

Thank you from Blackthorn!

We want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us in the last few months.

Beryl Bush Artist and Fundraiser has raised £1500 from her art sale and auction of promises held in Boughton Monchelsea in October.

DSH Accountants visited us to present Emma and David with a cheque for £500. David completed a survey for them and won the opportunity to donate £500 to his favourite charity. We are delighted he chose Blackthorn!

Thank you very much to Brenda Sharples and Joan and Jamal Stephan who donated a signed shirt from the Abu Dhabi open golf tournament. It was auctioned in July by our supporters at the Tudor Park in memory of Mike Sharples (Joan's brother and Brenda's late husband) raising a total of £343.75. A really wonderful and kind gesture in tribute of Mike.

Thank you to Sainsburys in Aylesford for all their fundraising support for Blackthorn as charity of the year 2011. We were delighted to welcome them to the garden in the summer to receive a large cheque totally £2081 for all their efforts!

Thank you to Steve Hart of Creative Vinyl Art for our amazing new signs. Steve (pictured) kindly donated the new Friends of Blackthorn Shop sign which looks amazing! Thank you Steve!

Thanks also to our volunteer Mike Bolton who has repainted the outside of the shop to give it a much needed face lift! Thanks so much for your hard work!

ASDA launched their Community Life scheme earlier this year and chose Blackthorn as one of their charities to support during the launch period. We are delighted that ASDA Maidstone customers voted for Blackthorn and Emma was able to visit the store to collect another cheque! Thanks to ASDA and Viv Creamer (pictured) for their on-going support!

A huge Thank you to Sarah Ferrall and Confection Perfection for supporting our 'Girls Night In' Fundraising evening which raised £1000. It was such a success that we are working together again in December at our Cupcake Workshop!

We are delighted to be Sainsburys Maidstone's Charity of the Year 2012, we are working together on all our fundraising events. Sainsburys donated and ran the raffle at the 'Girls Night In' and they will be organising the tombola at this year's Christmas Fayre. Just two examples of how they are supporting us as well as fundraising in store. We are incredibly grateful to Anne, Jen and the whole team for their hard work and support. We are looking forward to doing more together next year.



BLACKTHORN TRUST

Medical care and rehabilitation through work and community

Autumn - Winter 2012





Dear Friends and Supporters

As the colours and smells of Autumn surround us, and nature begins its task of replenishment for the next growing season, it feels timely to reflect on the challenges and achievements of 2012 at Blackthorn. I am proud to report that, despite increasing economic pressures in the wider economy and reduced staff hours, we have supported a growing number of individuals to find their true potential despite the mental or physical health conditions they face. The stories within this newsletter illustrate the significant transitions individuals are making to rebuild their lives when major illness strikes. Their determination and resilience in the face of such challenges provides the inspiration which drives our work at Blackthorn.

Through it all, you – our friends and supporters – are alongside us, as volunteers, customers, donors, sponsors and Friends. Without your valued friendship and support, the work we do would not be possible. The back page of the newsletter acknowledges some of those within the local community who have provided specific help in fundraising or practical tasks. We realise many more are working on our behalf and have been both touched by, and grateful for, the interest and efforts of many within the local community who have taken on the task of raising funds and championing our cause on our behalf. This is particularly appreciated in these difficult economic times, when our own fundraising resources are so stretched.

Undoubtedly, the year ahead will bring its own challenges. Continuing uncertainty regarding public sector funding, along with greater demands to demonstrate clear outcomes, calls for ever greater focus and energy. Any assistance you or others around you can give, either practically or financially, will mean a lot to those for whom Blackthorn provides a real stepping stone from isolation and despair to a meaningful and fulfilled future.

On behalf of everyone here at Blackthorn, I thank you for your continued support and interest in our work and send you our very best wishes for the forthcoming Festive period and for 2013.

Jan Prior CEO

How Blackthorn Turned My Life Around

I have been suffering from ME (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) for about 6 years. Before that I was an active, lively, happy person. All of a sudden the illness hit me, leaving me constantly tired, hopelessly depressed and mostly bedbound. Over the years I improved, very gradually, but was still a long way from ever believing I could work again or be happy.

