

Your Voice

The Spectrum Signpost residents' newsletter Issue 23 • Spring 2011



Community Forums *Representing you*

“ I am pleased to be part of the new Community Forum in the area where I live. I see the Community Forum as a bridge between residents, the Associations, Spectrum Housing Group and, most importantly, the community we represent. ”

There was a buzz of excitement at our first meeting, with members keen to play their part. We have the potential to make a difference to residents and the wider community through local offers and working with other organisations and we are determined to keep 'Residents at the Heart' in all that we do.

Tony Tombs

South Wessex Community Forum

For more news about your Community Forum, please turn to page 9.

Inside ...

Overall Community Champion ...
Colouring Competition ...
Independent Living News ...
and much more!

Neighbourhood Day

The weather stayed fine and children from the Hyde Road area of Gillingham, North Dorset, came out to play. To find out more, please turn to pages 22 and 23.





Editorial

Welcome to the Spring edition of *Your Voice*. Spring is the time for spring cleaning, it is also a good time to have a good clear out, you'd be surprised what you can find in the back of a cupboard, apart from dust and cobwebs! Rather than throw things in the bin, you can give them to a local group that are holding a jumble sale, your local charity shop

or put them on 'freecycle'. The web address for freecycle is www.freecycle.org.uk. Freecycle has local groups if you have something you no longer need and it is too good to throw away. You can post the item on the website and if anyone is interested in the item they will email you. You then arrange a time for them to come and collect it from you. In doing this you will have been eco-friendly and saved excess items going to landfill. For more on the environment, please turn to page 13.

Here are some cleaning tips:

>> If my china ornaments are excessively dirty, I put them in the dishwasher on the top shelf on a gentle wash and, hey presto, they come out sparkling. Obviously you wouldn't put anything precious in the dishwasher as there is always a chance that it could be broken.

>> Used tumble dryer sheets are good for cleaning mirrors and glass as the static in them draws the dust to them. They are also great for cleaning your glasses and they leave a nice smell.

Do you have any tips for cleaning? If so, write in and tell us, we all sigh when we have to clean and any tips that make it easier are a great bonus. So come on, write in and make it easier for us. I look forward to hearing from you.

Alison Moors Editor



Residents of a learning disabilities scheme in Exmouth had their own special celebration event following their best ever results in last year's garden competition.

The mini award ceremony was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. 📣



New car park for Manston Village Hall


Spectrum Signpost Residents' Community Fund Committee was delighted to attend a tea party held at Manston Village Hall. The tea party was put together by the village hall committee to say thank you for the generous contribution made by the fund to renovate the car park.

Fund chairman, Mike Underwood, said; "On behalf of the committee I would like to say thank you very much for inviting us to come along. It is a pleasure to be able to see what a difference the fund has made to the Village Hall."

The newly renovated car park allows people of the village and surrounding area to park their vehicles with ease without the worry of getting stuck in the mud!

Manston Village Hall Committee Chair Poppy Sewell said; "Inside, the hall is fresh and welcoming and now we are smart outside too! We are very grateful to Spectrum Signpost for all their help."

If you belong to a group or organisation or know of club in your local community that is in need of funding, why not make an application? The maximum award is £5,000 for any one application. Applications will not be accepted for individuals, and funding will not be granted for salaries or core running costs.

For further information on applications, please contact The Resource Centre on 01258 484748 or write to The Secretary, Signpost Residents' Community Fund, The Resource Centre, Signpost House, Sunrise Business Park, Blandford, Dorset, DT11 8SA. 

Community Fund in Devon


Members of the Devon+ Community Forum are proud and pleased to have been able to provide much needed financial support to the following groups:

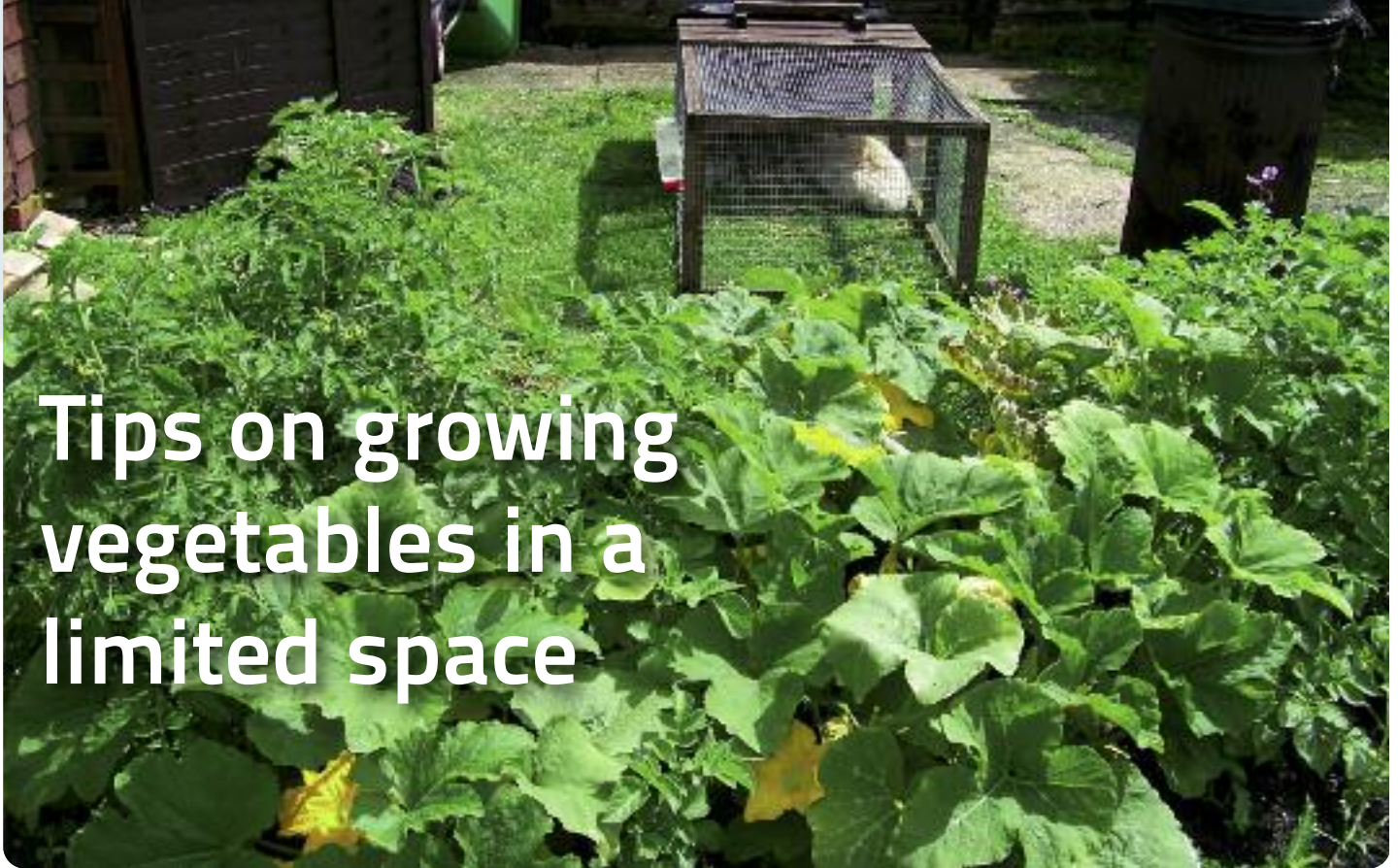
£1116 to **Digby Community Association** in Exeter to fund their

newsletter 'Respect' and to assist in the purchase of Neighbourhood Watch signage.

