

Christmas wishes from the Friends



It has been another busy year for the Friends – with the added responsibility of GDPR compliance. So many of you, in replying to our “Please may we keep in touch?” GDPR mailout, responded with generous donations. Thank you to you all.

As a small committee of trustees, we feel a great responsibility when we have to assess grant applications and decide which should be supported. We endeavour to use Friends charity funds as prudently as possible – with a view not only to the present healthcare needs of the local community but to the longer term as well.

However, we do face frustrations as a committee. I am a great supporter of the NHS and would urge you all to maintain your support for this wonderful British service at a time when staff are being so stretched and demands for healthcare are so high. However, at times, it is also important to speak up when things do not work well. We were so very disappointed that a refurbished OCT machine (used for 3D eye scans) – purchased by the Friends at auction in March 2017 for the Savernake Hospital eye clinic, with approval from GWH Trust – took until **June 2018** to be put into action at Savernake Hospital, despite the many (many) efforts by myself and the dedicated eye consultant at Savernake Hospital to move things along. The delay had nothing to do with the integrity of the machine, but ended up tangled up in (avoidable) NHS bureaucracy.

This should not happen.

Rather than summarising some of the grants we have provided this year, I am setting out a table of grants and amounts given by the Friends in 2018, which I hope is self-explanatory. What I would like to let you know about are a couple of changes in approach by the Friends this year to grant applications.

This year – to reflect changing local needs, and following discussions with various third parties – the trustees have agreed for a short trial period to ‘ring fence’ an amount of funds to be used solely for the part-purchase of defibrillators, if requested by grant applicants. This has not been done without some reservations: not only have the Friends already purchased and continued to maintain a number of public defibrillators in the Marlborough area, but we are concerned that a willingness to fund new defibrillators – particularly with the emergence of portable defibrillators - could ‘open the floodgates’ with grant applications. And whilst we have a great appreciation for medical equipment required for ‘just in case’ scenarios, we also feel a responsibility to those in the community who require evident assistance with ill-health and disability right now.

These are the considerations that fall on the shoulders of our small committee.

One issue that has spurred us on to adopt this trial approach is the discovery that the ‘activation radius’ for public (locked) defibrillators in Wiltshire is now only 150 metres. What this means is that if a situation arises where a defibrillator might assist the victim, but they are located more than 150 metres from a public (locked) defibrillator, the South West Ambulance Service may not direct helpers to that public defibrillator or provide the code to access the defibrillator.

We appreciate it is pragmatic to set an activation radius, beyond which fetching a public defibrillator is probably unrealistic, given that time is of the essence. However, we are concerned that some other areas of the country, under the control of other ambulance services, allow for a greater activation radius. Why is there a difference? Community Heartbeat (who services the Marlborough area public defibrillators) is making enquiries about the local activation radius, and we will provide support if they require it.

We have also tried this year to encourage grant applicants to make greater efforts to seek part-funding from other sources/from fundraising, or at least to show evidence of an attempt to do so. Some grant applicants, such as Brighter Futures, do this very successfully – as do some of the local surgeries. There are many benefits of encouraging this approach: raising local awareness and participation, but also evidencing to the Friends a genuine need for items, rather than it simply being a ‘nice to have’. I must emphasise that the Friends will not turn down grant applications, however, simply because part-funding has not been sourced from elsewhere.

In my capacity as chairman, I have attended various meetings with health providers this year. Recently I attended the presentation at Savernake Hospital on the proposed changes to Ailesbury Ward (to be split into separate medical and rehabilitation units). I also had the opportunity to attend the 10th anniversary celebrations of Cotswold House (the adult eating disorder unit). It was a lovely event. I spoke with a representative of Oxford Health (under whose umbrella Cotswold House falls) who has undertaken to ensure Oxford Health provides part-funding for future grant applications from Cotswold House. I also met with staff at CAMHS, to whom we provided a grant for furniture items.

I was also invited to the NHS 70th anniversary celebration event organised by Great Bedwyn Surgery. And of course, we held our AGM earlier this year, and were provided with updates from recent grant recipients, Brighter Futures and Alzheimer’s Support. Thank you to the Jubilee Centre for use of their cosy rooms and to those of you who were able to attend.

Thank you to the Friends volunteers for helping to run the hospital Shop and for taking the trolley shop up to patients on Ailesbury Ward each weekday. The home-made raffle prizes provided by our knitters and bakers etc are always a great success, a wonderful fundraiser, and a delight to see. Thank you also to my fellow trustees – and in particular trustee (and volunteer) Nelson who is stepping down from duties shortly. He has been a steady and good-humoured team player and we shall be sorry to see him go. We are fortunate that Keith Marshall will be re-joining the committee early next year. However, we would, as always, welcome any newcomers who feel they might have the time to attend 4-5 daytime meetings during the year.

Wishing you a safe and happy Christmas and all the best for 2019.

Janet Louth, Chairman – November 2018

2018 Grants to date: – Total £11,515.50

Specialist lens – eye clinic Savernake Hospital	£84.50
Playstation – New Road Centre	£450
Julia’s House, Devizes – toys and development activities	£1,100
First aid kit – Great Bedwyn Preschool	£94
Arts Together- Wellbeing Service	£2,000
CAMHS – furniture items	£1,039
KAMP – auroscope and specimen fridge	£475
Brighter Futures – special care baby incubator appeal	£1,000
Great Bedwyn Surgery – refurbishment (storage room to consultation room)	£1,785
Ailesbury Ward – physio stairs	£900
ARK – portable defibrillator	£449
KAMP – vaccine fridge	£726
Community defibrillator upkeep costs	£1413

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Shop with your favourite stores and a donation will be made to the Friends without costing you a penny extra.