

Season's Greetings

Barbara
Bus Fund

Christmas Newsletter 2014

'Santa brings joy once a year- Barbara Bus does it all year long'



New Arrivals

In October we took delivery of a nice new VW Caddy converted for us by Brotherwood. This vehicle is called 'Margaret' and is named in honour of our Treasurer, Margaret Rudolph, who died so suddenly in 2013. After Margaret's sudden death it took us some time to find a new treasurer, but luckily we were joined this year by Susie Fairbrother, who worked hard to learn all about the Fund in her first few months, and is now keeping on top of our finances as well as looking after her baby daughter.

'Thank you for giving us the bus to use, I had longed for freedom...'

10 Years in the Louis Fleischmann Building at RNOH

September 2014 was the 10th anniversary of the Fund taking an office in the hospital – before then, although the vehicles were stored here, the admin activity took place in the homes of the Co-ordinator and one of our Trustees. As anyone who has visited the office knows, it is a very small space, but it serves its purpose and ensures that we are near to where the vehicles are parked and on hand in case of emergencies. Having an office which is open on a daily basis has given the Fund the chance to expand its activities, helped by having two assistants, Irene who joined the Fund at the same time as the office opened, and Mel who has been here over three years now.

'My Nan had a wonderful 100th birthday and enjoyed her trip out'

Volunteer Drivers

We have a wonderful band of volunteer drivers, some who have driven for us for years, some who only joined us during 2014 – all of them are treasured, as without them we would be unable to offer a service to so many of our passengers who have no one they can call upon to drive them. Even a trip up the road to the dentist becomes impossible if you are a wheelchair user whose carer is unable to drive and that is where our friendly drivers step in to help – of course they will also do some much longer trips. We are always looking for more drivers to help us – so if you know of anyone who might be able to spare a few hours a week, or just occasionally, do please ask them to get in touch with us, full details below.

'Thank you for the use of 'Les' on our holiday to Bournemouth – it made for a very easy and enjoyable time'

Insurance Premiums and the larger vehicles

Our insurance premiums leapt up this year, mainly due to several 'fault' claims all relating to usage of 'Rose', the largest of our vehicles. This has of course been a cause of concern to us, and we are looking for ways to help prevent this happening in the future. It seems to us that people are not allowing enough leeway when manoeuvring such a large vehicle and we have sought advice from the people who convert these vehicles for us. The advice is that attention should be paid to adjusting the wing mirrors and using them carefully and regularly. Please do not rely on the rear view mirror as this can easily be obscured by passengers, the tail lift or stored equipment. In order to help new drivers, we are now making it a condition of use of the larger vehicles that before booking one of them out the driver spends some time driving, parking etc in order to become aware of the vehicle size, and decide if they are confident to drive it with passengers in. Hopefully next spring we will take delivery of a new Renault Master to replace 'George' and would ask for co-operation from all drivers to ensure that this and all our other vehicles are kept in good condition and are used with care and consideration at all times.

'What a wonderful, thoughtful and unique service you provide – it is much appreciated by my family'

Innovation on the website

It is now possible to view an instructional video for each of the different sorts of vehicle we have based here at Stanmore, and for the Stoke Mandeville vehicle. The purpose is not generally to replace the personal demonstration offered to all new drivers, but as an additional source of instruction. They can be accessed via the 'vehicles' page on the website and will be a helpful tool for people who may not have used a vehicle for some time, or for someone who has had to be changed to a different vehicle at the last moment – or even if you just want to see how it works before committing to becoming a driver. These videos were produced for us by Neil Ben from Training-n-Promo, who spent a whole day here filming in September. We owe thanks to the following drivers and passengers who helped us during the day – Harold Harris, Tina Osborne, Nigel Armstrong, Michael Pearce, David O'Brien, Julie Halstead, G. Shamash, Moira Bunting, Eric Sanger and Sylvia White and of course those people in the office who produced an excellent lunch for us on the day. It was an interesting and worthwhile experience for all of us and I am sure that the videos will be well used – those who have been driving for some time may like to check that they are doing things right!



'I really appreciate how helpful and accommodating you have been'

Donations

We have been very lucky this year to be nominated by a branch of Asda and by a branch of Waitrose to receive funds from their community programmes and a local charity which closed down donated to us as well. We are also grateful to so many of you who support us with donations large and small; one of our customers with a 'significant' birthday was happy to forgo presents this year and instead his friends made a number of generous donations to the Fund. We have also had a bequest from the will of a long term customer, and several generous amounts that Care Homes have raised for us. There are several ways in which people can donate to the Fund – you can send us a cheque to the address below, you can pop into the office with cash, you can obtain our bank details and set up a direct debit or make a one off payment or you can go to www.justgiving.com/bbf and follow the simple instructions. Please don't forget that if you are a UK taxpayer you can increase the value of your donation at no extra cost to you by completing a Gift Aid declaration when donating.

'Going out has a lasting effect on the residents and we all thank you'

Richard Holland, Chairman

After yet another very busy year for the Barbara Bus Fund, I just wanted to acknowledge and thank all those involved in the running and support of the vehicles and the Fund. It is always satisfying to know that all the vehicles we now have in the different locations continue to make a difference to so many people. I also wanted to take this opportunity to formally announce that after 20 years of loyal and dedicated service, that Julia Pryor has decided to step down from her position as Coordinator. I know this has been a difficult decision, but Julia would like more time for other interests – especially her family. I would therefore like to thank Julia for everything she has done. In the time Julia has been with us, she has been so effective in supporting the Trustees in the development and expansion of the Fund which has changed significantly in size, as well as how and where it operates. Julia hopes to be able to continue to support the Fund in some part time capacity. As a result, we are now recruiting for an additional Coordinator to work alongside Irene and Melanie. Further details on this position can be obtained from the RNOH BBF office.

All good wishes for 2014