£1971.67 to **Winkleigh Village Hall** to fund improvements to their building so that local people can make maximum use from the space to run clubs and other activities.

£300 to Residents of **Geneva Court** in Exeter to fund the purchase of a new bench for the communal garden.

To receive an application form from Devon+ Community Fund, please contact Kate Weeks on 01392 361122 or email kate.weeks@sha.co.uk 



Tips on growing vegetables in a limited space

With the rising cost of fresh vegetables, a few pounds can be saved by growing a small crop of delicious home grown produce, even within a limited space.

Salads and pulses can be grown, to remind your family that all things organic have been grown, not manufactured by supermarkets.

One of the most rewarding crops is tomatoes. They can be grown either in a large pot, 10 inch (or an empty 10 litre emulsion paint pot with ten 5mm holes drilled in the bottom) or three plants in a grow bag. They can even be planted in hanging baskets amongst the floral arrangements.

Several runner bean plants can be grown up 2.4 metre (8 ft) bamboo

canes in a large pot or 4 plants to a grow bag.

Cut and come again salad can be fitted into any corner. Fresh herbs can also be grown in pots. One 12 inch, (30 cm) pot will provide virtually all the exotic flavours you desire for your culinary delights throughout the growing season.

Packets of seeds are quite expensive. Try to obtain the few plants that are required from markets, or garden centres will have a greater selection of plants to suit your needs. Better still, if

you know someone with an allotment or large vegetable garden, try cadging a few plants from them as they usually have an abundance.

If you are using pots or containers, multipurpose compost is the growing medium that is required. It is the same medium that is used in grow bags. Always use new compost for tomatoes. Tomato blight is retained in previously used soil.

Always keep your plants well watered especially in hot dry weather.

Go for it, happy growing! 🌱

Mike Ruddy
Resident and garden competition judge



Crackdown on anti-social behaviour

Spectrum Signpost, working closely with Police and Neighbours, managed to secure a crack house closure in Weymouth town centre. This brings to an end months of misery for residents in the area who have had to endure anti-social behaviour and illegal activity in their neighbourhood.

Thanks to the hard work of Housing Officer, Rachel Irvine, who acted quickly on information from the Police, we served a notice to gain possession of the property within 4 days. Rachel then spent long hours establishing a good relationship with Police and consulting with residents in the local area to ensure we had a good case.

The whole process took almost 3 months, in which a crack house closure was agreed, and applications were made to court for possession. 🏠



Spectrum Signpost Annual Garden Competition

When we spoke to residents who participated in last year's garden competition, many of you said you would like the competition to take place a bit earlier so that your borders are looking at their best. With this in mind, we have brought the competition forward to the beginning of July.

You will find enclosed an application form and we would like to encourage as many of you as possible to take part. Even if you are new to gardening, why not give it a try? The judging process is very friendly and you will get to meet like-minded gardeners at the celebration event in October if you are successful and win a prize. We look forward to receiving your entry. (t)

Recognising residents - improving our communities



Owen bowls them over

Congratulations to Spectrum Signpost resident, Owen Newton, who saw off stiff competition from other residents across the south west to win the award of overall Community Champion for 2010/11.

The panel faced a difficult task when they met by telephone conference at the beginning of February, as they had to find an overall Champion from the winners of the previous rounds. The following residents were nominated and deserve a special mention for their voluntary contributions.

Cities champion, Andy Rowe of Plymouth, has worked as a volunteer for Age UK at two day centres in the city, making hot drinks, cheering up the visitors and running the occasional bingo session.

Village champion, Margaret Kirk of Milborne St Andrew, North Dorset, has been involved in a number of voluntary activities in her community for many years. In particular, Margaret has been the driving force behind the Wednesday Social Club which meets monthly and seeks to involve older residents.

Village champion, Babs Ashford of Blandford St Mary, North Dorset, has been involved in a number of voluntary roles, representing residents on the Dorset County Tenants' Federation and Signpost Residents' Forum.

Village champion, John Baker helps other residents and neighbours in Shillingstone, North Dorset, carrying out gardening chores and handy jobs about the home, and even cooking meals for people when they cannot manage on their own.

Overall champion, Owen, has devoted years to improving youth cricket in Dorset, and has now turned his hand to fundraising for the charities that helped his son, Ted, when he was diagnosed with bone cancer. Last year he organised Teddy20, a cricket event at Blandford Cricket Club that was supported by local residents and businesses, raising nearly £6,000 for CLIC Sargent, Piam Brown Ward at Southampton General Hospital and Kingfisher Ward at Dorchester County Hospital.

This year, Owen is organising an even bigger and better Teddy20 event, to be held at Blandford Cricket Club on Bank Holiday Monday, 30 May. If you are able to attend this event, it promises to be a good day out, with music, stalls, fun for children, and some entertaining cricket. If you live in the area, do put this date in your diary.

We are starting a new round of Community Champion Awards for 2011 and start with cities and towns. If you know a Spectrum Signpost resident who lives in a city or town and gives up their time as a volunteer in their community, we would like to hear from you. Please contact Kate Weeks on 01392 361122, email kate.weeks@sha.co.uk or Liz Baker on 01258 484800, email elizabeth.baker@sha.co.uk. We look forward to hearing from you. (t)



Children's pages

Youth involvement opportunity

Are you between 12 and 18 years old? Do you want to try running the gauntlet water zorbing or take a leap of faith on a zip wire course?

The Devon Tenant Participation Group is holding a free event on 20 April at the River Dart Country Park and Spectrum Signpost can send a maximum of 6 young residents along. You will also get the chance to meet other teenagers and young people from across Devon and talk about the areas where you live. Lunch and transport will all be included.

Names will be drawn from a hat and the lucky winners will be contacted with more information and to make arrangements. To enter, please contact Kate Weeks on 01392 361122 or email kate.weeks@sha.co.uk. You need to tell us your name, address, age, the name of your parent/guardian and phone number.



