

REJUVENATE!

Creative Carer Group

By Maggie Sanderson

"If I can find a way to improve the wellbeing of Carers, I believe it can improve the life of the person they care for."

Two years ago Hereford Creative Carer Group, Rejuvenate! was just an idea! Myself and Lisa Woakes, both family Carers, were in a unique position to recognise just what was needed because of our own experience and this has contributed to its success. We are passionate Creativity and Wellbeing go hand in hand.

"We crochet, we paint, we craft - we feel better - it works!"

Rejuvenate! is about having some time for **you**, to put your caring responsibilities aside for a couple of hours and be creative. There are no set outcomes, all levels of skills are welcomed and we encourage, listen and motivate you where we can.

Images showing the creativity of our Carers



Improving wellbeing enables us to manage our caring role more effectively and enjoying some well-deserved time to ourselves in a community setting puts us in a better place to do this. Additionally, the crafts and activities may be continued at home and shared with those you care for, stimulating conversation and maybe enjoying a new and different activity together. I found this particularly helpful when my late mum was in a nursing home. Doing crafts together gave a structure to some of my visits, brought smiles to our faces and helped us reminisce about all those crafts we'd shared over the years.

We had some initial funding from Herefordshire Carers Support, we had enthusiasm and plenty of ideas! The Courtyard Centre for the Arts, an uplifting, dementia-

friendly space in the heart of Hereford, generously provided the setting to meet each month.

Local artists and practitioners have run some sessions and other monthly activities have included hand-stitching gifts, Bookbinding, block-printing, working with locally sourced willow, mosaics, journaling and collage, weaving and pebble art.

In early 2020, students from Herefordshire College of Arts will be planning and facilitating a couple of workshops to add another dimension to the group. These will include mono-printing, letterpress and 3D sessions.

Rejuvenate! has now become recognised by professionals and local organisations as a friendly and meaningful group. We continue to attend local Health and Wellbeing events to promote the group and each month a poster is distributed to all members and over thirty interested professionals.

The group is now run independently by volunteers and has been supported financially by Herefordshire Carers Support, Aviva Community Fund and the Royal Voluntary Service. The cost has been kept at an affordable £4.00 per session, first taster session is free and this includes all materials and refreshments.

In a recent survey, these are some heart-warming words Carers have said about Rejuvenate!



I am a carer and this gives me headspace to do something creative for myself. Rejuvenate! has been very interesting and I've learnt new skills and have time to concentrate on creative activities with others.

It has made me feel special. Gives me self-esteem. Helped me re-evaluate my life in other areas. I look forward to this group each month. I helps me emotionally.

To bring you up to date, I have recently met with the lead on the local Social Prescribing team who is keen to work together, signpost Carers to our group and promote in local GP surgeries. As well as this positive move, another local Arts organisation has approached us to see if we can collaborate next year with a view to offering more sessions each month.

And this month we opened an Instagram account for Rejuvenate! - with almost 70 followers already !

Personally, my involvement in the group is so rewarding. As a former Carer, it is a fitting tribute to my late parents who both inspired me creatively. With a little more time to spare now, it enables me to pass on the skills I have and give Carers the opportunity to explore their own creativity and, hopefully, benefit themselves and others.

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