About a year ago I moved to Maidstone, I was lucky enough to get an excellent doctor. I told him I had tried everything, but nothing had helped except time and positive thinking. He instantly mentioned the Blackthorn Trust. I had never heard of it, but was willing to give it a try. I met Nathalie there who showed me around and told me all about the place. I thought it sounded perfect for me.

And I was right. I've now been at Blackthorn for 6 months, and it has been the most amazing experience. I could go on forever about how wonderful it is and how much it has helped me. It provides a caring, understanding environment in which people can develop new skills, regain confidence and feel worthwhile. I chose to do gardening and crafts out of the many workshops available. I thought two mornings a week would be too much for me, but I have been able to achieve this and am now beginning to increase my time even more. Everything you do here has a purpose, like growing food for the café or making things to sell in the shop.

I had never done any gardening or crafts, or ever believed I could be good at either. I have been shown the basics and I found that, with the right environment and motivation, I could do these things after all. I have learned a lot about the basics of gardening, enough to give newcomers a helping hand. And in the craft workshop I have made many different things which have then been bought by the public such as cards and decorations. This is amazing to me. I was told when I started I'd be making things to be sold, and I thought there is no way anyone would buy something I had made!

I've learned more and more during my time here, and more importantly my confidence and self-esteem have grown. This has helped with my illness, when nothing else was working, by giving me more energy and enthusiasm through what I've done. This is the essence of Blackthorn. It provides a way to build yourself back up as a person, which will help with whatever problems you may have.

I feel really honoured to be here, and want to give back as much as I can. I have become a co-worker representative, providing another person for others to talk to, and as a link to the staff for any issues that arise. I've been helping run the craft stall at open days, and I'll also soon be tutoring numeracy to whoever needs it at Blackthorn. It's the least I can do for a place that has helped me so much, and for the wonderful people there. I feel my connections with Blackthorn will go on long after I leave as a co-worker.

I want to thank all the staff for their kindness, understanding and devotion to helping others which has had such an effect on me and everyone else lucky enough to be here. I have begun tutoring outside Blackthorn as well, in preparation to gradually getting back into work when I leave. This is something I couldn't have dreamed of doing when I began my time here.

Robert Watts – Co-Worker

Blackthorn – A Place Where People Care

Getting out of bed was a huge effort. Chronic pain made me feel so depressed, that I just wanted to be 'duvet girl'. I didn't want my friends to see me so miserable. I was so focussed on what I couldn't do anymore I couldn't see a future, and felt I was no use to anyone let alone myself. Alongside chronic pain due to a degenerative spine condition, I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia. I think deep down I knew there was something other than the spine condition but I didn't want to admit to myself that there was another problem with my body to deal with.

I was referred to Blackthorn by my doctor and didn't really know what to expect, but I have an open mind and if you've ever suffered from any form of chronic pain you will try anything to get some relief. I started with Glass Therapy (which helped me sleep and relax before bed), massage and Dr McGavin's anthroposophic medicine. After 3 months, I was referred to Blackthorn Garden and following 'taster' days, I chose to go into the greenhouse and craft workshops and here is where my life became mine again.

I was made to feel very welcome and a part of Blackthorn. My two days a week here gave me a reason to get up because I was making a difference. Of course there have been days when my pain prevented me doing certain things but there are other things I can be doing instead.

It's a tremendous feeling when you plant seeds, prick out, plant on, pot up for sale and then see them being purchased and you know you did that! Last Christmas was amazing, I was able to teach other co-workers how to make candle and table arrangements (I was a florist before I had children) which sold faster than we could make them! Craft brought out my artistic side and I have learnt so many new skills. I have been inspired to pick up my photography again and, after couple of afternoons with my camera in Blackthorn garden, I put together an exhibition of my work which has been displayed in Blackthorn cafe over recent months.

