“Elvis has left the building!”

Palmerston residents and staff, along with neighbours from Fleming & Stutt, enjoyed a special treat when none other than the King himself (or someone very like him) performed for them.

As you can see, the lovely sunny day and great music raised everyone’s spirits!

Photos above left to right: Care Assistant Mandy Miller with Lily Orr, Elvis, Tommy Burns thought Elvis was just the ticket!
Photos below left to right: Elvis, Activities Coordinator Carla Ross with Esther Dunbar, Aileen Walsh, Mandy Miller with Helen McCauley
Welcome to our latest Lockdown Extra ezine. As this period of self-isolation goes on, it seems more and more of us are trying out new hobbies, or reacquainting ourselves with previous ones to help pass the time and give us a focus while we are not able to meet up or go about our normal daily business. So in this edition, we thought we’d share what some of our Abbeyfield & Wesley family have been up to. We think you’ll agree we have a lot of hidden talent in our midst!

There’s plenty of evidence to show that imagination, creativity and self-expression really enhance our health and well-being. Last week (18th - 24th May) was also Mental Health Awareness Week, which has “Kindness” as its theme. The intention is to shine a light on the ways that kindness is already flowering at this time. Kindness, according to this Mental Health movement, “is an antidote to isolation and creates a sense of belonging. It helps reduce stress, brings a fresh perspective and deepens friendships.”

So much of what is featured in our ezine are expressions of kindness. From the care in decorating a cake for the recent VE Day Anniversary, the time and thought put into writing the words of a poem, sharing a cartoon to raise a smile, or tending plants in the garden, all these things help make life a little better for each other. Many of our Abbeyfield & Wesley houses have received unexpected gifts and donations to help get through these difficult times. It’s good to see how, in the face of uncertainty, people are intentionally choosing to look out for each other. As the saying goes, “In a world where you can be anything, be kind.”

We asked you to send in examples of your own creativity, and this poem was written by HR Manager Brooke Cameron. She says, “My sister got all of the actual creative genes, so no outlandish homemade, organic, gluten free craft products from me, I’m afraid! I have, however, been writing poetry, which I have not done FOR YEARS, so please excuse my very rusty attempts.”

‘Forward’

Would you fast forward this strange time?

Jump at the chance, forward facing, never hesitating, just so tired of all the waiting?

Are you forward thinking to ‘the better time’, immediately in your prime and life presumably sublime?

Did you appreciate your ‘old normal’, the glorious humdrum, life less rigid, less formal?

Are you slowly resurfacing as much as possible, your ‘new normal’ a bit clearer, a little less illogical?

I’m tempted to fast forward the frame and remember my ‘old normal’ through a rose tinted pane.

But the most important forward I repeatedly chime, is how much I look forward to seeing you - all of the time.”
In Holywood, children from the local primary school sent in some lovely pictures and their own poems for residents in our Holywood House. We’ve picked a small sample for you to enjoy.

### An Acrostic Poem - Can you guess the title?

**Q**uestion me on quarantine?
**U**rgh, this awful experience!
**A**ll day long I spend at home.
**R**adiant is the spring sun, which we can no longer freely explore.
**A**ll my friends and family are kept far away from me.
**N**o celebrations to look forward to, but safe we stay.
**T**ime is passing slowly by,
**I** wish I could see my loved ones again, and hope we soon get to try.
**N**o, I won’t let hope die,
**E**veryone will soon be together, standing side by side and smiling.

**By Eve Curry, Holywood Primary School**

### Quarantine Poem - The Lockdown

I looked out the window and feebly said,
“**C**an I at least lie in bed, or go and see my friend Fred?”
“No, you may not see Fred”, came the reply,
“**W**ell, can I stay in bed as I feel sickly dry?”
“If you feel ill, how did you expect to see your chum?” asked my Mum.

I stayed in my room, feeling very glum!

**B**ut the main thought in my head was 
**C**oronavirus won’t last forever,
**B**ecause scientists, doctors and nurses are very clever.

I then woke up and thought it’s all been a dream.
**B**ut then Mum shouted up “Get up Daniel, home schooling again with me!!!”

**N**ightmare!

**B**y Daniel Curry, Holywood Primary School
Let’s get creative

We have really been enjoying finding out what Joanna Shaw, our Boardroom Apprentice, has been getting up to with her children Oliver and Phoebe, during lockdown. And it looks like creativity really does run in the family.

