

NEWS

Issue 2 – August 2015

Road
Victims
Trust
Giving hope to rebuild lives

'Welcome to the 2nd edition of the Road Victims Trust newsletter. The experience and professionalism of our team of Staff, Volunteers and Trustees ensures that we provide the best levels of practical and emotional support to those affected by a road death across Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. However, we also rely heavily on the wonderful generosity and friendship of so many of you. Thank you for your ongoing support.'

Mark Turner – Chief Executive



What would we do without them

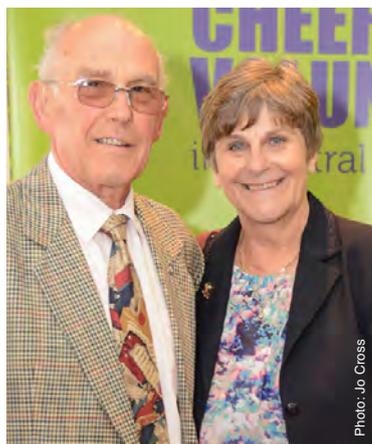


Photo: Jo Cross

Cheering Volunteers Awards 2015

One of our Counselling Volunteers, Margaret was nominated for an award at the Cheering Volunteers Awards in Central Bedfordshire.

The awards took place on 2 June during Volunteers Week. Margaret has been a Counselling Volunteer with the Road Victims Trust for seven years.

The work of a Counselling Volunteer is highly specialised requiring good counselling skills, knowledge of what happens following a road death and great sensitivity. The work involves the grief and trauma experienced by those our service supports. In her seven years with us Margaret has worked with many families and individuals giving freely of

her time to support and provide hope to those coping with the aftermath of a collision. As well as the weekly sessions she provides she has also attended inquests and court hearings as part of the Trust work – she devotes over 20 hours a week to the Trust.

Margaret was presented with a well-deserved Highly Commended Volunteer of the Year!

Not only is Margaret a valued Trust Counselling Volunteer but she is also a member of the Inner Wheel, she cooks for the elderly through her work with the Amptill Baptist Church, and also volunteers for two hours each week in her local community café.

Congratulations from the Trust to Margaret and thank you for all you have done and continue to do for those we support.

Partnerships . . . the Police



Assistant Chief Constable Mike Colbourne leads the Collaborated Roads Policing teams across Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. Each year there are between 75 and 90 deaths on the roads of the three counties.

Formal Service Level Agreements mean that details of every person affected by a fatal collision are referred to the RVT which then makes contact with these people to offer free emotional and practical support that is tailored to the needs of the individual. This lasts for as long as is useful.

Talking about the working relationship, Mike said: "The partnerships enjoyed between us are unique nationally and the early intervention of RVT Counselling Volunteers provides the best possible levels of victim care. I remain indebted to the RVT for their passion, enthusiasm and sheer hard work in delivering such vital care and help."

RVT Chief Executive, Mark Turner, said: "Police officers across three Forces do a fantastic job in the most testing of circumstances. The strong working relationships have done so much to help people whose lives have been devastated by a road death."

Say Hello . . .

Meet our Trustee **Clifton Ibbett** who was recently awarded the OBE for services to charity and the community in Bedfordshire. Clifton has been involved in the Road Victims Trust from the very beginning and a great supporter over 20 years. We are delighted he has received the award. It is well deserved and we would like to offer Clifton our congratulations.



Clifton became involved with RVT after his two daughters were tragically killed in a road collision in 1982.

He said: "I count myself very fortunate to have had very supportive parents, a reasonably strong Christian faith, many friends connected with the church, many friends and business colleagues and, not in any way to belittle them, many 'just friends'. It was an amalgam of all these people with their many and different backgrounds and life experiences which helped us through the first few months.

How I became involved . . .

"It began one cold February evening in 1984 when my son John and I both arrived at the back door together. He had had a particularly bad day at work, and broke down and said: "You and mum had a lot of support when the girls had their collision, but nobody realised I had lost my sisters." As a consequence something formal was set up under the auspices of Victim Support and with the active involvement of the police. From a portacabin in Bedford Road Police Station the office moved to the Victim Support premises in Kempston, and received great support and encouragement from its Director.

When it became apparent that we did not fit with Victim Support procedures, and in spite of the best efforts of the team to try to get a sustainable working arrangement, the Road Victims Trust was born. The rest has been a real success story and we are now celebrating 20 years of service."



Trust Administrator **Alison Panton** used to be a legal secretary in London, and took a 22-year break to be a mother in 1989!