I have learned a new craft which has given me hopefully a new career, a path to find myself. If someone had said to me two years ago that I would be using my pain as a focus to concentrate on making bespoke jewellery using genuine gem stones and wire work, I would have laughed in their face. Of course some days I can't make jewellery because my pain won't allow me to get comfortable, but I can still design in my head, search the net for cheaper suppliers and research information. At Blackthorn's recent 'Girls Night In' event, I held my first public exhibition showing my handmade jewellery. I was extremely nervous of what people would think and say, but needn't have worried. The jewellery went down a storm and there were so many fantastic positive comments that have given me the confidence to keep going.

Blackthorn has given me so much and still gives me support and encouragement. The calming aura envelopes you, makes you feel at ease and safe and I have never found this anywhere before. It's a community made up of an eclectic mix of people from many walks of life. Everybody gels, no one passes judgement but every one of us there has an illness of some kind and we respect one another's privacy.

Blackthorn's Mentors are some of the nicest, gentlest and kindest people I have ever had the pleasure to meet. Thank you to everyone who has been by my side on my journey at Blackthorn, I can't thank you all enough. I hope I'm remembered for helping others as you have helped me. Blackthorn is in my blood now and I don't think I will ever be too far away from it. I hope I can give back as much as I've received.

Sarah Murton, Co-Worker



Veterans join the team

We have recently begun working together with a group of war veterans as a way of better understanding the nature and symptoms of combat related post-traumatic stress disorder from those who are living with the experiences and impact of this challenging condition. It is they who hold the key and answers for their healing and recovery.

Through conversations, sharing and artistic activities we have begun this journey together, hoping to develop a service and a new way of treating PTSD using anthroposophical medicine and therapies to help those suffering from it.

Neil Young writes about his experience of our first meeting:

"I was a little tense about the meeting. Mostly due to the unknown, not knowing what exactly was going to happen. However after just a few minutes my fears were put to rest and the atmosphere was comfortable and I was able to join in. By the end we were all laughing and joking and comfortable enough to agree on a simple set of guidelines and on what we were aiming to achieve."

So watch this space! We will keep you informed of our discoveries as they happen.

Below a photograph of our team. From left to right: Daz, David, Keith, Neil. Behind Susanna and Cristina.

Susanna Odlin and Cristina D'Agostino Biographical Counsellors at Blackthorn



Watch This Space!

I wonder if you ever go shopping at the Mall in Maidstone Town Centre? If so you may, or may not have noticed a featureless patch of land beside the Chequers Bus Station, marooned in a complex of roads, signs and traffic lights. Hardly the most inspiring site for garden designers! However the Mall has kindly offered Blackthorn the opportunity for a down town presence there and we are grateful to them for funding this project.

Our idea is to create a mini Garden of England with traditional apple, cherry and cobnut trees and hops climbing up structures shaped like oast houses. There will also be native hedging species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, spindleberry and dog rose – and some lavender bushes for any urban bees. This will all take a while to establish, so don't expect colourful displays of seasonal bedding plants, more an evolution of the spirit of the Kent countryside.

When going home from Sainsbury's, you should get a good view from the top of the bus!

Rose Moore Gardener



Friends of Blackthorn Shop and Cabin Thank You

We are extremely grateful to the team of volunteers including Maureen Bortolozzo (Trustee) who all fundraise so passionately in the shop and sorting area in the tractor shed, donating thousands of pounds every year to Blackthorn. They do this through the charity shop and monthly cabin sales held in the tractor shed on the last Wednesday of each month.

We are always looking for more volunteers to help out at the shop. Could you spare a morning or afternoon each week? If so please call Emma to discuss on 01622 722219.

NO TO THE GYRATORY SYSTEM!

Many of you will be aware of the proposed changes to St Andrews Road, as part of Maidstone Borough Council's Integrated Transport Strategy. This would have meant St Andrews Road becoming a one way busy street with no parking and would have impacted significantly on the Trust's ability to operate. I am pleased to report that, largely due to the enormous support received, Maidstone Borough Council have rejected the Strategy in its entirety and planners have been asked to think again. Many, many thanks to those who wrote letters to challenge the plans. We will keep you informed of any further developments as they arise.

