



Disability Essex

(Essex Disabled People's Association Ltd)

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For reasons of economy, we will not be sending out Christmas cards this year.

We would, however, like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers:

A very happy Christmas and an equally happy, and healthy, New Year!

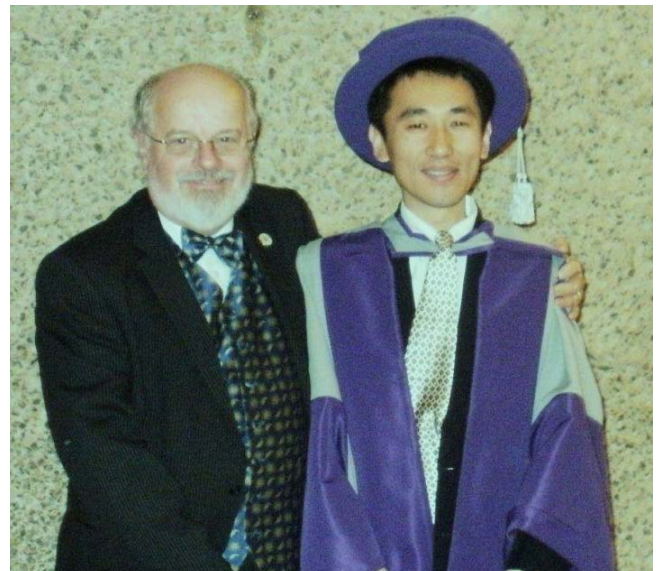
With very best wishes from the staff and volunteers of Disability Essex

Congratulations Jun Li!

Jun Li, pictured alongside with Disability Essex CEO, Richard Boyd, was awarded his PhD at the Barbican Centre on 4 December.

Jun Li invited Richard and his wife Maureen to represent him at the award ceremony, as his own family were unable to join him. London Metropolitan University commended Jun Li on his work on the Intelligent Keyboard – and the achievement of his doctorate in less than 2.5 years.

London Metropolitan University has in the region of 30,000 students – Jun Li's was one of only five doctorates awarded this year.



First class travel

Simon Chisnall, one of our helpline volunteers, is now representing Disability Essex at the meetings of the Options for Independent Living Transport Group (OIL). As a wheelchair user himself, Simon brings his own experience to these discussions. Through these meetings, he was recently given the opportunity to compare the information provided by First Travel with his own, first hand, experience of travel by bus.



Simon agrees that, with the majority of First Travel's buses being low floor, they are accessible for him as a wheelchair user. These low floor vehicles have sufficient dedicated space for one wheelchair user—if this space is occupied by a non-wheelchair user, First Travel say that the driver will make every effort to ask them to move to allow the wheelchair user to board. Simon has indeed found most of First Travel's drivers to be helpful and willing to provide assistance when necessary.

Wheelchair users always take priority over unfolded buggies on board, so the driver may ask that buggies be folded to enable a wheelchair user to come on board. A wheelchair passenger is always entitled to travel on First Travel's buses, unless the bus is already full, or there is a wheelchair user already on board.

On the whole, Simon feels that the service he receives from First Travel has been good. 'Travel would be a lot more difficult for me, if there wasn't an accessible bus service,' he says.

Passengers with a state assistance dog are always welcome on board and these dogs travel free of charge.

If timetable, or promotional material is required in a non standard format, customers can request this by contacting the First Travel Customer Services team on:

08456 020 121

Source: OIL meeting, 4.12.09

SWANS nominated for national award



We are pleased to hear that SWANS, one of Disability Essex's member clubs, has been nominated for a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. The Award was created in 2002, in celebration of Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee, and recognises groups of individuals that give up their time for the benefit of others.

The list of winners for the 2010 Award will be announced officially on 2 June 2010 and details will appear on the Queen's Award Website at www.queensawardvoluntary.gov.uk.

Source: Maldon & District CVS newsletter, Issue no. 34, Winter 2009

'Your health your way'

The 'Your health your way' website sets out the support that patients and the public should expect from the NHS if they choose to self care.

A new addition is the patient information leaflet 'Help and advice for living well with a long term condition', which aims to raise awareness of the self care support available to people living with long term conditions.

Please visit www.dh.gov.uk/yourhealth/ for more information.

Source: Brentwood CVS Newslink, November 2009

RADAR Awards

We are proud to report that two Disability Essex projects achieved finalist status at the recent RADAR award ceremony: Jun Li's work on the Intelligent Keyboard was nominated as an innovative IT project in the 'Doing IT Differently' category, while our collaborative project with Safety First Training Ltd was nominated for the 'Doing Access Differently' category.

Our congratulations go to Mike Adams of ECDP for his Person of the Year Award. Mike follows in the footsteps of Disability Essex CEO, Richard Boyd, who received the award in 2006.

