



Under embargo until: 13 June 2018 00:01hrs

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## Wales's most admired volunteers honoured at annual national awards

They are the people who give up hundreds of hours of their time every year for no reward except to make the lives of others better.

But today four groups and 17 individuals who devote themselves to projects in their local communities will get national recognition for the work they do at the country's leading volunteer awards.

Among the winners of the 2018 Wales Volunteer of the Year Awards are an 80-year-old woman tackling strenuous physical tasks at wildlife reserves, a teenager helping in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking, and a Red Cross volunteer who 'dropped everything' to rush to the Grenfell Tower fire scene.

The presentation of the awards run by Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) will take place at 2pm today (**Wednesday 13 June**) at The Cornerstone in Cardiff, with the ceremony hosted by WCVA Vice President Tom Jones and Chief Executive Ruth Marks.

A total of 21 winners in the six nomination categories of adults, young people (under 25 years), groups, green volunteers, digital volunteers and trustees are being presented with awards to mark their fantastic contributions.

'Wales is famous for being a welcoming nation, and we're increasingly acknowledged for our willingness to help others for no personal gain,' said Ruth Marks.

'WCVA is very proud of our seemingly endless supply of amazing volunteers and our awards programme is a fitting opportunity for us to show our gratitude in front of a national audience.'

Wales Volunteer of the Year Awards 2018

**Adult category** (25 years and over)

**Glenys Benford-Lewis**

Glenys Benford-Lewis has helped hundreds of people 'find their new way in the world' following the loss of their loved ones.

Glenys, 60, of Pontardawe, has volunteered with Cruse Morgannwg since 2007 as a trainer, bereavement volunteer, supervisor, management committee member and unofficial 'ethical advisor'.

Following her initial training as an adult bereavement volunteer she trained to help children and championed the need for them to get good bereavement support to enable them to carry on and lead productive lives and engage with education.

'Glenys has worked with people who have experienced multiple suicides, had family members who have been murdered and supported the elderly in intense grief when they have lost their partner after 60 years of marriage,' said Cruse Bereavement Care Morgannwg Area Coordinator Susan Richards-Hoskin.

'Many weeks she has worked all day, taken phone calls in the evening and trained new volunteers at the weekends. We have many volunteers who go the extra mile, but Glenys goes the extra mile and another one on top.

'Without Glenys, many adults would not have found their new way into the world, would not have restored themselves back to what they perceive as some kind of normality and rebuilt their lives.'

### **Laura Kilvington**

Laura Kilvington is supporting hundreds of people to cope with mental health problems while also reducing the stigma attached to the condition.

The 27-year-old volunteers as Community Writer with Taff Housing Association, meeting members of its community groups to find out what issues they face. She then researches the issues and writes case studies for articles published across a range of Taff Housing media streams and on her blog, 'Picture the Positive'.

'Laura's main focus is on reducing the stigma surrounding mental health, particularly Bipolar, and the impact it has on relationships, friendships and employment,' said Housing Association Community Investment Officer Clare Dickinson.

Laura from Fairwater, Cardiff, talks openly about mental health in relation to motherhood, body image and the importance of self-care. Her articles not only help reduce stigma but also show others that they are not alone.

'The mental health awareness project Laura is involved with will have a lasting impact on the community,' Clare added. 'One in four of us will experience mental ill health at some point in our lives. It is therefore important that employers take steps to promote positive mental health and support not only tenants and local residents

experiencing poor mental ill health but staff too.

'Laura recently did a talk as part of mental health awareness week. The talk was attended by a mix of staff, fellow volunteers and community members. Laura is an inspirational young person who is a role model to others - her dedication deserves recognition.'

## **Robert Clapham**

Without the volunteering of Robert Clapham, thousands of young people in Neath Port Talbot would not have had benefitted from taking part in life-changing activities.

Rob, 72, of Pontardawe, pioneered the formation of Glantawe Outdoor Education Academy while also 'almost single-handedly' running Riverside Community Park - of which he is Secretary - doing everything from clearance of overgrown areas to cutting the grass, cleaning and maintaining the centre.