COLOURING COMPETITION WINNERS



Congratulations to the following young residents, who were winners of the Christmas stocking colouring competition and all received gift vouchers: • Ellie Thomas, Blandford • Casey Chapman, Tiverton • Leo Corfield, Stourpaine • Atlantis Addams, Plymouth • Oliver Mitchell, Stratton, Dorchester • Paige A'court, Marnhull • Emily Reed, Stratton, Dorchester • Ellesha Sams, East Stour • Leon Sams, East Stour • Tre Sams, East Stour

СІПІТІВІ КВІТИ



Resident, Mike Ruddy has drawn this lovely picture of Spring flowers. Just name as many flowers as you can, colour in the picture and you could win a prize. Please send your entry by Thursday, 21 April 2011 to:

The Editor, The Resource Centre, Signpost House, Sunrise Business Park, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 8SA.

Don't forget to include your name and address with your picture. Good luck!

Letters to the Editor...

After long cold winter, I thought of ways to cheer other people up. We could all give a little care to others each day and none of the following cost money, only our time.

Hold the door open for someone

Give a smile to a stranger

Give a sincere compliment

Make someone laugh

Give someone a hug

Take time to really listen to someone

Invite a neighbour in for a cuppa and a chat

Pass on a book you've enjoyed reading

Help someone in need

Visit someone who is lonely in your neighbourhood

Let's all do our best to spread a little happiness!

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Lye

Morden



your voice - your views

Do you have views to share or a tale to tell? Or perhaps you have a question you would like answered, a problem solved or a grievance to air? Whether it's good news or bad, we would like to hear from you. So why not write to the Editor and share it with other residents?

Don't forget, if you write the star letter you will receive a £25 gift voucher!

Hello, I'm Simon, one of your new Community Forum members for Dorset and South Somerset. I, along with my colleagues, am here to represent **you**, the residents. This means that anything in your area with which you are unhappy or would like to see changed, even if it is not the direct responsibility of Spectrum Signpost, I am happy to listen to you and put your views to management.

Now, we all live in difficult times and it would be foolish of me to promise the sun and the moon. However, with all the resources as my disposal, I will do my level best to hold Spectrum Signpost to account to ensure that you, the resident, get the best deal possible.

If you wish to see me about any matter connected with housing, then I am in The Resource Centre at Signpost House, Blandford on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month from 2-5pm. Please come along. Finally, you are cordially invited to our Community Forum meetings where you will have the opportunity to raise any burning issues which you may have.*

Best wishes

Simon Hosken

Shaftesbury Resident

* Details of our next meeting can be found on page 15.

You can write to the Editor at:

The Resource Centre, Signpost House, Sunrise Business Park, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 8SA or email YourVoiceEditor@sha.co.uk



Competition winners

Thanks to everyone who took part in the competitions in the previous edition of *Your Voice*.

Congratulations to L Fitzgerald of Stoke Wake, Blandford who is the winner of the word search competition and C Atwell of Yeovil, Somerset who is the winner of the short quiz competition. Both win a £20 gift voucher.

Congratulations to the following residents who won £10 vouchers in the Christmas Tree competition: G Prill of Stalbridge; Mrs Everleigh of Sturminster Newton; Alison Foot of Child Okeford. 🏠

Your community represented

Residents at the heart

Devon+ Community Forum

Community Forum members from Devon held an informal get-together in January to discuss their ideas and plans for the future of their group. They looked at the Terms of Reference, setting the agenda and nominated Miranda Maryan-Lewis from Tiverton as their Chairperson. Following those talks, they held their first formal meeting on 8 February and decided to rename themselves 'Devon+ Community Forum'.

They set to work looking at performance reports with the assistance of John Wright (Operations Director) and Julie-Ann Foster (Divisional Director) who talked them through the numbers. The subject of Local Offers gave the group an opportunity to share some of their experiences and priorities and identify some areas for attention to be incorporated in the document.

If you are interested in attending a Devon+ meeting as an observer please call Kate Weeks on 01392 361122 for more details.

Representing you on Devon+ Community Forum are:

Miranda Maryan-Lewis (Chair) from Tiverton

Patricia Colmer from Plymouth

Chris Gillies from Exeter

Jo Hall from Horrabridge

Jon Brookes from Exeter.

Joining these resident are Councillor Danks from Exeter City Council and Di Combe, a Health Worker from Exeter.

South Wessex Community Forum

Community Forum members representing Dorset and south Somerset were keen to make a difference when they held their first meeting on 1 February. Members gave their views on priorities for people living in the area they represent which will be included in the Local Offers made to residents.

The Community Forum will be holding their meetings every month (except August and December) and will be visiting the areas where you live over the coming months. Turn to page 15 for meeting details.

If you are interested in attending the meetings please call Liz Baker on 01258 484800 for more details.

Representing you in Dorset and south Somerset are:

John Davies from Gillingham

Simon Hosken from Shaftesbury

Phyllis Williams from Blandford

Terry Rance from Child Okeford

Malcolm Lye from Morden, Wareham



Malcolm Lye – one on the South Wessex Community Forum members

Jean Taylor from Marnhull

Ron Ward from Milborne St Andrew

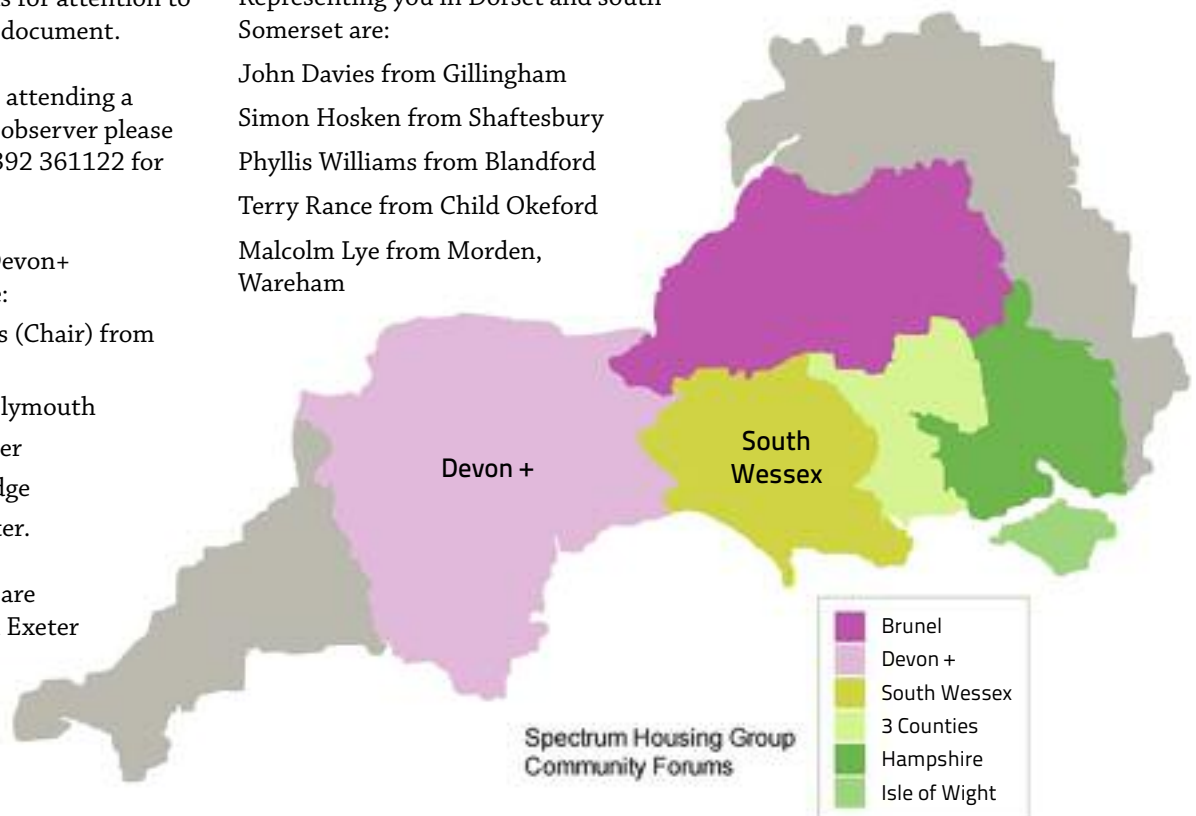
Tony Tombs from Blandford.