The introduction of the Bedford Learning Centre enabled her to attain the computer skills required to re-join the business world of today, of which she is truly grateful to Bedford College for providing this opportunity. Alison joined the RVT in October 2012, having first volunteered in the August of that year to help with admin duties. She feels that being a Trust Administrator for the charity enables her to work alongside a team that provides this much-needed service to families in the three counties. Alison enjoys amateur dramatics, and in the summer enjoys the cricket season with her husband Bob. She has six grown-up children and nine grandchildren.

Why we do what we do

Lives turned upside down . . . the Chapman's Story

In an interview with a local paper several years ago Ray and Janet Chapman talked about the aftermath following the death of their 14-year-old son Jake in 2009.

Ray described how the death had turned their lives upside down and, in the early days, he was in a state of shock. He said: "You put barriers up to protect yourself, your family and close friends. The trouble is if you don't let those barriers down, you become like a pressure cooker. Sooner or later something will blow. What the Trust counsellor does is like a release valve."

Janet added: "It is easier to talk to a stranger because you know talking to family and friends will upset them. Without the charity I think I would be a mess. The counselling takes the burden away because you can talk and it is in total confidence."



Ray and Janet have kindly agreed to look back now in 2015 and reflect on their experience five-and-a-half years after Jake died.

'It all started on that fateful day, 27 December 2009. We got a call to say our son



Jake had been involved in an accident. At the hospital we discovered that Jake had been killed in a road traffic accident . . . our nightmare began.

We actually discovered the Road Victims Trust (RVT) by accident. After following advice in literature from the police, Ray went to local solicitors in Baldock where we were asked if we had been in contact with RVT . . . until then we had never heard of it. The lady then phoned RVT and spoke with Frances and gave her Ray's details. Frances then called Ray and arranged to come and see us both, and so our RVT journey began.

We started out with weekly visits from Frances every Friday morning. There were tears and laughter. Frances let us either talk or cry about Jake . . . she also told us that neither of us were to blame and that nothing would change what had happened and the 'what if' culture would not bring Jake back. Where there was darkness and despair in our lives, we began to see a glimmer of hope . . . this took between 6 and 12 months. Also during that first six months we had the inquest, which Frances supported us with and attended, taking us to the court. We had continual visits from Frances for about two years during which time we could actually talk about Jake without bursting into tears. We all then came to a mutual agreement that we were now able to carry on with day-to-day life, but were also told that we could contact RVT if we felt that we were not coping.

Without the valuable support of RVT we do not know where we would be now. This is a wonderful, supportive organisation that we will be eternally grateful to.

Janet and Ray Chapman – June 2015

"I've had to learn to live without my husband."

Lady Susan Acland, from Cambridgeshire, tells how the Road Victims Trust helped her cope with trauma and bereavement.

Six years ago, Sue and her husband Sir John Acland were making a routine journey back from Milton Keynes when their car suddenly skidded off the road.



"I was doing about 70mph when I suddenly noticed something dark on the road surface just in front of us, which I later found out to be oil from the pickup truck, whose engine had exploded. Unable to avoid the oil, Sue lost control of the car, which collided with the truck. I didn't have a scratch on me, but I could tell straight away John was badly injured. I was completely beside myself and didn't know what to do."

A passing motorist phoned for emergency services and Sue and her husband were cut from the wreckage and taken to hospital, where John was put on a ventilator. The doctors did everything they could to save him, but he had suffered massive brain damage. They kept him alive long enough for the family to say their goodbyes.

The next day Sue returned home, where she struggled to cope. She said: "Leaving John at the hospital was unbearable. Every day I was conscious of him being missing. However, the traumatic shock was so overwhelming that it blotted everything out and I couldn't mourn for the husband I had lost."

Two weeks after John's death Sue received a letter from the Road Victims Trust. She called us and arranged to receive over-the-phone support from one of our specially-trained counselling volunteers.

"In those first months I used to look forward to that one-hour phone call each week and it was the only thing that kept me going," she said. "They understood what I was going through and were the only people I could talk to about the things that were really bothering me. They helped me get through the inquest with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy exercises that challenged my thinking and stopped the endless questions I had going through my mind. They also offered a listening ear so I could tell my story and begin to accept what had happened."

With the help of the Trust, Sue has now begun to put her life back together and focus on the future. "I've had to make a new life with new people and my world has become much smaller. However, the Road Victims Trust helped me realise there are things I can still enjoy. There's not a day when I don't think about the loss of my husband. John was an amazing man – clever, larger than life and lots of fun, the kind of person you really miss – and I'm now able to focus more on the good times we shared together," she added.

Sue has also become more involved in the work of the Road Victims Trust and is now a patron of the charity.

"The Road Victims Trust offers such an essential service, as they come to you and offer a helping hand and focused support in those early days when you can't think about or do anything. Feeling alone with your thoughts after something like that is a terrible place to be, so if someone can make you feel you're not alone and that things will get better, that's a really wonderful thing."