The 25-acre park is used by thousands of people every year and also provides programmes for disengaged, disadvantaged people and groups to volunteer, gain practical skills and improve their personal wellbeing.

Although it is open to everyone, the focus is primarily on people living with mental illness, people who find it difficult to get work experience because they have a prison record, and those in need of practical and social skill interventions.

'Rob raised finance to purchase equipment and provide employment to the team who run programmes in the park, allowing his own business to deteriorate to ensure the project's success,' said fellow volunteer Suzanne Chapple.

'He continues to work tirelessly to further the interest of the charity and we feel that without his drive and sheer number of years, days and hours spent on the project, neither the academy nor the park would exist in their current form - certainly many young people would not have had the benefit of life-changing programmes.'

## **Lorraine Smith**

Lorraine Smith was one of the first British Red Cross volunteers from Wales to travel to help out at the Grenfell Tower fire, 'dropping everything' to be on the first train to London.

The team leader with the Red Cross's Emergency Response service in South East Wales worked in the Grenfell Tower community assistance centre, helping people displaced by the fire to access services and support.

She later returned to help with the relief effort again, this time working in an NHS outreach team, going around the estates surrounding the tower, knocking on doors

to offer support to residents. Most of the people she spoke to told her it was the first offer of support they had had.

'Lorraine is trained in how to speak to people who have recently been through trauma,' said Red Cross Service Manager Vern Cornish. 'This helps her give emotional support, which can range from offering a cup of tea and a friendly ear to helping guide people to decisions about what to do next and how to start putting their lives back together.'

As well as her emergency response role, Lorraine, 63, of Penarth is an Emergency Response trainer delivering Continuing Professional Development sessions across Wales, and a tutor on the British Red Cross foundation programme, the entry level for all new volunteers and staff across the UK.

'During the response to Grenfell Tower it became clear that more volunteers were needed on the ground urgently,' Vern Cornish added. 'Lorraine was called at around 8pm on Saturday night and dropped everything to be on the first train to London the next morning.'

'Lorraine's passion for supporting people was absolutely clear in the Grenfell response. She made sure people got the help and support they needed and that they felt cared for and listened to when they came to the centre. Her dedication really made a difference to a lot of people who were going through the hardest of times.'

## **Fay Jones MBE**

The exceptional voluntary contribution made by Frances 'Fay' Jones is helping people across North Wales with sight loss to enjoy books, knitting and socialising.

Since being diagnosed with Macular Degeneration and helped by RNIB Cymru (Royal National Institute of Blind People) eye clinic liaison officer at Ysbyty Gwynedd, the 76-year-old has spent the past 12 years tirelessly volunteering with, fundraising for and championing the needs of other blind and partially sighted people.

Registered blind, Fay from Holyhead is hugely passionate about RNIB. She credits the charity with giving her back her life after her own diagnosis and felt she wanted to give something in return.

She was instrumental in setting up a unique initiative on Anglesey, the RNIB Cymru Listening Books Group, which involves people with sight loss getting together to read books and chat about them.

The success of the group in Holyhead has led to Fay setting up groups in Menai Bridge with plans to start two more bilingual groups on Anglesey. The Welsh

Libraries service now plans to work with Fay to roll them out across North Wales libraries into Gwynedd and Conwy.

Fay has also started 'Knit and Natter' groups where people can get together to socialise while knitting to raise money for charity.

'Fay has made such a difference to so many people's lives and believes that it is as much about books as it is socialising,' said Ansley Workman from RNIB Cymru. 'Many people with sight loss are at risk of feeling isolated, which is why initiatives such as Fay's are so important.'

'Fay is an exceptional individual, very warm and caring. She also received an MBE for her work in fundraising for Ysbyty Gwynedd before her own sight loss diagnosis.'

'We're so grateful for Fay's commitment which helps us support the 107,000 people with sight loss in Wales.'

## **Young volunteer (under 25 years)**

### **Elizabeth Haven**

At the age of just 17, Elizabeth Haven is helping people learn about modern slavery and human trafficking and the work being done to combat it across North Wales.

