

# SURVIVING WINTER APPEAL: Age Concern gives place to meet



**TUCKING IN:** Garek Aekins, Ray Sewy, Bernie Cheverall and Tom Mcloughlin



**FRIENDS:** Derek Bailey, Alfred Attwood, Arthor Root, Tim Garven and Jim Dines

## Friends savour their Christmas lunch with lots of festive cheer

By Harriet Sinclair  
harriet.sinclair@essexchronicle.co.uk

THIS Christmas, most of us will sit down to a family meal with all the trimmings.

But for those without friends or family to share it with, Christmas can be a lonely time.

Many older people will be spending December 25 alone, and without festive meals like the Age Concern Christmas dinner on Friday, would miss out on the chance to have a real celebration with other people at this time of year.

The charity has been running its festive meal for years, and some of the guests have been coming together to enjoy the Christmas dinner together for more than a decade.

"Some people don't have family to be with at Christmas, but they can come here and meet people, have a hot meal and be in a warm, friendly place," said Freda Mountain, 74, who runs Age Concern in Chelmsford and has also been a Liberal Democrat councillor for Goat Hall for more than 20 years. "If some of the guests here don't have family, they are by themselves, and that can get so lonely.

"One of the main things people get from coming here is companionship and friendship."

### Godsend

Age Concern is just one of the many charities that benefits from the Essex Community Foundation's Surviving Winter Appeal, run in conjunction with the Chronicle.

"Surviving Winter is an absolute godsend," the grandmother-of-three explained.

"Without the money from the Surviving Winter fund, I don't know what we would do.

"I couldn't be without it, it gives us the money to heat this place, so that people know that they have somewhere warm to come and get a good healthy lunch."

The Day Centre in Cottage Place serves meals to elderly weekdays.

And the total raised for the



**POPULAR:** Around 60 people attended the Age Concern dinner in Chelmsford last week, including the city's mayor Bob Villa and wife Valerie

appeal so far this year stands at £6,000, thanks to Chronicle readers who have once again pledged their support, meaning people like Linda Carter, 62, and Ivy Treuman, 92, are able to enjoy a Christmas meal together.

"You get a good meal, it's a good Christmas dinner, there's entertainment sometimes and you get company and make friends, especially for people on their own. I'm a regular, I enjoy it," said Linda.

"It's very friendly, and you have someone to talk to. I come on a Friday and it's nice, I sit on the same table with Linda, it's a good place to talk to other people, especially at Christmas," added Ivy.

At least 60 people attend the Christmas dinner each year, while on other days the centre may see anywhere between 20 and 40 people coming there for a decent meal, good company, and all-important advice, Freda explained.

"Sometimes people come to me to talk about problems with their gas bill, or will tell me that a bus driver never waited for them," she said.

"They know they can come here and there is someone who will sort things out for them and try to

help. There is such a good atmosphere here, people can save some money and come for a good healthy meal.

"They get to eat lunch in a warm place and make new friends."

One table of men at the meal said they had become friends after meeting at Age Concern. "We all met here," said Jim Dines, 92. "Some people at the table have been coming for more than ten years. The meals are tasty, and the company is very nice."

As well as regulars from Age Concern, Friday's meal was also attended by Chelmsford's mayor and mayoress Cllr Bob Villa and his wife Valerie.

### Support

They have been coming to the dinner for the past six years, showing their support for the charity, which is no doubt appreciated by the other guests.

"I come once a week, although this is the first time I've been here for the Christmas dinner," said Joyce Hallett.

"A lot of us are by ourselves, and it's nice to get some company and have a Christmas meal. Strangers become friends."



**A SENSE OF COMMUNITY:** Miriam Boom and Marjorie Rowe find the lunches combat loneliness and have made friends at the centre

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



I/W/E would like to support the Surviving Winter Appeal 2013.

Name .....

Address.....

.....

Postcode ..... E-mail.....

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

## HOW TO MAKE A DONATION

■ Text WINT77 to 70070 to donate £5

■ Visit [www.justgiving.com/Winter-Appeal-2014](http://www.justgiving.com/Winter-Appeal-2014)

■ Send a cheque to Essex Community Foundation, 121 New London Road, Chelmsford, CM2 0QT – please complete and return

the form above and remember to tick the Gift Aid box

■ For people in the 60-plus age bracket, ECF is suggesting that those who do not need their government Winter Fuel Payment could consider donating it to the Surviving Winter Appeal