Jan Prior, CEO.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW TRUSTEES

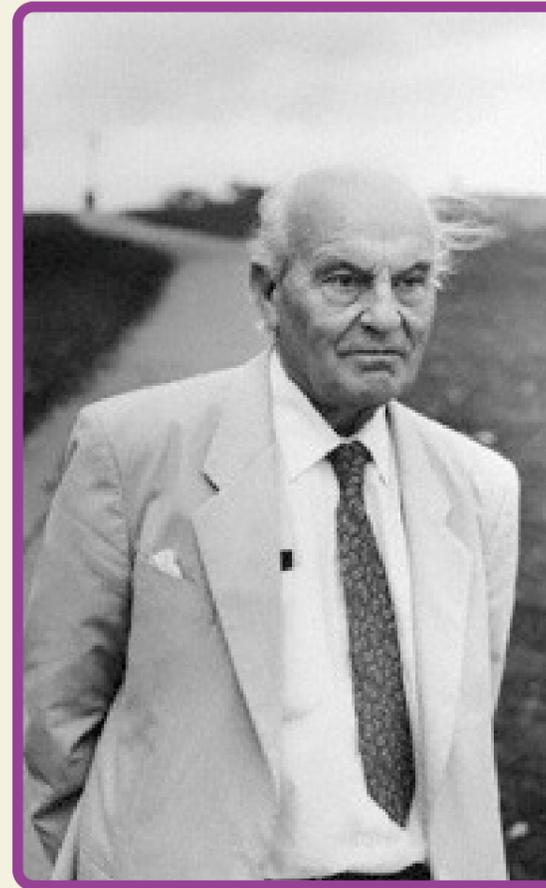
We are delighted to welcome two new Trustees to the Board at Blackthorn Trust. **Simon Palmer** is a local solicitor with a wealth of experience in the charity world. **Jonathan Shaw**, a former local MP, was Minister for Work and Pensions under the previous Labour Government. Both bring their experience and expertise as well as fresh perspectives to our work and we very much look forward to working with them in the months and years ahead.



Simon Palmer



Jonathan Shaw



Dr John Horder 1919 -2012

John Horder was a Patron of Blackthorn for over 20 years. He died aged 92 on 31st May 2012. He took up our invitation because of his interest in the use of the arts in medicine and his own long and personal experience of depression. John found a deep interest in, and empathy for, his fellow human being. He attended several of our patient case study meetings, demonstrating an astuteness of observation and sensitivity in his listening. He had been passionate about his job as a Kentish Town GP and clearly knew what Rudolf Steiner described as the doctor's 'will to heal'.

John was an accomplished artist particularly in piano, organ and watercolours. This enriched his capacity as a doctor, academic and transformer of general practice which, when he began in the 1950s, was the Cinderella of medicine. John was influential in founding the Royal College of GPs, went on to be its President and for many years advised the Department of Health and beyond, to become known as the 'father of modern day general practice'.

John was an initiative taker who could lead by quiet example. He brought a gentle, sensitive and positive encouragement to those he was helping. The many personal introductions he made for us at high level within general practice and the world of grant-making trusts helped Blackthorn establish itself, gain acknowledgment and become an original contributor within the NHS.

David McGavin

FRUITFUL PAIN MANAGEMENT

Our programme is individually tailored for patients whose chronic pain is beyond further conventional help. It is particularly suited to patients for whom:

The condition has proven difficult to treat;

Further interventions and medication may be doing more harm than good;

Emotional and psychological factors complicate the condition e.g. anxiety, depression, PTSD;

There is social isolation, lack of direction & purpose, need for companionship;

Rehabilitation, occupation and employment are pressing issues;

Relations between doctor and patient have become strained.

Of 60 patients who could be properly assessed using the SF12v2 quality of life measure over the last 2 years, 45% have shown improvement in physical health and 57% in mental health. Other measures have shown increase in levels of confidence control over life, decreased dependence and steps in personal development.

Full details on our website or call from Emma on 01622 722219 for a copy.

WHAT IS ANTHROPOSOPHIC MEDICINE?