Elizabeth, from Conwy, takes part in a range of volunteering activity, including with local scout groups - she is currently completing her Queen Scout Award - coaching a youth netball team and working towards her Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.

An accredited Young Trustee, she is currently volunteering at Haven of Light CIC in Colwyn Bay, which aims to prevent, raise awareness of and provide support for survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking in North Wales.

'Elizabeth has raised awareness with many citizens of all ages about the signs of slavery, the effects it is having, and the work being done within North Wales,' said Ali Ussery, Director and Project Coordinator with Haven of Light.

'She has shown passion and commitment to all her volunteering opportunities, is a credit and excellent example of a proactive young volunteer and an excellent role model to other young people who say they don't have time to volunteer,' Alison added.

'We were informed by the Scouts that Elizabeth is the most mature, grounded, intelligent teenager they have ever met. If anyone wants to reaffirm their faith that the future of the world is safe with the youth of today, introduce them to Elizabeth.'

## **Alex Williams**

Alex Williams' volunteering with a cancer charity has had an 'astounding' impact on its work, raising more than £4,000 for vital equipment and attracting new recruits as the face of a national campaign.

The 23-year-old from Maesteg has climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, carried out a skydive and donated 'countless hours' to Tenovus Cancer Care - all while working full-time and caring for both of his parents.

He reached the top of Kilimanjaro, despite 'horrendous' weather conditions. Some of the money he raised was used to fund telephony nurses, who are available to give help and advice around the clock. It has also funded benefits support workers.

'The money goes towards literally bringing treatment to patients' communities,' said Alex's friend Gemma Richards. 'It's no secret that some cancer patients have to travel miles for treatment, but Tenovus brings it to them in the form of their high-tech mobile unit, which is kitted out with state-of-the-art technology, allowing nurses to administer chemotherapy.'

Alex is qualified to advise people how to stop smoking and puts on sun awareness courses to show the dangers of not using sunscreen. A poster with his face on was displayed in every Tenovus shop in England and Wales to encourage more people to volunteer.

'His impact on Tenovus has been astounding,' Gemma added. 'He's a carer to his mother and father, and to do all the errands for them - while working full-time and committing himself to helping cancer patients and their loved ones - truly shows him as an exceptional example to people.'

## **Luke Morgan**

Luke Morgan has helped bring 'great joy and happiness' to the lives of thousands of unwell children, most of them hospitalised.

Through his 'Make a Smile' volunteering project, set up in 2017, Luke's Cardiff University student colleagues dress up as well-known characters and visit children to interact and play games with them.

'His idea was driven by his belief that every child deserves a happy childhood and that, sadly, some children who are hospitalised or face other hardships miss out on this,' said John Steele of Cardiff University Students' Union.

The project has provided rewarding volunteering opportunities for almost 200 young people, developing their confidence and providing them with new skills and opportunities to give something back to their local community.

So far, the group has visited more than 3,000 children and volunteered over 1,000 hours, 'lighting up children's faces and bringing a little joy to their lives to help them forget about their afflictions', John Steele added.

Luke, 21, dresses up regularly as Peter Pan - the boy who never grew up - encouraging children to use their imagination and embrace their childhood by creating games around pirates and treasure hunting.

'His actions have brought great joy and happiness to the lives of hundreds of sick children in the locality, literally making them smile and forget about their illness for a moment in time,' said John.

### **Geri Escott**

'Outstanding' teenage volunteer Geri Escott has taken responsibility for organising inter-generational activities in a rural village, bringing together young and older people.

'She reaches out from her youth club to the wider community to the pensioners' group, to the churchgoers, to parents of young children...and is an outstanding ambassador both for the club and the younger generation,' said Youth Club Leader Conway Hawkins.

Every week, Geri makes an hour-round bus trip from her home in Llantwit Major to Wick Youth Club in the Vale of Glamorgan, where she helps with paperwork and supports members in arts and craft and sports activities. She also helps run the tuck shop.

