

## News

### Uni picks 'vital' charity to support



ABERYSTWYTH University has chosen Wales Air Ambulance as its Charity of the Year for 2020-21.

Now in its eighth year, the University Charity of the Year appeal seeks to raise as much funding as possible for a worthy cause, and provide a fundraising focus for staff, students and the community.

The chosen charity is selected through a nominations and voting process involving students and staff across the university.

Prof Elizabeth Treasure, vice-chancellor, said: "It will be a pleasure to support the Wales Air Ambulance throughout the year ahead. This is the third time the charity has been selected as our Charity of the Year, which is testament to the high esteem in which this lifesaving service is held.

"In rural communities such as Ceredigion, the life-saving services provided by the Wales Air Ambulance are absolutely vital, and it will be a privilege to play our part in helping to keep their helicopters flying and saving lives."

Andrew Hall, Wales Air Ambulance's Mid Wales fundraising manager, said: "The ongoing support our lifesaving charity receives from Aberystwyth University is humbling. As one of the oldest and most revered higher education institutions in the UK, we have enormous respect for the University and its contribution to Wales and beyond.

"Fundraising has become challenging since Covid-19 and we expect this to continue for some time. Therefore, to be announced as the institution's Charity of the Year is a massive boost for us at a difficult time. This support will help us to keep our helicopters flying and ensure that we can deliver our rapid A&E-standard care, which is especially important to rural Wales."



Pictured at the cheque presentation are, left to right: Morgana Power, Lisa Head (services manager - Area 43), Sally Jones (CEO - Area 43), Sinead Roberts, Dr Geoff Jones (chair of trustees - Area 43), Theo Salam, Gemma Head

# Drop-in centre 'thrilled' to scoop £500,000 grant

A YOUTH project in Cardigan has scooped nearly £500,000 from the National Lottery.

The staff at Area 43 are thrilled to have been awarded a People and Places, National Lottery grant of £456,157, to be spread over the next five years, enabling them to continue the work of their young people's project in Cardigan.

Although operating under slightly different circumstances during the enforced social distancing measures due to Covid-19, the drop-in centre, Area 43 provides a safe, meeting space where young people aged 16-25 can access advice, support, information, training and accredited learning, various engagement activities and counselling services in Cardigan.

The project was originally part-funded by the National Lottery Charities Board back in 1996, to

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serve the counties of Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion.

Since then, the charity has spent the past 24 years offering support by taking a holistic approach to provide a safe, fun, informative and inspiring environment for young people.

The new funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, which distributes money raised by National Lottery players for good causes and is the largest community funder in the UK, will enable Area 43's free, daytime drop-in centre to continue providing vital support.

It is a popular destination for the young people of Cardigan and the surrounding area, and last year Area 43 received nearly 3,500 daily visits from over 300 young people. The

space is safe and warm and has free internet and phone access. Young people are offered a healthy meal each day and have access to free, unlimited tea, coffee and soft drinks.

Sally Jones, Area 43's CEO said: "We're delighted that the National Lottery Community Fund has recognised our work in this way.

"Now, thanks to National Lottery players, we will be able to continue to offer a free resource to the young people of our community."

The staff at Area 43 feel that it is good to recognise the situations that some people find themselves in, through no fault of their own and the damage this can cause in communities. Therefore, they can offer information, support, training, creative project opportunities, provide food bank vouchers, sanitary products and condoms, they also have access to a small number of sleeping

bags for those who are homeless or sofa surfing as well as access to their free counselling service.

The team at Area 43 aims to proactively empower young people in this community to develop and maintain life skills and resilience, to work towards and sustain their independence and to express themselves by engaging with the issues that affect them. They do this through educative, participative practice, enabling young people to develop knowledge, understanding and positive attitudes towards their communities by being inclusive and non-judgmental in their approach.

There is a strong focus on prevention through the promotion of physical health, mental health and well-being. Reinforcing positive patterns of behaviour through counselling, mindfulness and, where appropriate peer support.

### Project aims to spread a little kindness

A PROJECT to make Ceredigion a kinder community has been launched by the county council.

Connect to Kindness in Ceredigion aims to share the benefits and impact of kindness to ourselves and others in our community.

It is based on an intergenerational approach that fosters and nurtures connections to alleviate loneliness and isolation prevalent in many of our communities.

Cllr Catrin Miles, Cabinet member with responsibility for support and intervention, said: "This campaign will celebrate and encourage more of the fantastic work and deeds of kindness that individuals and groups have shown in our communities across Ceredigion."

Cllr Catherine Hughes, Cabinet member for Porth Ceredigion, early intervention, well-being hubs and culture, added: "We all have something to offer, something that can make a difference to others around us.

"One act may seem trivial to us, but could make the world of difference to a person who is feeling isolated."

As part of the campaign, its regional partners will be developing community networks in order to create an environment where acts of kindness can flourish and happen more easily.

For more details on Connect to Kindness, contact Cyra Shimell, Community Connector Plus at 01545 574200 or cyra.shimell@ceredigion.gov.uk

## Staying connected with nature in lockdown

STAYING indoors is not what the staff, volunteers, and participants of Coed Lleol (Small Woods Wales) are used to.

Based in Machynlleth, with woodland activities all over Wales, Coed Lleol supports people to improve their health and wellbeing by spending time in Welsh woodlands to connect with nature.

Gwenan from Aberystwyth has been involved in Coed Lleol's woodland activities since 2011, through the Actif Woods Wales project. Before lockdown, activities included group walks, campfire cooking, foraging and conservation work.

"It has been the highlight of my week," she said. "When I had my third hip replacement, the Woodland Leaders pushed me in a wheelchair when I got tired. I can still feel the joy of being out in the woods after being inside recovering for weeks."

Not having as much access to nature and friends over the past few months has been difficult for a lot of people. Many of us depend on spending time outdoors to balance our emotions and improve our wellbeing. It's for this reason that Coed Lleol took nature connection work online during lockdown and have been reaching out to people who might be struggling.

One of the ways they've been doing this is through online nature sessions, which run every weekday and are open and free to anyone in Wales. They happen on Zoom, which is a free video call programme that can be used from a computer, laptop, tablet, or smart phone.

Gwenan said: "I had never used Zoom before and when I heard that Coed Lleol were going to use it I just thought I was too old to get to grips with it. I received a phone call from them about the sessions and decided then I should give it a go. Well, I wish I had joined the sessions from the beginning."

Session activities include foraging for edible plants, keeping fit in nature and insect identification. Coed Lleol also has a session specifically for families and children.



Gwenan on a woodland walk in Aberystwyth

Gwenan added: "I'm enjoying the Zoom sessions and feeling a lot better since I started them."

As well as Nature Sessions on Zoom, Coed Lleol are also releasing regular nature videos on their YouTube channel, making free nature Activity Guides, and offering a "Nature Chat" befriending service.

"I really don't know what I would have done without Coed Lleol. I definitely wouldn't be fit and have so many friends."

To find out more about how Coed Lleol can support you to improve your wellbeing through connecting to nature in woodlands, go to: [www.coedlleol.org.uk/covid19](http://www.coedlleol.org.uk/covid19) or follow them on Facebook (@CoedLleol), Instagram (@coed\_leol) and Twitter (@ActifWoodsWales).