

Welcome to the New Leaf Christmas Newsletter 2013. As I come to the end of this year, it is a good time to reflect on progress and to thank all our supporters and volunteers without whom there would simply be no project. I am always in awe of how much time and energy our volunteers give to the project, in what can be a very challenging role.

If you would like to keep up to date with New Leaf, you can find more information on the website www.newleafproject.co.uk at [facebook.com/newleafprojectmentoring](https://www.facebook.com/newleafprojectmentoring) or on twitter [@NewLeafProject1](https://twitter.com/NewLeafProject1).

Wishing you all a peaceful 2014

Caroline Stevens - New Leaf Project Manager

Two recent high profile events in New Leaf's Calendar



Chequers in Buckinghamshire, which since 1921 has traditionally been the country retreat for Prime Ministers, opened its great oak doors on Friday 5th July to welcome guests of Thames Valley Partnership and New Leaf to a small fundraising event. Guests were treated to a rare viewing of this beautiful house, with its many and varied historical treasures, which was offered by kind permission of the PM and Mrs Cameron to help support and highlight the work of the charity. Visitors included supporters and volunteers as well as strategic or commercial contacts from across the three Thames Valley counties and some national. Musical entertainment from students at local Aylesbury Music Centre added to the occasion.



In the autumn, the new High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire chose compassion through justice as the core theme for the service to inaugurate his year in office. The High Sheriff kindly chose New Leaf as the charity to benefit from the collection. New Leaf mentor Howard Newlands read from the scriptures and mentee Ian McCulloch shared his recent experiences and hopes. The Shrieval Service was held at St Mary and All Saints in Beaconsfield.

'Recent Good news!'

We are delighted that the Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales has awarded a grant of £40,000 for two years to New Leaf (£20,000 2013 and £20,000 2014) to support the salaries of the Prison Collection Team Co-ordinator, Prison Needs Assessors, volunteer costs, administration and overheads.

We are also grateful to the Chiltern District Council Community Grant Fund for their donation of £1,200 to encourage innovation and the development of new services.



'Mentors'

New Leaf is a small project therefore our volunteers are vital. This year we have held four training events and have trained over 40 volunteers. However, we are still desperately short of mentors in Bucks and Oxon.

If you are interested in training or would like more information on the next mentoring training event, please contact Caroline Stevens

caroline@newleafproject.co.uk

or phone 07979 855843

"Thank you for introducing me to my mentor - she is fantastic"

"I don't know how I would have coped without you today - thank you so much"

How can you help us?

There are all sorts of ways to support the project such as mentoring ex-offenders, fundraising and other volunteering opportunities. If you would like one of the team to come and talk to your church or group then please contact

carrie@newleafproject.co.uk

"Much crime strategy is about containment — New Leaf, however, goes further than that. It helps ordinary people with all kinds of positive faith and vision for others to connect with offenders, creating and supporting relationships that actually turn things round. It's good news for the whole community." **The Rt Revd Alan Wilson Bishop of Buckingham**

Mark Squire came to New Leaf as a Vodafone World of Difference Volunteer in May and we have been able to keep him on the project due to funds raised from the Chequers event.

Mark has been working with the Reverend Kevin Downham, HMP Woodhill Prison Resettlement Chaplain, to develop a way of introducing New Leaf to all short term offenders returning to our area. The scheme has been a huge success and we would like to replicate it in the other prisons we serve.

Case story

P was released in March 2012, homeless and with no income or way of supporting himself. In the year before asking the project for help, he was convicted of 17 offences and spent 168 days in prison. He remained offence free during the time he was on the project (6 months) and to date he has only received one fine. He has not returned to prison.

Over 100 people were accepted onto the project in 2013 (compared to 64 in 2012). Collections have increased and Gaynor Eatwell has been working hard on pulling together a team of volunteers to help on the day of release.

"Having someone to meet you on the day of release makes such a difference" – mentee E

Support New Leaf in Prayer

We would value your prayers.....

- Please pray for each individual who wants to change his or her offending behaviour but has not yet found the support that they need, or the courage to take the steps necessary to start the process of change.
- Please pray for those who are engaged in their rehabilitation but who seem to constantly face problems that have defeated them in the past.
- Please pray for those who are due to be released from prison at this time of year, who have no family, home or form of security.

Clothes Bank

We have a clothes bank that offers second hand clothing. If you have any items suitable for both male and female then please contact

lesley@newleafproject.co.uk

At this time of year, second hand sleeping bags would be valuable as well – thank you

Community Packs

Each mentee is presented with a Community pack, containing essential items including toiletries, disposable raincoats, a diary, can opener and emergency foil blanket/tent for homeless people. Items are donated from faith and community groups. We are particularly grateful to Little Kingshill Baptist Church, Amersham Free Church and the Quakers in Oxford, High Wycombe and Aylesbury who have kindly collected items for the packs. A special mention has to go to the Aylesbury Friends, and Geoff Hammond, the warden, who manages the stock and assemble the packs. For further information about the packs, please contact

carrie@newleafproject.co.uk

Fundraising update

Little Kingshill Baptist Church will again be donating half of the proceeds from their Christmas tree collection

A beautiful mystery hamper kindly donated by New Leaf volunteer Lesley for the raffle, was drawn at the Christmas lunch at Springhill Prison and raised £150

A big thank you to Aylesbury Quakers who have raised an amazing £500 for the project at their annual Winter Fayre and thanks also to St Mary the Virgin at Radnage for their kind donation of £500

A huge thank you to all our fund raisers

My experience of prison By Mentor Lesley

When I went to Bronzefield with Carrie it was the first time I had been to a women's prison. As you walk out of the car park, the first thing you see is the Visitors Centre, and a very nice little play park. Oh that's great you say to yourself, without realising just what it means. You go into the entrance for visitors, and that is where it all changes. The officer on the desk watches closely as you approach, and then you have to explain who you are, who you want to see, give an electronic fingerprint, show your passport and get your picture taken. Then you have to take your coat off, put all belongings in a locker and wait for the next round! After a while, you are called over to walk through a metal detector and then searched. Nothing in your pockets, not even a tissue (not pleasant when suffering from hay fever) and then told to wait by the automatic doors. Four of us shuffle in to a glass box, hoping that they remember to let us out the other side before we suffocate! We go through, and wait in another bare room in front of a steel door. While we were waiting, I read the notice pinned on the wall. It said 'dogs may be used as part of your search - If approached by a dog, DO NOT MOVE, DO NOT SPEAK and DO NOT LOOK AT THE DOG.' Now, I don't know about you, but if a large serious looking dog was coming towards me, I would most certainly be looking at it! Then I wondered how a small child would feel should that happen to them. I'd imagine it would be a very scary thing.....It does happen to them. The steel door had a doorbell on the front of it, and we all looked at each other, should we ring it? Is it the riot bell? Carrie braved it, rang it, and a short while later we heard noises behind it. **They are bringing the dog** went through my head, and I prepared not to look. The guard was very nice, and took us to a small room, to await our Mentee. When she arrived, she was obviously upset and we talked about her release and her plans for the future. The first weekend after release is always tricky, and all the promises that seem so viable in the controlled prison environment can all go out the window as soon as they meet up with their old pals. Not associating with friends, staying off drugs and alcohol and keeping a calm head in order to get your child back seems so daunting, it would be easy to give up. This is where a good support network is invaluable, and sometimes the only thing that keeps them going. When we left, I walked outside, and took a deep breath. The little play park meant something different now - it was where a mum and her child could pretend things were normal for a little while.....