Recently, a fellow volunteer died in tragic circumstances and Geri applied for a grant to fund a mini local volunteering award in his memory. Called Harry's Blue Sky Awards, it will be presented each year to one young volunteer.

Geri has taken over running a Christmas Dinner for local pensioners and a Halloween party for children and pensioners. 'In fact, there are no club activities over the past three years that Geri has not been at the heart of,' Conway added.

'Geri plays a major role in keeping the club running and has become central to all that we do. In particular she has played a major role in improving relationships between young and not so young in the village. She is inspirational.'

**'Green' volunteer** (individual of any age who volunteers with an environmental organisation or project)

### **Sam Adams**

Sam Adams is motivating disaffected young people to gain skills and qualifications while working on a scheme aimed at tackling climate change through building a 'unique' community resource.

The 22-year-old of Trallwn, Swansea, has volunteered for the past three years with the Gower-based Down to Earth Project, a social enterprise offering training

programmes for young people and adults from disadvantaged backgrounds in traditional and natural building methods.

As part of the project's Building Sustainable Communities initiative, Sam helped in the construction of a sustainable training centre, using a range of sustainable building methods including straw bale construction, larch cladding, sheep wool insulation, clay plastering, lime rendering and green roof installation.

He is currently part of the Murton volunteering team which completes a variety of tasks each month including land management, woodland management, animal husbandry and organic and sustainable food production.

'Building Sustainable Communities is already having societal, economic and huge environmental impact through a solutions-based approach to tackling climate change with the people who will be most impacted by it - the most impoverished and marginalised young people,' said Kate Denner, Down to Earth Project Group Facilitator.

'When Sam first joined our volunteering team, he lacked confidence and struggled with social situations,' she added. 'He has grown into a confident young man, capable of expressing himself, joining in with social situations, and able to make presentations to other volunteers, participants, and funders. He has a great work ethic, is focused, and trustworthy.'

'He has become a valued and well-loved member of our team; a true asset to our organisation. His smile and his enthusiasm are contagious and have helped motivate other young people to get involved in their community. We cannot think of anyone more deserving than Sam to receive the accolade of Volunteer of the Year.'

### **Bronwen Jenkins**

At almost 81 years old, Bronwen Jenkins works at nature reserves across Radnorshire, carrying out strenuous physical tasks including fencing, coppicing, cutting bracken, hoeing thistles and clearing brambles.

'As a woman of very mature years, Bronwen demonstrates that age is no barrier to contributing fully to the community,' said Chair of Radnorshire Wildlife Trust (RWT) Chris Ledbury.

Having begun volunteering with the Trust almost 30 years ago in 1989, Bronwen is an expert botanist who leads wildflower walks on the reserves, has taken part in a series of flora and fauna surveys and established a wildlife-friendly community garden in her home village of Builth Road near Builth Wells.

She is also a member of a group of textile artists and specialises in machine embroidery. An exhibition of textile art that she organised at RWT's flagship nature reserve Gilfach 'opened many people's eyes to the wonders of nature and brought a large number of people to the reserve for the first time'.

Chris Ledbury added: 'It's unusual for someone to be equally competent and enthusiastic in practical conservation work, scientific understanding and artistic interpretation. Bronwen's volunteering embraces all three.'

'She is always willing to help in many other ways - distributing newsletters, helping to organise visits, standing in at short notice when help is needed - a true powerhouse despite her years!'

## **Edgar Llewellyn**

Edgar Llewellyn volunteers six days a week every week, helping people in poverty or on low incomes to benefit from recycled furniture and other household items.

The 53-year-old of Tylorstown, Rhondda, volunteers in re-use and recycling charity toogoodtowaste's transport and warehouse sections, which collect and deliver the items donated or sold through its showrooms

'As the main part of a team that collected over 87,000 items during 2017, Edgar is an integral team member and has become our reuse champion, seeing the benefits of reuse on all aspects - social, environmental and financial,' said toogoodtowaste Manager Shaun England.

'Edgar has been unemployed for a number of years and lives in one of the most deprived wards in Rhondda Cynon Taf, so he sees poverty and the need for the essential service that toogoodtowaste can offer on his doorstep, every day,' Shaun added.

