



## Welcome to the Active and In Touch Newsletter for Volunteers and Members.

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### Active and In Touch welcomes ...

Michael Auton, who will be with us until the end of May and is the mastermind behind the “Above and Beyond Appeal” which will be launched during National Loneliness Week, 13<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> June. Michael has lived locally in Bath, Midsomer Norton and Peasedown St. John for 30 years. A graduate of North Staffordshire University, where he studied International Relations and History, he became active as a local campaigner whilst still a student. He helped to run the polytechnic RAG office and was the Clubs and Societies Officer for the Student Union, developing an interest in campaigning and fundraising. He was brought up in Africa, living in Botswana and Zambia, developing a love for all things African. Michael has worked in the charity sector in fundraising and marketing all his professional life, supporting a broad range of causes including ADD (his first paid job based right here in Frome.) Lepra, Tree Aid, the National Osteoporosis Society (NOS), Meningitis Trust, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, and African Initiatives. Redundancy from the NOS in 2014 gave him that “push” to make the step he had been thinking of for some time, to set up his own Consultancy. His focus was to support small organisations at the beginning of their fundraising journey. For this, he was eminently well qualified, having much experience and many ideas. However, “every day is a school day” and Michael shares that he continues to learn. Very much a people person, his core aim is to work to improve lives. In addition to his consultancy, Michael works part time as a Village Agent for a charity called WERN (West of England Rural Network), supporting families in Midsomer Norton and Radstock, on a range of health and wellbeing issues. He has seen first-hand the impact of COVID on frontline services. During Covid, along with his sister, he set up The Bath Masketeers making fabric face masks for frontline carers in Care Homes and working in the community. Eventually, a 50 strong team produced the masks and worked on fundraising to ensure sufficient material could be purchased to provide masks for a wide range of establishments including schools, Post Offices and local Foodbanks in B&NES and Somerset. Understanding the market and responding to need led to 8,500 masks being distributed, at the same time building relationships with Care Homes, having fun and setting up a Facebook page which had over 300 followers. His understanding of the challenges that COVID has had on local families makes him the perfect person to work with Active and In Touch. There is another very special link, as Lucia Chadwick, Dougie Brown’s predecessor as A&IT’s Director of Service, attended one of Michael’s early Fund Raising courses. Michael is now focusing on the situation post Covid. He recognises the opportunity for things to grow across several income streams, with the increased demand for services by a larger, and potentially older, population relying upon these services. Unfortunately, this coincides with some national organisations having to cut back on the services they used to provide, and so local charities and agencies are in even more demand. Thank you, Michael, for the support you are giving to A&IT.



In time honoured fashion, Michael was asked a couple of questions.

**What would you save from a burning building?** Having checked that his partner Clare (from Frome), a Care Worker, was safe, he would save Elsa (as in “Born Free” and not “Frozen”!) his four year old cockapoo, and shared a photo of this lovely dog with me. **What is your favourite record?** “Can you feel the force?” by The Real Thing, which takes him back to his teenage years and flared trousers. **What advice would you give your 16 year old self?** Take opportunities as and when you can, focus on the future not the past and be honest about what you can achieve.

P.S Michael is involved in amateur dramatics and has recently played an elderly and pompous Army colonel in Peter Shaeffer’s “Black Comedy” in Bath. For this he grew a moustache which is being shaved off. The picture above shows its last day!

### Thank you to the Coventry Building Society

During Mental Health Awareness Week, Dougie Brown (Director of Services for Active and In Touch), Gwen Corbet and Di Roberts (Co-ordinators) were at the Coventry Building Society, cementing the friendship with and support from the staff there. On three separate occasions, when customers entered the Society, having completed their financial business, they would also have the opportunity to talk to Dougie, Gwen or Di to find out more about the work undertaken by Active and In Touch in Frome and the surrounding villages. Thus, people were able to take away leaflets containing information on how to become a volunteer, the training they could undertake and the support available for them in this role. There was also information relating to regular giving to the charity as an alternative method of supporting the ongoing aim to combat



**Gwen, Keeley, Georgia and Megan in the Foyer of the Coventry**

support in Mental Health Awareness their Annual Christmas Raffles, where generously donated to Active and In helping ongoing support in the combatting loneliness and isolation within the community.



loneliness and isolation, which sadly has become even more important since the advent of the pandemic. Many thanks from Active and In Touch not only for their Week, but also for all the proceeds are Touch, thus further important area of

### VOLUNTEERS' MEETING

The first of what is to be a regular monthly meeting (the second Wednesday of every month) was held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May in the Active and In Touch Office in the Town Hall.

The purposes of the meetings are for volunteers to meet each other, share experiences and ideas, be more confident in signposting services to those they have befriended, as well as be able to ask questions of Dougie, Gwen and Di.

The first meeting saw eleven volunteers involved in a very productive discussion ranging over a number of areas, including the possibility of A&IT taking over the café situated in Frome Medical Practice, and delving more into the role of Assistant Voluntary Co-ordinators.

If you are interested in finding out more, please come to the next session which will be held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June, beginning at 4 p.m. We may not be able to offer a cream tea (see following article) but there will be refreshments!!



**Cream Teas Return ...** Many of you may remember the fun there was at The Cream Tea Stall last year. Well, this is returning again on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June, from 2p.m to 6 p.m at the Show Ground as part of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations. If you are able to help on the day and/or bake a cake or scones for the event, please contact Di or Gwen on [enquiries@activeandintouch.org](mailto:enquiries@activeandintouch.org). Your contributions will be greatly appreciated, as would your presence there joining in with and enjoying the fun.