Joanna says “We absolutely love drawing, painting, or crafting which all creates a lot of mess with two small children! One morning we collected lots of greenery and flowers from the garden and Phoebe enjoyed practising her scissor skills to cut them up making flower arrangements. And we also made German biscuits this week. The children picked their cutter, enjoyed decorating them and devoured them at snack time.”

Joanna herself has been painting some familiar children’s stories on rocks and leaving them on the wall outside our house for local children to enjoy when they take their daily walk. And even Pip, their 5 month old house rabbit was caught playing the piano in the playroom. Joanna says that when Pip jumped onto the keys it actually sounded pretty good!
Keep Calm and Colour In

For those who feel they are not especially gifted at freehand drawing or painting, but who still enjoy the colour and creativity of putting pen or brush to paper, both painting by numbers and adult colouring in books have risen in popularity over recent years. Many adult fans of colouring describe the hobby as a calming relaxation tool that they used to express creativity, and unplug from the screen heavy modern world.

Psychology researchers at the University of Otago in New Zealand have found there are definite mental health gains for adults colouring-in for as little as 10 minutes a day. In an article from The Guardian newspaper in October 2017, researcher Dr Tamlin Conner said, “Colouring-in could be considered an act of everyday creativity, in much the same way as gardening or gourmet cooking. We feel comfortable adding colouring-in to the growing list of creative activities for improving mental health outcomes.”

Board Member Celia Worthington, who recently completed this wonderful picture of a giraffe, agrees about the pleasure and satisfaction of such activity. “I was useless at art in school. This giraffe was painting by numbers with acrylic paint. I’m going to call him Covid and have him framed and hung up to remind me of these strange times. I’m already on to my next one - it is actually quite easy, but just takes time.”

Pat O’Neill, who is a resident in our Greenisland House, enjoys adult colouring-in and these fine feathered specimens are two of the latest pictures she has done. She does so many that if she put them all up on the walls of her room there would be no room for anything else! Pat comments “I love doing it, I'd rather do it than watch the TV. You get lost in the moment as you don’t think, or worry, about anything else while you are doing it”. If you fancy giving some colouring-in a go, then why not try the two designs, created by Arts Care artist Helen Shields, included with this edition.
VE Day Celebrations Round Up

1. Ballymena - Irene Leitch, enjoying a VE day themed afternoon tea.
2. Carrickfergus - Joe Cartmill, holds up an original WW2 gas mask.
4. Hamilton Road - Jean Beattie, celebrating social distance style.
5. Hamilton Road - Hugh Coffey, enjoying the house garden on VE day.
Kelly-Ann Gazzard, *(pictured right)* Housing & Support Manager, shared this wonderful photo of members of the McConnell family (her grandmother’s maiden name) on VE Day. It was taken on the corner of Ottawa Street in Belfast, where this street party had been organised by all the neighbours.

**Teatime Treats for VE Day**

**Patriotic Pavlova!**

**A delightful afternoon tea**
Whether it’s because people have more time at the moment to learn or rediscover handicrafts, or it’s on account of television programmes like *The Great British Sewing Bee* or *The Repair Shop*, working with needle and thread is something else enjoying greater popularity just now. Members of our Abbeyfield & Wesley family have been sharing some of their creations, and works in progress. Regional Housing & Support Manager Helen Collins sent in this photo of a Spring Throw she has just started to crochet.

Helen comments, “I enjoy all handicrafts but particularly crochet. My grandmother was fantastic at crochet and worked only in crochet cotton making lace, table centres etc. She couldn’t read a pattern, she made it up as she went along. I inherited her crochet hooks which are over 100 years old. Lacework is lovely to do but hard on the eyes! It was the colours in the pattern of this Spring Throw, which I spotted in the Woman’s Weekly, that caught my eye and thank goodness for online shopping - the wool was delivered within a couple of days. In this throw the pattern changes every few rows which makes it interesting. I’d never made bobbles before and they are so easy. The good thing with crochet is you see your progress very quickly.”

That experience of one generation passing on their skills to the next is shared by our CEO, Geraldine Gilpin. She recalls, “Some of my earliest memories are of my mother and grandmother showing me how to knit and sew. I loved the feel of all the different fabrics, the sound of the dressmaking scissors cutting through material, the constant clicking of needles, the pleasure of creating a garment.”