'Edgar is a great ambassador for toogoodtowaste and mentors new volunteers, sharing his life story to help put people at ease, or to help others who are struggling with life and come to volunteering as a way to help them focus and find purpose - or even find the skills - to gain employment.

'Edgar is the most humble person I have ever met, never taking praise for things that he has achieved, always supporting and wanting to help everyone have the chances and opportunities he has had since joining the organisation.'

## **Trustee**

### **Nerys Edmonds**

The 'amazing' work of its chair of trustees has prevented the closure of a project helping disadvantaged people overcome depression, learn new skills, and contribute to the local community.

At the beginning of 2017, Swansea Community Farm had been unable to secure enough funding to meet its budget and reserves were quickly running out. Nerys

Edmonds, who had recently become chair of the board, 'became critical to the survival of the organisation'.

The financial situation required a staff restructure and the redundancy of the post of director. Nerys stepped in and has since been leading the staff team, fundraising, developing partnerships and ensuring effective working practices.

The farm - which has a range of rare breed farm animals, allotments, wildlife areas, training space and a café - is in one of the most deprived wards in Wales, said colleague Ruth Domoney.

It exists to improve health and wellbeing, build skills and increase social inclusion, every year providing volunteering opportunities, training, play activities, community events and school workshops.

Nerys, 45, volunteered over 300 hours in 2017 - even helping to feed the animals on a Sunday - alongside working in her own paid job in public health and bringing up a young family.

'The people the farm helps range from eight to 80 years old,' Ruth Domoney added. 'Many live in poverty and face multiple disadvantages including long term unemployment, food poverty, physical and mental health issues, disabilities and social isolation. The breadth of the contribution Nerys makes is amazing.'

### **Peter Mayle**

'One in a million' Peter Mayle has been pivotal to the development of a Cardiff charity working to improve the lives of hundreds of people affected by acquired brain injury.

Peter, 71, of Llantwit Major joined Headway Cardiff & South East Wales as a trustee after his son sustained a serious brain injury in 1992, and has been treasurer since 1997.

Headway was set up to support patients discharged from Rookwood Hospital and Peter also volunteers in its Independence and Wellbeing Centre, based at the hospital.

'Pete has first-hand experience of the difficulties encountered by survivors and their families and this is evident in the way he is able to relate to our service users and his dedication to the organisation as a whole,' said Volunteer Coordinator Kathryn Jones.

'He provides crucial support, advice and management and focuses especially on finance and HR,' she added. 'He is present at fundraising events, training days and meetings and is always ready to help and assist staff members when we need him.'

'We really feel that Pete is one in a million. He gives so much and invests so heavily in our organisation, dedicating his time to gain a complete and deep understanding. By doing this, he has become so well-known and much loved by everyone here at Headway that we wouldn't know what to do without him.'

### **Dr Elinor Kapp**

A retired psychiatric consultant's dedication to her role as trustee at a Cardiff hospice has helped ensure it consistently provides a world-class standard of specialist home-based palliative care.

81-year-old Dr Elinor Kapp became a trustee of George Thomas Hospice Care on its foundation in 1984, contributing her clinical knowledge as a consultant in child and adolescent psychiatry and her experience in achieving high standards of care in a clinical setting.

She continued in the role beyond her retirement after 50 years service to the NHS, seeing the charity adopt its new identity as City Hospice in 2017.

In the past year, a record total of 750 new patients with incurable illnesses were referred to the hospice.

The Clinical Governance Committee chaired by Dr Kapp since 1984 is charged with overseeing the quality and standard of care provided by City Hospice's clinical team, and ensuring it provides a world-class standard of palliative care, working collaboratively with colleagues in primary and secondary care.

'She has offered the board sound advice on all clinical matters, and her judgement and wise counsel has proved particularly valuable on the rare occasions when the continuity of the service might have been under threat, or in arguing for investment in the clinical service on grounds of increasing demand or enhancing quality, or both,' said Chief Executive Mike Walsh.