Recent RVT Events

The **20th Anniversary Walk** of the Road Victims Trust took place on Saturday 6 June where 43 walkers assembled at 10am on a glorious Saturday morning at AFC Kempston Rovers.

Team leaders had been appointed for safety purposes and back-up was in place should anyone need support, with this all covered it was time to set off on their intrepid journey across Bedfordshire. Their route started along Spring Road and across the fields to Wilstead, cutting through the countryside to Haynes, which at this point, they were able to stop for a short refreshment break, which was well received. With the sun beating down, they advanced through Rowney Warren to Old Warden which was half way and an opportunity to break for yet more refreshment, and time for some sustenance!

After lunch their route took them through Cardington, Cople and Willington. At this point they knew they were on the homeward stretch as they walked along the bank of the River Ouse back towards Kempston.

Our band of walkers all successfully completed the 'Anniversary Walk', which covered 23 miles in total – all arriving safely back by 6pm. The event raised over £3,000 – thank you to all who sponsored the walkers.

Our thanks to all those who took part in this We hope you all enjoyed yourselves, and that you will join us again next year.



We held our first **Big Lunch** on 7 June in Bedford Park.

The Big Lunch is an Eden Project initiative which is aimed at bringing the community together – and it certainly worked in Bedford. The sun shone and the people of Bedford and surrounding areas came in their hundreds to enjoy a picnic in the park and join in the fun throughout the day.



Activities included a Dog Competition run by ARAS Dog Rescue, a cheerleading display by Dance Starz, and a fun sports day for the children – including the old favourite sack race – with all the children taking part going away with a medal and very smiley faces.

We were entertained throughout the afternoon with music from 'May Contain Nutz' and with an appearance from Anna and Elsa from Frozen, courtesy of Imajica Theatre Company, which also went down well with the children.

We would like to thank The Pavilion Café and their staff, and all the stall holders who took part.

A very special thank you goes out to our fabulous volunteers from Waitrose, Halifax, Tesco, SSG Ltd and the Bedfordshire Volunteer Police Cadets. And not forgetting Bedfordshire Police and Fire services and the Bedford Road Safety team for their attendance and support.

Our First Big Lunch was a roaring success, so much so that we have already set a date and ordered the sun for next year. So 'save the date' – 5 June 2016.

We look forward to seeing you all again next year. Thank you everyone who came along and supported the event and for making a difference to someone's life.

Amiee Phillips who works at Central Bedfordshire Council is taking to the skies and throwing herself out of a perfectly serviceable aircraft on 6 September at Sibson Airfield all in the name of RVT.

To support Amiee go to:
www.justgiving.com/Amiee-Phillips

Mike Franks is running the **Robin Hood Marathon** in Nottingham on 27 September in aid of RVT.

To support him and read his story go to:
www.justgiving.com/Mikefranks

Darren Matussa is putting on his running shoes to take part in two events for RVT this Autumn. The Great North Run on 13 September and the Frankfurt Marathon on 25 October.

To show Darren support please go to:
www.justgiving.com/DARREN-MATUSSA



RVT is delighted to be supported by local business **Fire Safety Services** of Kempston. Managing director David Murfitt (pictured right with Mark Turner) said he is proud to support the Road Victims Trust and, as an existing sponsor of Bedford Blues Rugby Club, he has arranged for the Trust logo to be placed

in a prominent position at the Goldington Road ground.

Trust Chief Executive Mark Turner said: "This is brilliant support from David and will do much to raise awareness of the important work we do."



Forthcoming Events

Some more dates for your diary in 2015



19 September – THE GREAT ESCAPE

Magical mystery tour with a difference

Are you looking for a challenge? Then look no further – join us for the Great Escape on 22 August 2015. Get a team of four, find yourself a fancy-dress theme and sign up today. You will be dropped off in a secret location with no money, phone or credit cards

and given a series of tasks to perform before making your way back to Bedford as quickly as possible – having fun and raising money along the way for our fantastic charity.

For registration forms and more information contact Jenny Hillam: jennyh@rvtrust.co.uk or telephone 01234 843345.

17–21 September – EXTRA MILE CHALLENGE

arranged by the *Rotary Club of Bedford Park*

Calling all cycling enthusiasts – this is definitely for you go that EXTRA MILE for charity! To take part in this event and for further information contact: andrew.morris@asheconstruction.co.uk

Saturday 28 November 2015 – 20TH ANNIVERSARY BALL

We are celebrating 20 years of service with a black tie ball at the Park Inn, Bedford.