Joining the above residents are:

Jo Rose, Community Development Worker in North Dorset

Tony Molloy, Manager of CAB in North and East Dorset

Su Hunt, North Dorset Councillor and Mayor of Gillingham. 🗳️





Big birthday celebrations for Ivy and Pat

Congratulations to Independent Living resident, Ivy Masterman (above) of Blandford St Mary, who celebrated her 90th birthday at the end of January.

Ivy's family and friends helped celebrate in style with a tea party at Bryanston Court. Over 50 guests shared a delicious tea provided by residents, Helen Lawson and Babs Ashford, and Jean Benham made Ivy a beautiful birthday cake.

Ivy would like to thank everyone for their kindness and for making her birthday very special.

Congratulations to Pat Squibb (pictured with friends and fellow residents of Lavington House) who also celebrated her 90th birthday in January. Pat, a keen artist and former member of the Womens' Air Force, was joined by her friends and fellow residents at Lavington House.

Residents, Elizabeth Hales and Jean Wells organised the tea party for Pat and together put on a fantastic spread of sandwiches and home made cakes.

Pat said; "I have had a fabulous day and been very spoilt. I don't know what I have done to deserve it, I must have been a good girl!" 🎉

Carols at Rawson Court

Children from Topsy Rabbit Nursery came into Rawson Court in December to sing carols to residents. Everyone had a lovely time and enjoyed singing along with the children. A small donation was made to the nursery to say thank you. 🎉



No stopping at Station Court

When I became liaison officer to the residents at Station Court, Blandford in January 2010, the residents association had dwindled away, very few residents came to the bi-monthly residents meetings and social activities were at a standstill. Thanks to the hard work of residents, social events are now being organised and the wider community is being involved.

Our first social event was a Sing along, organized for a Sunday afternoon and on this occasion each resident who attended came with a plate of finger food to be shared. In November, residents held a slide show and afternoon tea called 'a slice of life' which proved popular. Residents decided to continue having a social event at least once a month and, needing



to consult with other residents, meetings became monthly.

Social activities then developed at a pace and in December there were a number of events including:

- A visit from the Blandford Mayor, Esme Butler (see photograph)
- Decorating the communal lounge and Christmas tree
- Carols with the Girl Guides
- An old fashioned Christmas party including traditional games and

Father Christmas

- A Christmas meal at The Railway, courtesy of the landlord

Having spoken to residents who attended the events they felt they were all very enjoyable and on their behalf I would like to give a big thank you to Pat Herbert and Pat Christopher who between them did most of the organising and catering. Well done ladies. 📞

Catherine Jones, Liaison Officer

Doorstep sellers and bogus traders

Doorstep crime is where someone comes to the door uninvited and tricks the householder into letting them in so they can steal or persuade the householder to hand over money.

How to beat the bogus caller

Lock. Keep your front and back doors locked, even when you are at home.

Stop. Before you answer the door, stop and think if you are expecting anyone. Check that you have locked

the back door and removed the key. Look through the spy-hole or window to see who it is.

Chain. If you decide to open the door, put the chain or door bar on first, if you have one. Keep the bar or chain on while you are talking to the person on the doorstep.

Check. Even if they have a pre-arranged appointment check their identity card carefully. Close the door while you do this. If you are still unsure, look up the phone number in the phone book and ring to verify their identity. Do not use the phone number on the identity card as this may be a fake.

Remember. Any caller you don't know and can't check the I.D. of – don't let them in.

If you are unfortunate and become a victim of crime, or notice anything suspicious in your area, then report it to the Police as soon as possible. 📞

Signpost Services changes its name

Signpost Services is our contractor carrying out responsive and planned maintenance works to your homes. Signpost Services has recently changed its name to Spectrum Property Care Ltd. You'll begin to see the new name appearing on items such as vans, depot signs, uniforms, stationery, ID cards, leaflets and brochures.

Signpost Services is a subsidiary of Spectrum Housing Group. The Group is carrying out a rebrand for all of its subsidiaries over the coming months to make it clear to customers that we are all part of the same Group. This includes Signpost Services. Who you deal with and how you contact Spectrum Property Care will remain the same as before.

For a while you will still see some of the old logos but in time these will be phased out and replaced by the new name and logo.



If you have any queries please do contact Mark Batchelor at Spectrum Property Care on 01258 484700. We also have a Frequently Asked Questions page on our website that you can refer to at www.spectrumpropertycare.co.uk.

Shelter Devon Consortium with Citizens Advice

We are now working in partnership with the CAB to provide free legal help across Devon to eligible clients – we will provide specialist advice in housing.

To qualify for this service, clients will need to provide evidence of their income and capital.

Housing advice is provided at a face to face interview at our office in Plymouth, or at Totnes CAB, Paignton CAB and Exeter CVS.

Clients will need an appointment which can be arranged by calling 0344 515 2399.

At the first appointment clients will need to bring proof of their income/benefit. This is a requirement of our funders (Community Legal Services). Without this information the client will not see an advisor, but will be offered another appointment.

Due to funding restrictions Shelter Devon cannot give telephone advice, although this can be provided on the Shelter National Helpline – 0808 800 444.

supporting active communities



Estate Walkabouts and The Big Tidy Up!

This year Spectrum Signpost in Devon is supporting The Big Tidy Up which is an initiative being run by the Keep Britain Tidy organisation.

We think that a clean and pleasant environment to live in is important and so we are combining some of our Estate Walkabouts with Big Tidy Up events – which are shown in green. We will write to residents nearer the time telling you how you can get involved. If you would like to find out more in the meantime, visit www.thebigtidyup.org where you can register your own Tidy Up and get some free equipment!