'She balances diplomacy with humour and a sound understanding of medicine, people and the complexities of providing palliative and end of life care to patients in their own homes and living with their families.

'Nothing is ever too much trouble and her commitment to her role in time, energy and enthusiasm has been and continues to be exemplary.'

**Groups** (two or more individuals, whether as an informal group or a formally constituted organisation)

### **Cardiff University Student Safety Walk Scheme**

Cardiff city centre has become a safer place at night due to a student 'patrol' group looking to help vulnerable people.

The Student Safety Walk Scheme was launched in 2016 following a spate of sexual assaults near the University buildings during 2015 freshers' week.

A group of students led by Alastair Babington, a first year bio-science student, approached Cardiff Volunteering with the idea of a project involving student volunteers patrolling the area around the University on Wednesday and Saturday evenings between 10pm and 3am.

They would help students and other people who were alone and vulnerable, lost or disorientated or intoxicated and unwell. This would include providing them with water/appropriate footwear/assistance to a safe place - such as the Students' Union or University Halls - or referring them to the Students' Safety Bus or police if necessary.

All the volunteers receive training in Basic First Aid and Conflict Resolution. Almost 400 students and non-students have been supported since the launch of the scheme.

'This group of students - led this year by two student lead volunteers Geoff and Petar - are loyal, committed and completely community spirited,' said Sean Hoare of Cardiff University Enterprise. 'They turn up to volunteer twice a week, giving up their own time at very unsociable hours to help others.'

'They are a credit to themselves, Cardiff Volunteering, the Students' Union and the University and I believe that what they have achieved, and how the project has gone from strength to strength since its small beginnings, is inspirational.'

### **Young, Migrant and Welsh Project**

A group of 24 young black, Asian and minority ethnic volunteers in Swansea is 'bravely and creatively' challenging racism, far-right extremism and Islamophobia.

The Young, Migrant and Welsh project run by Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST) Wales and funded by Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), was set up for young people who have migrated alone - or with their families - to Wales, either as asylum-seekers or refugees, as economic migrants, or as second or third generation migrants.

The volunteers have been trained by staff at the Waterfront Museum in Swansea in research and interview skills and in archiving material for future generations. They then designed a unique exhibition for the museum showcasing who they were and challenging stereotypes around young people, ethnicity, religion and gender. They

also featured in their own film exploring themes of heritage, identity and experiences of growing up in Wales.

‘The project has brought people together to form a strong unit of ambassadors who through their experiences will champion the message of tolerance and inclusion within their own grassroots communities,’ said local resident Adebowale Omole.

‘This group deserves recognition because they are bravely, creatively and relentless standing up to face the prejudices threatening the fabric of our community.

‘Through their targeted approach, they are challenging racism, far-right extremism, and Islamophobia at the grassroots level and doing their best with limited resources to stop the spread of negative narratives about being different.’

### **Penparcau Community Forum**

A charity set up following the end of the Communities First programme is continuing to make life better for residents of the largest disadvantaged area of Ceredigion.

Penparcau village near Aberystwyth is primarily made up of a large housing estate with around 3,200 residents, including 800 young people, 40% of whom live in poverty.

Penparcau Community Forum was formed - after Communities First funding was withdrawn in 2013 - with the aim of developing sustainable and inclusive activities and facilities for the benefit of all.

Since then, the Forum has secured a total £1.2m to build a community centre which houses a café, training kitchen, youth zone, training room and changing facilities, all of which are aimed at upskilling young people and families.

The Forum also runs a food co-op and much-needed foodbank with surplus food from local supermarkets given out to residents every Saturday. The group’s Youth Forum runs a year-round programme of activities and events for children and young people, while the Hub also hosts a dance school and Bounce Fit, and courses and workshops for various ages and groups.

‘Penparcau Forum is held up by many as an excellent example to other communities and especially as a resilient community,’ said Debra Croft of Aberystwyth University.

‘It really does stand out as a forum where the volunteers use all the skills available to them to make life better for the wider community. As well as developing training and skills, they look at the wider picture of wellbeing, including environmental, health, safety and finance initiatives.’