If you would like to join us for the celebrations contact Jenny Hillam for details and tickets. jennyh@rvtrust.co.uk or telephone 01234 843345.



WANT TO DO A SKY DIVE?



Calling all adrenalin junkies and bucket list tickers!!!!

Ever wanted to jump out of a plane? Whether you are a budding daredevil, seasoned adrenaline junkie, or just fancy the challenge of a lifetime, then look no further for an incredible experience and a great way to fundraise!

If you are over the age of 16 and think this is the challenge for you, let's make it happen.

We need your help!

Exciting news! – the JustGiving Awards return this September. We have the opportunity to enter the Awards, to become Charity of the Year, and we need your help!

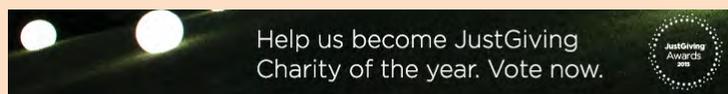
This is a unique opportunity to gain public recognition for all the hard work of our volunteers, fundraisers and supporters. The Charity of the Year Award gives you the chance to vote for your favourite charity and show your support.

You can vote by following this link: <http://just.ly/charity-award> or go to our Facebook page and follow the link.

If you don't have Facebook you can contact enquiries@rvtrust.co.uk for a voting form – you've got until Sunday 23 August 2015 to vote.

Please cast your vote and share with friends.

THANK YOU!



THANK YOU – It's impossible to thank everyone, but here are a few . . .



DONATION – GEOFFREY LEAVER SOLICITORS

We recently received a donation of £6,763.27 from Geoffrey Leaver Solicitors in Milton Keynes.

Mairead McErlean, a partner at Geoffrey Leaver Solicitors, said: "The RVT does a wonderful job of supporting the families of people who have been killed in road accidents. The support they provide is specialised, immediate and free of charge. For its recipients it is

invaluable. Geoffrey Leaver Solicitors is delighted to be able to make this donation to support their ongoing work."

We would like to say a huge "Thank You" to everyone at Geoffrey Leaver Solicitors for their wonderful support.

The HALIFAX held a cake sale and awareness day in the Bedford branch in Silver Street on 28 May, raising £85.64.

Thank you to staff and members of the public for your support, it is very much appreciated.



'BIG LUNCH' THANK YOU'S

halfords HALFORDS of Bedford kindly donated a child's bicycle to raffle at our Big Lunch which raised around £336.

TESCO – Riverfield Drive, Bedford and **WAITROSE** of Bedford both donated wonderful hampers for our raffle which went down very well with the winners.



the full effect MARK HARRISON and the FULL EFFECT kindly donated two tickets for the Proms in the Park on Saturday 1 August. The lady who won was thrilled to pieces.

SSG LTD supported our Big Lunch by supplying two inflatables for the children to happily bounce the day away. They were a great hit.

Thank you all for your support.



We would like to welcome **A L & G Abbott** as latest members of our **Club 1000**. They have pledged to raise £1,000 in the coming 12 months to help support the Road Victims Trust. They have already begun their fundraising, with one member of staff joining us on our 20-mile walk.

We look forward to hearing what they do next; I think there was talk about a Sky Dive . . . watch this space!

The **ROTARY CLUB OF BEDFORD CASTLE** invited the **London Welsh Male Voice Choir** to perform a concert at **St Paul's in Bedford** on **Saturday 7 March**, and the event proved to be a success.

The choir was conducted by Edward-Rhys Harry, accompanied by Annabel Thwaite and with compere Colin Jones. The programme included Gwinllan A Roddwyd I'm Gofal and Anfonaf Angel, two beautiful Welsh tunes, and their repertoire even included one of those great musical songs Bring Him Home from Les Miserables.

The music was thoroughly enjoyed by those who attended, and the ice-creams went down well in the interval served by members of the Rotary Club.

Richard Owen, who is a member of the Rotary Club, and also sings with the choir, set about organising this and the response was fantastic! It was attended by over 400 people – a full house.

Donald Parsons, President of Bedford Castle came along to the Trust's premises to present the cheque.



A big thank you to the Rotary Club as they raised an amazing £3,500 for the Road Victims Trust.



Funded by the Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation's Panacea Fund.

The Road Victims Trust is a charity and relies on the generosity of its supporters in order to be able to deliver the support to people in their time of need.

If you have the time you can help: With your school or college, with your friends, or on your own, at work or with your group, by taking part in an organised event, by forming a Fundraising Group, making a donation, or if you have great ideas for fundraising we would love to hear from you.

Please contact our Fundraising Manager Jenny Hillam for a chat.
email: jennyh@rvtrust.co.uk or 01234 843345

To donate to Road Victims Trust visit
www.rvtrust.org.uk

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