In recent years finding time to take up these pastimes has been difficult, however, lockdown has provided the perfect opportunity to rectify that. Geraldine says, “When I saw the pattern for a felt needle case it brought back memories of the one my mother had all her life, so I decided to give it a go. Although the end result is far from perfect, the time spent absorbed in recalling how to create a French knot, feather stitch and daisy chains whilst reminiscing was very soothing and calming. A perfect antidote to the turmoil around us.”

![Helen Collins’ Spring Throw](image1.jpg)  
![Geraldine Gilpin’s Needle Case](image2.jpg)
Ken Gordon, Board Member and volunteer in our Merville House, (pictured left) sent in this photograph of himself in his new coronavirus mask, looking, he says, “like a reject from the Great British Sewing Bee”.

Ken adds, “Although masks have not been recommended by government for the general public, my wife Liz has, from the outset, felt that they would eventually be the norm. So she set about making masks for each of us, using patterns available online. Her own was finished and deemed satisfactory quite early on but mine was more problematic. Apparently my head has awkward features such as chin, nose, and ears - we went from early prototypes through umpteen fittings till it fitted well (or I just got fed up).

As well as being an absorbing pastime for Liz, she was delighted to use one of my old shirts for material. In my opinion there were years of life left in that shirt but we’ll not go down that road! The only outing to date for this new fashion accessory has been a visit to the local GP surgery last week where the nurse also had a mask. Hers, however seemed a bit plain, standard issue type of thing. She didn’t exactly say so but I think she wished she could have one like mine.

Meanwhile I wonder what Liz is going to make with the rest of my lovely shirt!”

Also in Lurgan, resident Ellen McIlwaine (pictured right) has been enjoying making craft bags for her sewing bits and bobs.
Meanwhile, Greenisland volunteer Laura Kiely has been inspired to get out her knitting needles as her way of showing appreciation to the NHS.

Laura comments “I began knitting nurses and medical staff for people to put in their windows in support of key workers and to put the time in during lock down! Then one day I was thinking about Abbeyfield as I miss the residents and staff and thought that I would cheer them up by knitting the Support Manager, Gillian, as of course she is one of the key workers who go above and beyond every day.”

Gillian is delighted with her mini-me - and Laura says that if anyone else would like a knitted keyworker, she’d be only too pleased to hear from them. Any requests can be passed on to Laura via: info@abbeyfieldandwesley.org.uk
My World - Here and Now Project

Abbeyfield & Wesley residents have worked on a number of occasions with Arts Care, a regional organisation which provides artists from all sorts of fields - music, writing, crafts, painting and dance - to work with people and promote the benefits of creativity for well-being. Their annual Here & Now Festival celebrates artworks by older people and earlier this year, residents in our Ballymena house contributed to the project, which took “My World” as its theme.

Resident Ethel McDonald, who despite being registered blind, has enjoyed taking part in several previous Arts Care projects, including felt making with artist Grainne Kielty (centre picture) “It was very exciting trying to do the arts and crafts for the Here & Now festival with my poor eyesight, and my favourite thing was making the Mexican eye.”

Margaret Hughes added, “We looked forward each week to seeing Ceri from Arts Care, along with Margaret, our volunteer, to find out what we were going to make.” Ruby McCaw agrees: “It was most enjoyable and Ceri got us working with our hands. The chat was good...and so were the tea and biscuits!”.

Under the direction of artist Ceri McKerville, our residents produced some fantastic work which was then displayed at the Northern Trust’s local showcase in Stranocum Community Centre and at a showcase exhibition in the Arts Care Centre in Belfast, under the title “In Full Bloom”.

Photos 1 and 2 – Work in progress for the Here and Now Project.
Photo 3 - Ethel McDonald with artist Grainne Kielty in pre-social distancing days.
Photo 4 and 5 – My World exhibition with Abbeyfield Ballymena art works.
A Fond Farewell

Our very best wishes go to staff member Alison McGrugan (Pictured Right), from our Ballyclare house, who retired recently. Here she is being presented, social distance style, with a bouquet of flowers by Support Manager Geraldine Coulter. We hope you enjoy a long and happy retirement.

Just for Laughs!

Thanks to Board Member Billy Graham for sending us a lockdown related smile or two!

We are hungry for your feedback!

Why not let us know what you’ve enjoyed so far and what you’d like to see in future editions.

Please share your photos, tips and stories with us:

info@abbeyfieldandwesley.org.uk