

# SURVIVING WINTER APPEAL: Elderly enjoy friendly gatherings

## Over 60s club is great for beating the blues

### 100 gather at seminar about cold homes

By Megan Tatum  
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"ANY loneliness just disappears as soon as you arrive, it's just marvellous."

Tucking into her Christmas buffet lunch on Tuesday, 92-year-old Ivy Stanbrook has nothing but praise for the opportunities brought to her by the Bradwell Over 60s club.

"As far as I'm concerned it's the best club going and I've been to a few, I would miss it terribly if it wasn't here," added the pensioner, who lives alone in Braintree.

"People need the chance to get out and meet people, we all look forward to it."

#### Christmas

Ivy is one of 30 members gathered together at Stisted village hall, near Braintree, for the group's Christmas gathering.

A feast of sandwiches, scotch eggs, mini sausages and pineapple on sticks have been laid out by organisers Violet and Gordon Knock.

"A club like this is absolutely needed, it's loneliness that is the real killer," said Violet, 85.

"We have ladies here who have lost their husbands, and it takes them out the house and gives them something to look forward to - some of them have become great friends now."

Far more than "just a lunch club", the packed 2014 schedule of



**FESTIVE CHEER:** (l-r) Jane Carter, Ann Clarke and May Clarke at the Silver Threads Christmas lunch

fortnightly meetings already includes quizzes, talks, poetry readings and a chance for members to show their holiday snaps to one another.

But the "essential" service relies upon charitable grants to continue, as well as fundraising with its yearly bring-and-buy sale and Christmas bazaar.

"It is hard to get the money to continue, we have to rent the hall and just paying for an entertainer can be £60 plus travel expenses so there isn't a lot left afterwards," added Violet's

husband of 40 years, Gordon.

"But when you see them go out the door with a smile on their face, that means a heck of a lot."

Gathering for their own Christmas party just a few days earlier were Silver Threads, based in Tollesbury, who boast 50 regular members.

The group has a programme of fish and chip suppers, crafts, and - more surprisingly - talks from policemen on violent crimes in the capital.

"Our members are almost all over 70, and some are in their nineties, they're lonely and it helps them to be able to come and have a cup of tea and some cake, and talk with other people," said treasurer Jane Newman.

#### Tighter

"We can't have more than 50 at the moment as we'd need a bigger hall, and we're not sure what impact that would have on where we get our funds - things are getting tighter and tighter."

The 2012 Surviving Winter Appeal, run by the Chronicle and the Essex Community Foundation, gave more than £1,000 to provide hot lunches to members of the Tollesbury group as they battled to continue through winter, and a further £400 to the Bradwell Over 60s to assist with enhanced activities over the coldest months.

■ To keep vital services such as



**VITAL SERVICE:** Gordon and Violet Knock say social clubs are essential for pensioners



**FRIENDS:** Ivy Stanbrook says she never feels lonely when she is at Bradwell Over 60s club



**PARTY HATS:** Tom and Peggy Pease enjoy themselves at the Christmas lunch in Stisted



**CRACKING:** Committee members Eunice Snow and Jane Newman of Silver Threads

and homeless people this winter we are once again asking for donations as part of our 2013 appeal. See right for how you can help.

■ If your voluntary organisation supports elderly or vulnerable people and a grant would help call Essex Community Foundation's grants team on 01245 356018.

MORE than 100 people attended a seminar on tackling cold and damp homes in Chelmsford this winter.

Landlords, charities, and health professionals came to the event at the Civic Centre on December 3 to discuss the pressing problem of cold, damp and mould affecting many homes during the coldest months, and to hear of the health impacts for residents.

Chris Singleton, of the mid-Essex Clinical Commissioning group, revealed that circulatory and respiratory diseases, as well as mental health issues, can all be increased due to exposure to the cold, as well as rheumatism and joint pain.

#### Illegal

From 2018, it will be illegal to rent out a residential or business premises that does not reach a minimum energy efficiency standard to be set at EPC rating 'E' - which would leave 9,000, or 14 per cent, of Chelmsford homes illegal when this comes into force.

Chelmsford City Council's cabinet member for housing, Councillor Duncan Lumley, said: "I am pleased that so many people accepted our invitation and attended this event to learn more about this serious issue."

"We have received positive feedback from several attendees who feel they now have the knowledge to deal with it themselves, or at least know who they can contact here at the council for advice."

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

- You can text COLD00£10 (or other amount) to 70070
- Give online at <http://www.justgiving.com/Winter-Appeal-2013>
- Or you can send a cheque to Essex Community Foundation, 121 New London Road, Chelmsford, CM2 0QT - please complete and return the Surviving Winter form (left), and remember to tick the Gift Aid box

**NO MATTER HOW MUCH IT'S ALL FOR THE CAUSE**



IWE would like to support the Surviving Winter Appeal 2013.

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If you are a UK taxpayer, Essex Community Foundation can reclaim Gift Aid, ie 25p on every £1 that you give, at no extra cost to you. Please sign below if you want Essex Community Foundation to reclaim tax on this donation.

Signed ..... Date .....

■ Please return this slip with your donation to: Essex Community Foundation, 121 New London Road Chelmsford CM2 0QT