20 May 2011
Morwenna Court, Exeter at 2.00pm

20 June 2011
High Street, Crediton at 2.00pm

21 June 2011
Kings Heath, Exeter at 11.00am
Banner Court, Paignton at 4.00pm

22 June 2011
College View, Tiverton at 2.00pm
Southway, Plymouth at 10.00am

23 June 2011
Colwill Estate, Plymouth at 2.00pm
Wantage Gardens, Plymouth at 4.00pm

24 June 2011
Parkside Court & Magdalen Bridge Court, Exeter at 2.30pm

12 July 2011
Turnworth Court, Exeter at 11.00am

10 August 2011
Tailyour Road, Plymouth at 1.00pm

19 August 2011
Junction Gardens, Plymouth at 12.00pm



Going green

Spectrum Signpost is doing its bit for the environment, and most of your homes have been improved, or are on a programme to be improved.

This includes the following energy efficiency measures:

- ✓ Loft insulation
- ✓ Cavity wall insulation
- ✓ High efficiency boilers
- ✓ Composite doors
- ✓ Double glazing


We are looking at other ways to help our residents and under consideration are:

- ✓ Power downs (switches that turn off your electrical appliances when not in use)
- ✓ Water butts
- ✓ Hippos (water-saving devices for cisterns)
- ✓ Energy efficient light bulbs

These are just a few of the ideas under consideration for you in your home, but the environmental agenda is much bigger than that, and covers all aspects of how people live their lives and companies run their businesses.

We would like to know what you think and what ideas you may have for reducing our carbon footprint. Your suggestions could be something big that has an impact on the way Spectrum Housing Group operates its business, or perhaps you do something yourself, or as a family, that is making a contribution to the environment. However big or small your idea may be, we would like to hear from you.

Please send your ideas to the Editor using the contact details on page 8. There will be a prize for the best ideas, so do share your suggestions with us.

To get the ball rolling, Wendy Rooke, Liaison Officer at Rawson Court says: "My suggestion would be 'Meat-free Mondays' as over consumption and over production of animals is environmentally damaging. Reducing our consumption can benefit our health and animal welfare in addition to the environment, so it's a win-win situation!" 

Why does the date of Easter move?

Easter is called a moveable feast because the date of Easter changes every year.

Easter Sunday can fall on any date from 22 March to 25 April. The reason for this variation in the date of Easter is based on the lunar calendar (moon) rather than our more well-known solar one.

Easter always falls on the first Sunday following the full Moon (the Paschal Full Moon) after 21 March. If the Full Moon falls on a Sunday then Easter is the next Sunday. 🗨️



Recipe: Easter biscuits

Cooking time: 15-20 minutes

Ingredients

4oz/100g butter/margarine

4oz/100g sugar

8oz/200g flour (plain or self raising)

4-6oz/100-150g currants

1-2 teaspoon mixed spice

A little milk or egg yolk

Method

Preheat the oven to 325-350F, 170/180C, gas mark 3.

Cream fat and sugar together then sieve flour and spices.

Add currants, milk or part egg yolk to bind.

Roll the dough out thinly, cut in large rounds.

Put on lightly greased baking trays and bake in a very moderate oven for 15-20 minutes until golden brown.

Leave to cool slightly then transfer onto a cooling rack.

What Easter means to me

In this new section we look at the different faiths of our residents, to get an understanding of what is important to them. As Easter is upon us, resident, Trixie Lye, tells us about her Christian faith.

As a Christian, Easter period starts for me on Ash Wednesday, signifying the start of Lent. Lent, is the 40 day period of fasting and prayer from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday before Easter. For many years I have always given something up for Lent, but this year I have decided not to give anything up, but instead to try to give something as this seems a more positive approach. I decided that I would make a conscious effort to give a smile to everyone I meet and to try to be more tolerant and understanding to others.

On Good Friday, I go to church for prayers and to remember Jesus died on the cross to save us. Easter Day is very special day for us Christians, as we celebrate in the belief that Jesus rose from the dead.

I try to be with my family if possible over the Easter holiday although sometimes this is not possible. I'm pleased that shops and garden centres do not open on this special day, but as a Christian I am aware that people from different cultures do not celebrate Easter in the same way as we

do. For many, Easter is about chocolate eggs, the Easter Bunny, and enjoying a feast with friends and family. As it takes place during the spring, it is linked to the images of new-born lambs, spring flowers and birds nesting, all symbols of renewal and joy. 🗨️





We need you!

We welcome Chris Gillies of Exeter onto the Spectrum Residents' Group (SRG). Chris is a Spectrum Signpost resident who has been involved for some time on the West Area Residents' Forum, is a member of the Planned and Response Repair Review (PARRR) Group and represents residents on the Design Panel. With such wide experience, Chris will be a valuable asset to the SRG.



Our group has another vacancy for a Signpost resident to join us. The Spectrum Residents Group (SRG) is part of the management structure of the Spectrum Housing Group and acts as an independent link between a group of residents drawn from the four subsidiaries (three members from each) of Medina Housing Association, Western Challenge Housing Association, Signpost Housing Association and Signpost Care Partnerships (including Independent Living), and the Group Board.

Our main role is to scrutinise and monitor the services the residents receive, making sure that our views are taken account in all the decisions that are taken.

Any new member will need to show a commitment to the work we will be undertaking but I feel you would find it not just challenging but also rewarding and enjoyable.

There are certain responsibilities you will need to observe in taking on the role such as representing the interests of all residents and those of the Spectrum Housing Group. Initially, you

will be asked to serve a three year term. Any relevant training you may need to fulfil your role will be made available to you.

Being a member of the SRG is voluntary, but you will be able to claim out of pocket expenses such as travel costs, childcare or other carer costs. Meetings are held approximately every six weeks or so and in some cases may involve an overnight stay. Meetings are usually held in Christchurch, Dorset, but could involve travelling elsewhere at times.

I do hope you may be interested in filling the vacancy on the SRG. If you do feel you would like to join us could you please, in the first instance, contact Liz Baker, Community & Resident Involvement Officer, Signpost Housing Association, Signpost House, Sunrise Business Park, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 8SA., or email: Elizabeth.Baker@sha.co.uk

I would ask to register your interest by 21 April 2011 please.

John Radford
Chairman, Spectrum Residents Group

South Wessex Community Forum: are you the resident we are looking for?

The South Wessex Community Forum has a vacancy for a resident member. If you live in South Somerset or Dorset and would like to represent the views of residents in your area, why not apply to be on our brand new Community Forum?

The Forum will be meeting 10 times a year in the different areas they represent – see list. Members will receive support such as travel, childcare expenses and training.

Being part of this new Forum is a great way to meet new people, have a direct influence over the way we do things and is an opportunity to learn new skills.

If you are interested to find out more, please contact Liz Baker on 01258 484800, email elizabeth.baker@sha.co.uk or write to Liz at Signpost House, Sunrise Business Park, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 8SA.