Disability Essex AGM 2009



Our AGM on 8 December 2009, in the Adult Community College, was well attended. We are pleased to welcome on board our two new trustee/directors: Revd Simon Garwood and Mr Keith Cotterell, and John Gibson MBE was elected for a further term as Chairman.

Delegates took the opportunity to visit our new HQ, now in the final stages of construction. The response was overwhelmingly complimentary and we were pleased to hear the Chairman of Rochford District Council's favourable comments.

We look forward to moving in early in the New Year, with an official opening later in the spring.



Care and Repair England is a national charity, established in 1986 to improve the living conditions of older and disabled people. Its aim is to innovate, develop, promote and support housing policies and initiatives, which enable older and disabled people to live independently in their homes for as long as they wish.

Care and Repair England has asked older people across the country what is important to them about housing in later life. A brochure has been produced, summarising older people's key messages to those who are making decisions about future policies. To see this brochure, and a detailed report, please go to:

www.careandrepair-england.org.uk

For any other information, please contact Pat Strachan, Housing Action Support Officer on 01487 822888.

Source: *Braintree District VSA newsletter, issue 60, Nov/Dec 2009*

Autism Bill passes final parliamentary stage

The Autism Bill has made it through its final parliamentary stage and will now become the Autism Act, the first ever disability-specific law in England. The National Autistic Society (NAS) heralded the new law as 'groundbreaking' and said health and social care services could now face legal action if they failed to provide support for people with the condition, which affects over half a million people in the UK.

Source: *NRAC Access Newsletter, November 2009*

Pleased to meet you!

Hi, my name is Tracy Gingell and I have been with Disability Essex, as a Helpline volunteer, for just one year. I approached the charity last year, because my youngest daughter had started school full time and I felt that it would be good for me to become more involved in the community.



I currently work in a large call centre three days a week – so, although I am still a novice on disability issues, I have a wealth of experience in Customer Service. I volunteer one day a week and, if you call the Disability Essex Helpline on a Tuesday, then mine is the voice you will hear.

I have joined the team at a really exciting time; there is a real BUZZ in the air about our new building and I know I can't wait to see it completed.

I hope that you all have a great Christmas and New Year.

Tracy



'Meals on Wheels' is a lifesaving service throughout Essex. WRVS drivers/volunteers deliver a daily hot meal to hundreds of older

people who are unable to cook for themselves. 'Meals on Wheels' not only provides food; it ensures that older people get a daily visit from a WRVS driver/volunteer who can check they are OK.

WRVS wants to ensure that this vital service continues, despite the potential for a flu pandemic. The charity is seeking to recruit contingency volunteers, who can be called on to keep 'Meals on Wheels' moving across Essex.

So if you've got a CRB check, would be happy to be called on to help in an emergency, and want to help ensure that older people receive this valuable service, WRVS want to hear from you! Even if you don't have a CRB check, but still want to get involved, or if you know of another organisation who may be able to offer support, please come forward; there will be ways you can help.

Source: RRAVS newsletter, issue 30, Autumn 2009

Grants to help more disabled people volunteer

Grants of between £250 and £5,000, which can be used to help overcome barriers that stop disabled people volunteering, eg lack of specific equipment or suitable access, have been made available to charitable organisations as part of the Access to Volunteering Fund. The Fund, developed by the Office of the Third Sector as a pilot scheme in Greater London, the West Midlands and the North West, will operate between Autumn 2009 and Spring 2011.

Angela Smith, Minister for the Third Sector, said: "Volunteering is an unbeatable way to build confidence and skills. We know that there are many barriers stopping disabled people volunteering and this targeted fund aims to overcome these limits."

For information on how to apply, and on how to become a member of a local assessment panel, visit the **Access to Volunteering website** www.accesstovolunteering.org.

Source: NRAC Access newsletter, November 2009

Grant Warmhouse

'Grant Warmhouse' is the public face of Brentwood Council's innovative partnership with other local councils in Herts and Essex to provide grants and subsidies for thermal insulation and heating systems.

15 councils (Brentwood, Broxbourne, Chelmsford, Dacorum, East Herts, Epping Forest, Harlow, Hertsmere, North Herts, St Albans, Stevenage, Three Rivers, Uttlesford, Watford and Welwyn Hatfield) have obtained £6.6million worth of Government funding, to promote and install energy efficiency and renewable measures. Residents will be offered the best possible deal, depending on individual circumstances, and energy efficiency measures will be provided free of charge, or at reduced rates, depending on your circumstances.

Enquiries and applications can be made on freephone no. **0800 980 6026**. You can also get visit the website www.heepgrant.org.

Source: Brentwood CVS Newslink, November 2009

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Please note that all responsibility for adverts within this publication is between the buyer and the seller. Disability Essex can accept no liability for equipment advertised.

We wish to remind all wheelchair users that there is a recommended wheelchair "Highway Code", copies of which we can supply on application. Furthermore, Class 3 Invalid Carriages must be registered with the DVLA.