn't figure out a way to explain the fears and worries that kept me awake at 3am, and whenever I tried I fell to pieces. Though many people want to be there for you in these moments, very few of them are prepared to deal with a full melt-down of emotional control. So instead, whenever I heard a story in conversation or watched a show that was even a bit emotional, I wept. Not because it was sad, but because I was sad and had no outlet.

It's been about a year now, and I no longer burst into tears daily, but I still haven't really found my voice. However, I have had some time to reflect on my experiences of becoming a Carer. I can see that the adjustment to my new role was traumatic and sudden, but I am learning to take each day individually rather than imagining the vista of thousands of days in my future just like this one. I recognise that my experience is only my experience and I cannot base my assumptions of the caring role of others on my realities. But it has struck me how glibly, how easily I used to write and talk about "listening to voice of the carer", when my own experience has been one in which my voice as a Carer was inaccessible. Even if I had had the time and mental energy required to fill out a survey or attend a focus group, my voice deserted me at a time when I desperately needed it to shout about what I needed and what my family needed.

If someone were to ask me tomorrow how they could hear my voice as a Carer, and get my input into the services I or my loved one needed to access, I would say: be flexible with me, this is less about your questions than you realise. It is about my life, and some days my voice may be available to me, and some days it may not. It is not like recounting a mildly difficult trip to the grocers, it is about pulling apart the complicated layers of Velcro that hold my life and my memories together and hoping the right stuff spills out. Take the time to build my trust and recognise that if I can tell you what you want to know, use that information carefully, respond to me empathetically, because you may have been the only person I have been able to tell.

Alzheimer's Society Dementia Helpline 0300 222 1122 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and Saturday and Sunday 10am - 4pm.

Daphne Sharp ☎ 01785 211140 or 07939 505455
Elaine Dunlop ☎ 01785 823110 or 07812 440226

MASE Co-ordinators
MASE

✉ Daphne.scharp@ntlworld.com
✉ Elaine.dunlop12@btinternet.com

Beware of Scams - HMRC



HMRC is calling on everyone to stay vigilant in the fight against fraudsters, who are using email and text messages to scam people out of their savings. **HMRC only informs you about tax refunds through the post. All emails, text messages, or voicemail messages saying you have a tax refund are a scam.** Never click on any links with these messages.
. Forward them immediately to HMRC's phishing email address and phone number below.

We know that criminals will try and use events like the end of the financial year, the self-assessment deadline, and the issuing of tax refunds to target the public and attempt to get them to reveal their personal data. It is important to be alert to the danger.

Many of these fraudulent emails and texts include links which take the user to dubious websites where their information can be stolen. These sites are a focus of HMRC's efforts to tackle fraud. In March 2018, it requested 2,672 phishing websites be taken down and received 84,549 phishing reports. This kind of phishing is expected to continue in the coming months as genuine tax refunds are issued.

Income Tax for 6 April 2017 to 5 April 2018 will be calculated over the coming months and anyone owed a genuine tax rebate will receive a tax calculation letter by post between June and October.

If you haven't paid the right amount at the end of the tax year, HMRC will post you a tax calculation. This can be a P800 or a Simple Assessment letter. If you have paid too much tax, the letter will explain how you can get your refund paid to you. If you have not paid enough tax, the letter will tell you how much you owe and how you can pay.

Recognise the signs - genuine organisations like banks and **HMRC will never contact you** out of the blue to ask for your PIN, password or bank details. Please stay safe - do not give out private information, reply to text messages, download attachments or click on links in emails you weren't expecting.

Take IMMEDIATE action - forward suspicious emails claiming to be from HMRC to phishing@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk and texts to 60599, or contact Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 to report any suspicious calls you receive.

Walking for Eileen

Robert Pitcher is again this year raising funds for the MASE with a tribute walk to his dear late wife Eileen.

'Walking for Eileen' takes place on Saturday 1 September at 12 noon, at Marquis Drive, Cannock Chase WS12 4PW. People are still able to sponsor Robert : please call 01543 270539 if you would like to make a pledge, or contact walkingforeileen2018@outlook.com if you would like a sponsor form.

Currently there are seven MASE volunteers taking part in the walk, and six Carers. Robert feels it would give Carers taking part a boost knowing they are making a contribution to the MASE Groups. Obviously this is a tribute walk to Eileen, but Robert is hoping to make it a annual community event. The Hednesford Lions are talking about supporting this event for 5 years. The walk is 3.5 km, along a friendly even pathway. The 10 km walk will finish at approximately 4:30 pm. With a choice of distances, you can invite family and friends along to support the walk.

All proceeds of the Walk will go towards funding the work of MASE Monthly Alzheimer's Support Evenings.

Mid Counties Co-operative 2018 Celebrity Charity Football Match

Jet 2 TV All Stars vs Coop Mid-counties will be holding a Celebrity Charity Football March on **Sunday August 26th** at **Rushall Olympic Football Club, Daw End, Walsall WS4 1LJ** to raise funds for The MASE and four other charities. Celebrities from Coronation Street, Emmerdale and Hollyoaks will all be playing on the day. So please come along and support the event. For Tickets please see the posters at your respective Groups, or speak to Daphne or Elaine. Please come along and support what we hope will be a fantastic afternoon.

If you have a computer please take a look at our website which covers all MASE activities: www.themasegroup.com

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