South Wessex Community Forum – dates for the diary:

12 April 2011 **Blandford** – Station Court, Damory Court Street. 10.30am-12.30pm

10 May 2011 **Yeovil** – Century Park area.* 7pm-9pm

14 June 2011 **Sturminster Newton**.* 10.30am-12.30pm

12 July 2011 **Weymouth**.* 7pm-9pm

13 Sept 2011 **Gillingham**.* 10.30am-12.30pm

11 Oct 2011 **Stalbridge**.* 7pm-9pm

8 Nov 2011 **Yeovil** – Lyde Road area.* 10.30am-12.30pm

* venues to be confirmed.



Leaseholders' page

*Listening to residents
- improving services*

Homeowner focus group

We would like to thank the leaseholders and shared owners who participated in the meeting by telephone conference in February.

Topics under discussion included improving website information for leaseholders and shared owners, improving information for homeowners on repairs, and service standards for homeowners. We have taken into account your views about information on the website and in the leaseholder and shared owner guide and we will be making a number of improvements based on your comments.

The Homeowners Focus Group meets by telephone conference twice a year. If you would like the chance to take part and have a say on how our service to you is being delivered, please contact Liz Baker on 01258 484800 or email elizabeth.baker@sha.co.uk.

Sewage treatment update

Spectrum Signpost is in the process of re-tendering the contracts for its sewage treatment plants. Currently, six contractors have been shortlisted for the sewage treatment plant contracts and seven for the pump maintenance alone. Following the return of tenders by interested contractors, the next consultation with residents on contract proposals is scheduled for the end of April 2011. We will let you know the outcome in the next edition of *Your Voice*.

Leasehold property insurance FAQs

What does the current insurance policy cover?

The current insurance policy taken out in the name of Spectrum Housing Group covers the building against loss or damage caused by any of the industry standard risks.

As a leaseholder, what does the policy offer if the building is totally destroyed, following an insurable event?

The basis of cover is full reinstatement, with no average applied. (This means if the declared value of the building is less than the replacement value, it will still be replaced.)

What is the excess limit? £50, £100 or higher.

The current excess is £100 per claim, rising to £1,000 for subsidence claims

Are there any extensions to the standard policy cover?

Yes:

- Accidental breakage of fixed glass in windows, doors and of fixed sanitaryware
- Accidental damage to underground water sewerage drainage and gas pipes and electricity cables
- Fees incurred in reinstatement of loss or damage

- Fees incurred in removing debris, dismantling and shoring up
- For premises subject to a contract for sale, an indemnity to the insured on behalf of the purchaser
- Accidental loss of keys – Limit £3,000.

What is the difference between Home Insurance and Home Contents Insurance?

Home insurance covers the fabric of the building. Home contents cover the personal contents of the owner of the property.

What exactly are fixtures and fittings, and who is responsible for these?

Fixtures and fittings are items which are considered to be part of the building, and would not be taken by the outgoing resident when selling their property. These would include boilers, hot water tanks, etc.

What insurance should residents personally be responsible for (hold) in order to protect their possessions?

All residents should hold tenant's contents insurance, which should replace items damaged following an insured risk on a 'new-for-old' basis.

Is the building covered against acts of terrorism?

Yes, but under a separate policy.

What do I have to do if my property will be empty?

If you will be away for more than 90 days, you must ensure that:

- All main services are switched off
- All water pipes and central heating systems are drained
- The property is inspected every 7 days by a responsible person, and a log of all visits is kept.

When must I report a claim?

As soon as possible and within 60 days of the occurrence.

What information is required?

Full details of the claim, with supporting information, receipts and proofs which the insurers may reasonably require.

Is there any liability cover under this policy?

Yes. Property Owners liability forms part of this policy.

Is there an excess for claims made under this?

Yes. £500 per claim.

What is Property Owners Liability?

This is legal liability cover for damages and costs arising out of injury or damage to people or property as a result of your ownership of the property.



Six things you didn't know about... **Weymouth**

- Melcombe Regis developed separately on the peninsula to the north of the harbour. It was mentioned as a licensed wool port in 1310, but French raiders found the port so accessible that in 1433 the staple was transferred to Poole.
- Melcombe Regis is thought to be the first port at which the Black Death came to England in June 1348, possibly either aboard a spice ship or an army ship.
- In their early history Weymouth and Melcombe Regis were rivals for trade and industry, but the towns were united in an Act of Parliament in 1571, to form a double borough. Both towns became known as Weymouth despite Melcombe Regis being the main town centre.
- The villages of Upwey, Broadwey, Preston, Wyke Regis, Chickerell, South Hill, Radipole and Littlemoor have become part of the built-up area that is now known as Weymouth.
- The present Town Bridge, built in 1930, is a lifting bascule bridge, one of ten in the United Kingdom. It allows boats access to the inner harbour.
- Weymouth is the largest town in the area, larger than the county town of Dorchester. A steep ridge of chalk called the South Dorset Downs separates Dorchester and Weymouth.

LIMITED SPACES AVAILABLE BOOK NOW!



HOMES FOR THE FUTURE - HAVE YOUR SAY

All residents are welcome to attend to discuss the design of future housing schemes as well as receive presentations on new building technology.

If you are interested in attending this event then please contact us on the details below.

**Venue: Dorford Centre,
Bridport Road, Dorchester**

Limited Car Parking spaces available



Date: 1 July 2011

Time: 11:00am - 16:00pm

RSVP: Andrew Lawrie
Telephone: 01752 306591
andrew.lawrie@spectrumhousing.co.uk
by 1 May 2011

www.source-development.co.uk

PARTNERSHIP for PROGRESS

And ...something you may already know about Weymouth

Weymouth and Portland will be hosting the Olympic sailing events in 2012. Events such as the Finn, Laser and Star classes will run from 29 July to 11 August and up to 50,000 visitors are expected to watch the sailing events during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. 🗨️





Financial Inclusion

Signpost is working towards the financial inclusion of its residents so that access to free face-to-face money advice, banking and bank accounts and affordable credit options are available to all.

Changes to your Housing Benefit if you have other people living in your home

Don't risk losing your home!

Do you receive Housing Benefit to help with your rent?

Do you have someone living with you (not your partner) such as grown up children, who is aged 18 or more?

If you said yes to both, this information is very important to you...

Someone who lives with you who is aged 18 or over and who is not a joint tenant or boarder and not your partner is called a **non-dependant**. A non-dependant could be • a grown-up son or daughter • a parent • a friend • another relative who lives with you.

If you have a **non-dependant** living in your home, your Housing Benefit is usually reduced by a certain amount each week. This is called a **non-dependant deduction**. This amount depends on the circumstances of the person living with you (**the non-dependant**), for example if they are working or on benefits. If they are working, it is their **gross** income that matters, which is the money they receive before paying tax or national insurance.