### **Mind Matters**

Almost 1,000 young people living in the South Wales valleys have more of a sense of belonging to their communities after taking part in a wellbeing initiative.

Mind Matters is a mental health and positive wellbeing project for young people aged 14-25 living in Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent, which recruited and trained volunteers to deliver 45 peer-led workshops.

They also set up a 'feel good' group for people with low-level mental health issues such as anxiety or problems with peer pressure. As well as sharing self-help strategies with their peers, they took part in sports activities they would not have had the confidence to previously.

'All the young people have increased mental resilience due to greater awareness of how to look after their mental wellbeing and what support is available,' said David Williams of partner organisation Torfaen Youth Service.

'Over 95% of the volunteers stated that they now feel more of a sense of belonging to their community by gaining more local knowledge of support and services available to them and via the new connections developed with their peers,' he added.

'The project also had an impact on the wider community, especially on the families of the young people who have gained knowledge and fed this indirect support back into the family home.

'Mind Matters is an excellent example of outstanding youth volunteering work through embedding the key purpose of youth work throughout its approach and delivery.'

**'Digital' volunteer** (an individual who has helped tackle digital exclusion and helped others to experience the benefits of using ICT) supported by Digital Communities Wales

### **Mohan Patel**

Mohan Patel is opening up the world to vulnerable adults recovering from drug and alcohol misuse by helping them become more at ease with new technology.

The 60-year-old from Grangetown, Cardiff, volunteers with several Recovery Cymru groups and has set up his own supporting members to use email, social media, PCs, laptops, mobile phones and tablets.

The project is helping people to grow and learn, keeping them in touch with family and friends and allowing them to access online recovery resources and shopping, said Andrew Sims of Recovery Cymru.

'Mohan is so easy to learn from, willing to share so humbly such valuable knowledge which makes such a significant difference to the lives of our members, their friends, families and loved ones,' Andrew added.

'People will accept his help because his attitude is "If I can master it, you can". It opens up a whole new world of possibilities some of our members believe are the preserve of youth.

'He is a real enabler, helping to make vulnerable adults in recovery more tech-savvy and offering them a bigger world.'

## **Martin Hunt**

Residents of a North Wales village are overcoming some of the difficulties of rural living thanks to the IT skills and patience of Martin Hunt.

The volunteer Digital Champion runs a digital drop-in session at the library in Penygroes, Caernarfon, every Friday afternoon and also makes himself available on alternative days for people who can't get there on Fridays.

'In a tight knit community like Penygroes, having an asset like Martin available is a tremendous boon,' said Daniel Richards of Gwynedd Ddigidol. 'As with most villages in Wales, Penygroes has seen the loss of local services such as banks and shops, which - along with rising travel costs - makes rural living very difficult unless the internet is utilised.

'Martin has the special ability of being able to talk with people, and explain technical details in a language they understand, without scaring them away with too much information,' Daniel added.

'He has a wonderful patience with people, with one senior attendee who started coming over a year ago gradually moving on from simply calling in to use Google maps, to using e-mail - and now transferring her father's war diary to an electronic copy.'

Martin, 64, worked on a number of digital projects while in employment. Having had to retire early on medical grounds, he gets great enjoyment from helping others and giving guidance using his years of experience.

Daniel concluded: 'I have managed a number of volunteers in the digital field over the past few years, and the majority have been a great boon to helping others. But I have never before come across such a passionate and skilled volunteer as Martin.'

**For more information, please contact Lynne Reynolds or Simon Dowling  
on 0800 2888 329.**

## Notes to editors

- WCVA is the national membership organisation for the third sector in Wales. Our vision is for the third sector and volunteering to thrive and improve well-being for all. We do this by *influencing, connecting and enabling*.

WCVA welcomes receiving correspondence in Welsh. We will respond to correspondence received in Welsh, in Welsh. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.

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### **Swyddfeydd hefyd yn y Rhyl ac Aberystwyth**

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**Is-Gadeiryddion** Catriona Williams OBE  
**Prif Weithredwraig** Ruth Marks MBE  
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