

Cyrenians

OPAL Older People, Active Lives

FEBRUARY - APRIL 2023

Newsletter

We would like to open the first OPAL newsletter of 2023 by wishing everyone a happy and healthy new year ahead. The turn of a new year brings an exciting and notable one for OPAL, as it marks our 10th anniversary as a service! We are looking forward to celebrating a decade of memories, as well as making new ones this year with our service users and volunteers, both new and old. We hope you enjoy reading about our recent goings-on and what we have ahead...

Get to know a member of the OPAL team - Jackie Jackson! After retiring from working for the local government, Jackie was looking to keep busy and feeling as though she had some time and skills to offer, when her husband came home one day with a flyer that OPAL were seeking an admin volunteer. Since then, Jackie has become part of the fabric of OPAL; a volunteer of 7 years and currently works for the service as of February 2022. Jackie surmises joining OPAL as "the best thing I ever did - not only was I helping with a great organisation and finding out more about what they did in the community for older people, but I was also making new friends."



My role at OPAL: I am a Group Support Assistant and take two groups; one on zoom - OPAL's fortnightly Zoom Room - and the Bathgate Wanderers walking group. I also support the Nibble & Natter group at Royal Scot Court.

My best day at work (so far!): May I be cheesy... and say every group day for me is my best day! There is always something different; someone makes you laugh or someone thanks you for the company, which is just great.

What I enjoy when I'm not at work: My interests are going to gym classes, looking after my grandchildren and keeping on top of my healthy eating plan. I love to pass on my wee tips to my colleagues Lorna and Billie!

What I'm looking forward to in the year ahead: I am excited about getting to know new clients at groups and all the things that are being planned for everyone this year here at OPAL! I'm also looking forward to a trip to New Zealand later in the year.

10 YEARS OF CYRENIANS OPAL 2013 - 2023

As teased in this newsletter's opening...2023 is OPAL's 10th anniversary! In April, we will be highlighting a decade of the OPAL service supporting older people in West Lothian with a very special event and surrounding celebrations. We can't wait to celebrate with our service users, volunteers and friends of the organisation.



Saturday 22nd of April is the official date of 10 years of OPAL, however we will be reminiscing on memories from over the decade and announcing plans of our celebrations in the lead up to the anniversary. Follow us on Facebook or speak to the team to hear more about OPAL's anniversary. On Saturday 21st of January, Lorna celebrated 10 years of working with OPAL - and her birthday! We marked the occasion(s) with a brunch from the Larder and reminiscing with photos from over the decade. Lorna has been with the OPAL service since the very beginning...before it was even given the name OPAL in fact! She has seen and supported the service to grow and adapt to challenges such as the pandemic, and the team expand from just 4 members of staff to 11. Congratulations to Lorna!

BROTH & BLETHER FOR TIME TO TALK DAY 2023

On Thursday 2nd of February, we were delighted to welcome everyone to the OPAL office for a 'Broth & Bletther' afternoon to mark Time to Talk Day. This is a national awareness day which is devoted to encouraging people to openly talk about mental health and well-being. Over 20 people joined us for a lovely afternoon of having great conversations whilst enjoying a comforting bowl of homemade soup. OPAL's Sylvia kindly made two delicious flavours of soup - scotch broth and leek n' potato - which went down a treat with a side of bread. We hope everyone enjoyed getting together for a 'Broth & Bletther' in a safe, welcoming space.



TIS THE SEASON TO PARTY - OPAL'S VOLUNTEER THANK YOU AND CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

On Wednesday 30th November, there was fun and festivities in the OPAL office at our Volunteer Thank You and Christmas Celebration 2022.

Despite being held on St Andrews Day (there was haggis balls in the buffet though!), this event was to show our thanks to our volunteers for all they have done this year and to celebrate Christmastime together. We were delighted to welcome in the holiday season with 32 people coming along decked out in fabulously festive attire (including staff and one volunteer joining virtually). This event was the perfect opportunity for some of our long-standing volunteers to reunite, and also for our new volunteers to be welcomed and get to know everyone.



The celebrations kicked off with a choice of fruity mocktails mixed by Billie and Peter's brain-teasing quiz, before everyone tucked into a delicious buffet from The Larder. Then, we were treated to an outstanding performance by Kinneil Brass Band of classic Christmas carols. The evening was concluded with a touching thank you message from Cyrenians Director of Services, Michelle Lloyd, on behalf of the organisation. It was such a special evening to kick off the party season and, most importantly, express our appreciation of our volunteers.



"You've all made me feel so welcome, valued and included in so many ways!" - OPAL volunteer
"[Events] are always such fun. Great place to meet old friends and make new ones." - OPAL volunteer

A BEAUTIFUL TRIBUTE AT 'A CONCERT FOR JIM'

On Thursday 3rd of November, the Regal Theatre in Bathgate was filled with a symphony of sound for an evening of 'A Concert for Jim'. This concert was organised by one of our volunteers, John, to celebrate the life of his late partner, Jim Ross. Jim strongly believed in musical education, both young and old, and as such was involved in founding the Linlithgow Arts Guild and a Principal Teacher of music for many years. 'A Concert for Jim' featured a trio of outstanding performances by Caelin Forshaw, tenor Stuart Rathie with pianist Fiona Morison, The Edinburgh Highland Reel & Strathspey Society with ex-Craigmount Strathspey & Reel Players. These talented musicians played a wonderful variety of classical and Scottish Traditional music, which was received with a rapture of applause from the audience.



John kindly included the collection of donations for the OPAL service to be part of the evening, and we are so grateful to have received a total of £696.55. We would like to express our thanks to John for this, and to everyone who gave a donation. We were delighted to witness such a brilliant turn-out for the concert and would like to thank everyone who attended, as this concert was greatly meaningful to John and all those who knew Jim.

"Cyrenians OPAL really does as it says on the box" - OPAL client

"It really is an excellent service" - OPAL client

The Cyrenians OPAL Staff Team are:
Pauline Moffat - Service Manager
Billie Hamilton - Community Worker
Lorna Bryson - Groups Coordinator
Sylvia Forshaw - Befriending Coordinator
Rachel Lee - Service Administrator and Volunteer Liaison
Naomi Williams - Service Support Assistant
Peter MacLeod - Communications and Systems Support Officer
June Gilfether - Groups Support Assistant
Linda Clark-Patterson - Groups Support Assistant
Sandra Stark - Groups Support Assistant
Jackie Jackson - Groups Support Assistant

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Scottish Charity Number: SC011052