Because your Housing Benefit is reduced, you have more rent to pay. The idea is that the person living with you (**the non-dependant**), should give you that part of the rent. But the deduction is made whether they are giving you some money or not. A deduction can be made for each non-dependant you have

living with you. You, as the tenant, need to pay this amount, and any other rent you need to pay, to Spectrum Signpost Housing Association so that you don't fall into arrears.

From 4th April 2011 these amounts will increase – Please contact Carla Santagostino, Financial Inclusion Officer or your local council's Housing Benefit Office for the exact figures or for any concerns you have. 📞

STOP PRESS NEWS...

Please don't forget how important household insurance is. You never know when you may need to replace items due to theft, or fire or flood – it's not expensive and it really does give peace of mind to know that should disaster strike you can replace your valuable items.

The Government has changed its plans to penalise Job Seekers Allowance claimants who have been seeking work for over a year – good news for our rural residents who find it hard to successfully find employment. The 10% sanction on Housing and Council Tax Benefit has been abolished.

Don't be taken in by those TV advertisements that offer instant loans until your pay day – the interest rates can work out at over 1,000% and many people are just finding it is the start of a spiral of debt that becomes out of control. Why not try your credit union for small loans? Their interest rate is very competitive!



If you have any concerns about these items please do not hesitate to contact Carla on 01258 484800 or your local CAB. 📞

A few of my favourite things

We asked Tracey Peters, Chair of Signpost Care Partnerships, to tell us a bit about herself.

Do you have a favourite childhood memory?

Going to Windsor Safari Park and watching the dolphins perform.

What was your favourite subject at school?

English literature and I still love poetry and reading.

What was your first job?

Clothes basket girl in the local swimming baths, the life guards used to take great delight in throwing me in every morning before the public were allowed in – needless to say my swimming improved that summer!

What is your favourite food?

A really crispy, hot bacon sandwich. In fact this is the only thing standing between me and vegetarianism.

Do you have a favourite sports team?

Not really, but I find myself watching a lot of running as my husband is a cross country runner.

What is your favourite book?

Birdsong by Sebastian Faulks.

Could you single out a favourite song?

Not really as I love music, but I would include in my list Marilyn Monroe singing Diamonds are a girl's best friend, Abba's Dancing Queen and Eurythmics' Sweet Dreams are made of this.

What about your favourite film?

Dirty Dancing



If you had £10 in your pocket what would you most like to spend it on?

A magazine for me, a cake for my husband and a bone for the dog.

If you could spend the day with anyone, who would it be?

Jamie Oliver – I'm a terrible cook!

Who do you most admire, and why?

Ghandi, I believe in democracy and peaceful change where ever possible and I believe that his simple approach to life highlights what should be important rather than what is sometimes considered important. 🗨️

Our stock sale and transfer news

We told you of our proposal to sell Signpost Housing Association, Signpost Care Partnerships and Western Challenge Housing Association stock in North Devon and Torridge to Hastoe Housing Association in the winter edition of *Your Voice*. We originally aimed to complete this sale by 28 February. The completion date has now been deferred until 28 March.

Signpost Housing Association's property in Sedgemoor and Mendip was transferred to Western Challenge Housing Association on 28 February. Management of these homes will be achieved more economically and efficiently from the Western Challenge Bristol office, bringing about a better service to residents in the area. 🗨️

Sorry!

We are aware that there was a fault with our telephone system when we were out at our staff conference on 3 March 2011.

This will have meant that some of you did not receive the message to say that we were out on this day.

We have fixed the fault and apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused. 🗨️

Residents at the heart

Resident Involvement dates for your diary

7 April **Maintenance and Repair Group (MARG) meeting** 2pm-4pm venue to be confirmed

12 April **East Community Forum meeting** 10.30am-12.30pm Station Court, Blandford

13 April **Planned and Response Repair Review (PARRR) Group meeting** 11am-1pm Signpost House, Blandford and by video link with Hawthorn House, Exeter



Your Voice editorial team

26 April **Editorial team meeting** 10am-12am The Resource Centre, Signpost House, Blandford

3 May **Community Champion panel meeting** 7pm-8pm telephone conference

5 May **Spectrum Residents' Group meeting** Spinnaker House, Christchurch

10 May **East Community Forum meeting** 7pm-9pm venue to be confirmed.

19 May **Maintenance and Repair Group (MARG) meeting** 2pm-4pm venue to be confirmed

8 June **PARRR Group meeting** 11am-1pm Signpost House, Blandford and by video link with Hawthorn House, Exeter

30 June **MARG meeting** 2pm-4pm venue to be confirmed

PARRR update

Members of Planned and Response Repairs Review Group (PARRR) were given the opportunity to comment on a number of repair and maintenance issues when they met with the Asset Manager, Scott Maxwell, and representatives of Spectrum Property Care at their meeting in February.

Topics under discussion included the repair and maintenance budget for this year and next, customer satisfaction figures for repairs, procurement and the cleaner environment agenda.

Members made several comments for consideration including:

- Provision of discounted water butts for residents
- Bringing back a prize draw for repairs satisfaction forms to encourage more residents to send them back
- Sending out one repair confirmation letter with satisfaction form rather than two letters.

PARRR Group meetings take place every other month and are conducted by video link between the Blandford and Exeter offices to enable residents from Dorset and Devon to participate with ease.

The next PARRR meeting is on 13 April from 11am-1pm. If you would like further information, please contact Liz Baker on 01258 484800.

Residents get ready to inspect

Fourteen Spectrum Signpost residents will soon be donning hard hats and high visibility jackets and going out to inspect our empty properties.

The residents have signed up for training to become Resident Void Inspectors and will be working alongside the Spectrum Property Care surveyors to ensure that our properties meet the requirements set out in our Re-let Standard, a document that residents helped to draw up.

The Resident Void Inspectors will be part of the new voids process which aims to have properties ready to let in a shorter timescale and to a consistently good standard.

We will let you know how they are getting on in the next edition of *Your Voice*.

We need further volunteers in the West. If you would like to find more please contact Kate Weeks on 01392 361122.





Estate Walkabouts: East

12 April 2011
Wessex Court and School House,
Blandford, 10am-11am

27 April 2011
Filbridge Rise, Rivers Mead,
Sturminster Newton, 11am-12pm

3 May 2011
Cooper Gardens, Jacobs Ladder,
Greenway, Chalwell, Child Okeford,
11am-1pm

3 May 2011
Broad Oak, Addlewell Lane, Yeovil,
2pm-4pm

5 May 2011
Milton Terrace, Coleridge Place
Weymouth, 1pm-2.30pm

25 May 2011
Gent Close, Newman Close, Stevens
Close, Carter Close, Hunt Road,
Blandford, 2pm-4pm

25 May 2011
General Wolfe Close, The Old Rectory,
Rectory Gardens, Shroton, 11am-12pm

2 June 2011
Douglas Road, Weymouth, 2pm-4pm

29 June 2011
Okeford Fitzpaine, 11am-12pm



Spring flowers wordsearch

See if you can find the following words in the puzzle above for a chance to win a £20 gift voucher.

agapanthus, amaryllis, anemone, cherryblossom, dahlia,
freesia, heather, hyacinth, orchids, peony, rose, sweetpea,
tulip, zinnia

Send your completed entries by Thursday 21 April 2011 to:
The Resource Centre, Signpost House, Sunrise Business Park, Blandford,
Dorset, DT11 8SA.