Read all about it at www.ivaa.eu/userfiles/file/System_Anthroposophic_Medicine_PRINT.pdf

Or please call Emma on 01622 722219 to request a hard copy (cost £3)

Farewell to Hazel – Viennese Style!

May 13th was a special day at Blackthorn. Our colleague and friend Hazel Adams bade farewell to Blackthorn where she has been working as a therapist for 27 years. Hazel's spark - when met by Dr David McGavin - ignited the flame of Blackthorn, with at its heart the healing and transformation of the human being out of anthroposophy.

Patients, friends and colleagues shared their appreciation of Hazel and her dedicated work through music, poetry, eurythmy and singing. David shared his recollections of their first meeting, his initial scepticism, hesitancy and resistance and how – through Hazels steadfast certainty and grounded discussions - he finally agreed to explore and research this new approach. The rest is history!

Hazel presented David and Renate each with the gift of a plant. A rowan tree for the Trust to symbolise the wisdom of the sun and a rose tree for Renate whom she fittingly described as the 'Rose of Blackthorn'.



The afternoon continued with refreshments Viennese style! The garden cafe was transformed with voiles and drapes, china tea sets, lacey table cloths and pretty flowers creating the ambience of a Viennese coffee house. Whilst guests were able to enjoy homemade delicious cakes, biscuits and gateaux served with fresh tea and coffee, the Hess quartet played exquisite music from Vienna for us. It was a feast for all the senses.

We wish Hazel all the very best for the new chapter in her life.
Susanna Odlin



RETIREMENT FAREWELL & THANK YOU

Thank you to patients, family, friends and colleagues for the many tributes, artistic contributions and kind words. All have been enjoyed and much appreciated. The fundraising Viennese cafe was a great success, with many friends old and new joining in an afternoon of delicious coffee house treats, accompanied by the gifted Hess players, who concluded with an outstanding grand finale.

I am now settled in Bristol, beginning to recreate the garden and looking forward to having time to spend in it!! I am truly grateful for all I experienced through the work in Blackthorn, the impressive way in which illnesses and life challenges are confronted, overcome or lived with has been inspirational and in these days of evidence based medicine provides living proof, to those that need it, of the human being's spiritual dimension. I am glad to remain involved with Blackthorn as a Trustee, so hopefully our paths will still cross occasionally. With love and thanks, Hazel Adams



METAL COLOUR LIGHT APPEAL

Many thanks indeed to all who supported this appeal which has enabled us to purchase further panels - an impressive support in just five years of this new treatment at Blackthorn. The fund now has over £1000 towards the next panel and we have been warmed by the support of so many generous and helpful gifts. The work continues to grow and arouse interest wherever it is presented and I am hopeful that in the coming years other centres in the U.K. will be able to offer this therapy.
Hazel Adams

Grand Christmas Raffle

As in previous years please find enclosed in your newsletter two books of tickets for our fundraising prize draw. We have joined together again with the Kent Charities Group which enables us to save costs and benefit from bigger and better prizes. Blackthorn receives every penny for each ticket sold, so please, if you can, sell them to family and friends.

Any cheques need to be payable to Blackthorn Trust and all tickets and monies must be returned to Emma Halpin at Blackthorn by Thursday 6th December.

We are very grateful for your help with our Christmas Fundraising and hope you have a winning ticket!



BLACKTHORN TRUST

Cupcake Workshop

Thursday December 13th 7pm

£25 includes a glass of wine and 6 of your own cupcakes to take home

Pipe with chocolate frosting and make half a dozen animal-print cupcakes

Make a selection of cupcake decorations using both sugar and paste

Fun-filled activity for all abilities

Bring a bottle!

www.blackthorn.org.uk
St Andrews Road, Barming, ME16 9AN
(behind the medical centre)
01622 722216 charity no. 117979



BLACKTHORN GARDEN BAKERY

We bake our own bread every day. Along with our successful organic Artisan bread range, we are developing specialist lines, such as seasonal and gluten-free products.



To order your fresh bread call John on 01622 725585 (Monday-Friday 9-3pm) or pop into the Café after midday for loaves straight from the oven!