



Creativity takes us to other worlds
by Sharon Lewis, Jules Walker and Sam Schofield, November 2023

Person-centred care is at the heart of [Hazelgrove Court Care Home](#), in Saltburn by the Sea. While that starts with the health and wellbeing of residents, there is also a rich and varied range of activities that cater to their individual interests and hobbies. Creative activities in particular are very popular, with residents pursuing a lifelong interest or exploring their inner artists for the first time, participating in pen pal programmes, or picking up a pair of knitting needles.

For 74-year-old artist David Rigg, painting went from a hobby to a more serious pursuit in retirement, which he was able to continue when he moved to Hazelgrove Court. Having produced several works over the years – including a landscape of Robin Hood’s Bay – he harboured a wish to one day display his paintings in a gallery. The care home’s activities coordinator, Sharon Lewis, immediately set about fulfilling that wish and collaborated with [The Palace Hub](#), in Redcar, which is run by [Tees Valley Arts](#), to put on an exhibition of not only David’s paintings but the artworks of nine other resident artists as well. They produced works in embroidery, photography, silk paintings and oils, among other formats, which were curated by Sharon.

David said, “When I paint it transports me into another world and takes away all of my worries. It was really magical seeing my paintings up in the gallery.”

Sharon also entered David into the national [King Lear Arts Competition](#) for the over 60s. He received a “Highly Commended” for his Robin Hood’s Bay painting – coming sixth out of over 5,000 entries.



Sharon said: “I feel that when residents come into a care home, often they think it’s the last stage of their lives. And I see that it’s part of my job to create wonderful experiences that will become wonderful memories for both the residents and their families. One of my memories is going to my grandma’s house and I want family members to feel that they are doing this by coming to Hazelgrove and seeing how much fun residents have as they engage in creative activities.”

Working with social enterprise group [64 Million Artists](#), which is supported by [Arts Council England](#), residents built blanket forts that their grandchildren came to play in, they created recorders from carrots, wrote stories beginning with the first line of their favourite books, performed random acts of kindness, and took part in quizzes, collages, and more.

Residents have also taken part in [Versus Arthritis's "Knit-a-Thon"](#) for two years running, raising money for the charity through the sale of hand knitted chicks and owls. They have contributed to a special Christmas tree dressing in Saltburn, yarn bombed the local Emmanuel Church as part of a Guinness World Record breaking attempt, and created a scarecrow of Lord Nelson for a scarecrow festival trail.

Keen knitter Joyce Baxtrem, 92, produced a 300-foot knitted scarf during lockdown to keep herself busy, which was later wrapped around the town's miniature railway train. And Judith Pearson, 79, took part in a pen pal programme that introduced her to a volunteer at a local dog shelter, Maxi's Mates, where she used to be on the committee.

Sharon added, "Creativity isn't just about painting pictures, it can be photography, making collages, designing t-shirts for a plastic free beaches campaign, it can also be knitting. Being involved in creative activities has helped us do intergenerational work with the young children from Crafting Connections and keep us young in the process. I think that creative activity is so important for everyone but especially for elderly people as it takes them into a different world, makes them forget any worries and helps them feel young again."

Sharon Lewis is the activities coordinator at Hazelgrove Court Care Home in Saltburn. She is passionate about working with elderly people and those living with dementia. Being creative brings her such joy and she wants to pass that onto others. Sharon can be contacted at hazelgrove@hillcare.net.