The winner will be the first correct wordsearch to be drawn.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Let us know

“If you have a complaint we want to know about it” says Policy and Customer Services Manager Jon Simmons.

As part of our continuing drive to improve the way we provide services a new Complaints Policy has been produced which will be introduced across the Spectrum Group. This will provide a consistent approach to dealing with complaints no matter if you are a Resident of Spectrum Western Challenge, Spectrum Medina or Spectrum Signpost.

It was developed following a review of the existing policies in place. We also carried out an independent quality assessment, looked at good practice and consulted residents and staff. The new policy takes into account performance, satisfaction and value for money.

All this ensures that we have a successful complaints process which:

- Provides an open and responsive service
- Enhances our ability to resolve complaints in a consistent, systematic way, to the satisfaction of both residents and Spectrum
- Enhances our ability to identify trends and eliminate the causes of complaints
- Helps us create a customer-focused approach to resolving complaints
- Provides a basis for continual review and analysis of the complaints handling process, the resolution of complaints and any improvements we make to the service.

Whilst our existing policies met all the basic requirements we were able to make improvements to the way we handle complaints. These include:

- Emphasising our aim to deal with complaints on the spot and reducing response times
- Clarifying and improving processes
- Developing our use of the software called Resolve, which tracks and records customer complaints, so we can collect information on resources and the costs of complaint handling
- Improving customer satisfaction levels through more timely feedback surveys and establishing outcomes at an earlier stage
- Improving the process of learning from complaints to make the service even better.

If you would like to see a full copy of the new Spectrum Complaints Policy it is now available on the Spectrum Signpost website: www.sha.co.uk



Neighbourhood Day at Hyde Road

Residents living in the Hyde Road area of Gillingham, North Dorset, got out over February half-term to meet with Spectrum Signpost officers, their neighbours and other organisations operating in their community.

The Neighbourhood Day was the idea of Housing Officer, Paul Harris, who invited a number of different agencies along, such as the Police, Dorset Fire and Rescue and Sure Start children's services, to talk to residents about what is on offer in their area.

Children had fun in the play area set up by Sure Start, and went away with balloons, toothbrushes, t-shirts and fruit, all provided free by Spectrum Signpost, Community Dental Department and Gillingham Health Visitors' Service.



Poet's corner

Thanks to resident, Simon Hosken of Shaftesbury, who has sent in this quirky limerick. If you are a budding poet, why not get in touch and see your work published?

To all the Grandmothers out there

*There once was a Nanny called Goat
Who lived in a castle with moat
When asked, "Was she sad?"
She replied, "No, I'm glad –
Because they tell me I look like a stoat!"*

Working communities

Financial Inclusion Officer, Carla Santagostino was on hand to give residents help and money management advice, and informed residents about the services available through the Consumer Credit Counselling Service.

Local councillor, David Milstead, attended to promote the benefits of joining the First Dorset Credit Union. Councillor Milstead, the Police, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service and the Family Information Service were available to speak to residents about any issues they wished to raise.

Spectrum Signpost asked residents for their suggestions about how the Hyde Road area could be improved and those who completed a form were entered into a prize draw. Congratulations to Ryan Anning, who won a £20 shopping voucher.

Paul Harris said "It was good to see so many people at the Neighbourhood Day. This is a mixed community with families and Independent Living residents and this event gave them the opportunity to meet one another and find out what services are available to them. With the help of local residents we hope to organise another event in the summer." 🗣️



Short quiz

Can you answer the following questions? If you look closely, you will find the answers hidden inside *Your Voice*.

Please return your answers by post or email, using the contact details on page 8 by Thursday, 21 April 2011.

The first correct quiz drawn will win a £20 voucher. Answers will be in the next edition of *Your Voice*. Don't forget to put your name, address and telephone number on your entry.



- 1 What is Tracey Peters' favourite film?
- 2 How many visitors are expected to watch the sailing events at the Olympics in Weymouth in 2012?
- 3 Name the Housing Officer who organised the Neighbourhood Day in Hyde Road?
- 4 How often does the Homeowner Focus Group meet by telephone conference?
- 5 How many contractors have been shortlisted for the sewage treatment contracts?
- 6 Who recently joined Spectrum Residents' Group?
- 7 What is the name of the water-saving device that fits in a cistern?
- 8 Spectrum Signpost in Devon is signing up to which Keep Britain Tidy initiative?
- 9 Topsie Rabbit Nursery visited which Independent Living scheme to sing carols?
- 10 The residents of which town benefited from a recent Crack house closure?

Answers to the previous short quiz:
Quad biking • Finlake Holiday Park • 10 • Life Education Wessex • Help for Heroes • July • Lucas Cole • Robert Walter MP • Hastoe Housing Association • Spectrum Residents' Group

Is it all gobbledygook?

Improving communication was one of the top three suggestions for ways we could improve our service, at the Annual Residents' Conference last year. To do this we really need you to tell us what is good and bad about the information we publish.

We are setting up a new Communications Group. Some of the areas we want to look at include: • our website • our leaflets – including our Residents' handbook • paperwork that residents get when they sign up to a new tenancy • policies and procedures which define how we make decisions.

We know that many people don't want to come to meetings, so we are happy to get your comments by phone, email and by post. If you need help with travel, childcare or if you need other support to take part, we can help with that too.

As well as being a great way to meet new people and to have a direct influence over the way we do things, you will also hopefully learn some new skills along the way which may even help if you are looking for work.

To find out more call Kate Weeks on 01392 361122 or email kate.weeks@sha.co.uk

Your Voice available on audio cassette or CD

Your Voice is available on audio cassette or CD. This may suit you if you are having difficulty reading, or would prefer to listen rather than to read this newsletter.

Alternatively, if you have access to the internet you can access our website at www.sha.co.uk and click on Browsealoud and listen to *Your Voice* through a computer.

For further information or to request an audio cassette or CD please contact the Customer Services Team on 01258 484800 or email them at CustomerServices@sha.co.uk



Spectrum
housing group

www.spectrumhousing.co.uk • www.sha.co.uk

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Plymouth Office: 4 Mainstone Avenue, Plymouth, PL4 9NB
Telephone: 01752 306586 Fax: 01752 306526

Email: CustomerServices@sha.co.uk

Out of hours Emergency Number: 0845 600 3574

Callers living outside the 01258 code should use our lo-call number 0845 606 0800 during office hours. Callers with an 01258 code, please call 484848

For heating enquiries (gas, solid fuel and oil) please call 01258 484702