

NEWS RELEASE

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ESSEX RISES TO GOVERNMENT'S CHALLENGE

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The Chelmsford Retirement Action Group (CRAG) is one of the latest organisations to benefit from the Grassroots Grants programme, a Government funded programme which could result in £7million being available for local charities in Essex.

Essex Community Foundation is managing the local programme and has met the first target set by the Government to distribute £2million to Essex based voluntary and community groups by March 2011. CRAG received £1,617 to buy a PA System, enabling members with hearing impairments to attend their regular meetings

The Grassroots Grants fundraising Challenge target has also been met, with £100,000 in new donations received in the first three months of the programme. In all the Foundation has to raise £3.3 million, towards their appeal to establish a £5million fund. The Government is adding 50% to all local donations towards an endowment fund which will continue to give local grants forever more.

Commenting on the response so far, Laura Warren, Chief Executive of Essex Community Foundation said "We are very grateful to all those who have helped us to meet this first target." She added "We are asking local people, individually or through their companies, to get behind this Challenge, with donations of all sizes, otherwise we risk losing money that the Government has set aside for Essex."

Laura also appealed for local voluntary and community groups to contact the Foundation if they need funding for their charitable work. Groups can apply for grants of up to £5,000 over the life of the programme which ends in March 2011. Eligible groups must have a gross income of less than £20,000 and they must have been active in their community for at least 12 months.

For more information about Essex Community Foundation, how to apply for a Grassroots Grant, how to make a donation or establish your own named Charitable Fund visit the Foundation's website www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk or call Jo Murphy on 01245 355947.

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For further information contact

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Patron: Lord Petre, The Lord Lieutenant of Essex
Chief Executive: Laura Warren OBE DL

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The Chelmsford Retirement Action Group (CRAG) gives support to local, retired people offering them support, companionship and an opportunity to socialise. Guest speakers are invited to attend their monthly meetings, to present on a wide range of topics.

It was from these presentations that CRAG identified the need for a PA system to help some of their members who were finding it difficult to hear the speakers at the meetings. Tony Hocking, Chairman of CRAG said "Receiving this funding really made our day. Thanks to the grant from Grassroots, we now have a full PA system with laptop and projector which has really enhanced the quality and pleasure of our meetings, making everyone feel included and able to take part."

CRAG is keen to encourage more members. They have a stand at the "Information Day" being held on Monday 17 November at the Baptist Church, Victoria Road South, from 10.30am for anyone who might be interested. The group meets on the first Wednesday of each month at The Quaker (Friends) Meeting House in Chelmsford at 10.00am and also holds regular luncheon clubs.

Photo Caption: Members of CRAG (Chelmsford Retirement Action Group) thank Jo Murphy from Essex Community Foundation for their cheque for £1,617 which enabled them to buy a PA System and equipment for use at their regular meetings.

Michael Pratley Grassroots Charitable Fund – Michael and Rhiannedd Pratley recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary with their sons, Euros and Hywel and close family and friends. Rhiannedd is a Trustee of Essex Community Foundation and for some time the family had been thinking about setting up a named family fund within the Foundation. Grassroots Grants helped to bring forward their decision, as they wanted to take advantage of the amazing 2 for 1 Government offer.

"The Grassroots Challenge was an opportunity we felt was just too good to be missed" said Rhiannedd, "and with the uplift we will receive on the generous donations from friends and family for our anniversary, the Fund has given a real boost." Talking about the named Fund, she said "What Michael and I really liked about the idea of setting up a Fund is that we can be involved as family and then, in the future, Euros and Hywel will continue to work with the Foundation to ensure the Michael Pratley Charitable Fund continues to strengthen local grassroots charitable and community activity.

Sadly, since establishing the Fund, Michael died on 24 October 2008. Anyone who would like to make a donation to the Michael Pratley Charitable Fund can send their donations to Essex Community Foundation, 121 New London Road, Chelmsford, CM2 0QT.

Photo Caption: Michael Pratley (pictured 2nd from right) with his wife Rhiannedd and their sons, Euros and Hywel.

Notes to Editors:

Essex Community Foundation was set up in 1996 and has established a grants programme which has seen nearly 3,000 Essex based charities and community groups receive over £11.2 million in grants. Funds are distributed on behalf of a wide range of donors who want their charitable giving to be accessible to local charities. www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk

Community Foundations are independent charities committed to supporting projects that engage local people. Since the 1980s, a nationwide network of Community Foundations has developed, endorsed by many major public figures and leading companies.

There are 1000's of charities and voluntary groups working for the community to create a richer society for all. Community Foundations build endowed funds and make grants to these organisations.

- There are 55 local Community Foundations in the UK covering 94% of the population
- Collectively they manage endowed funds of circa £200 million
- In 2006/07 Community Foundations distributed grants totalling £75million.

Grassroots Grants is part of £130 million nationwide drive by the Government's Office of the Third Sector to support thousands of voluntary and community groups throughout England. Essex Community Foundation won the Government competition to manage the Grassroots Grants programme in Essex, Southend and Thurrock because of its expertise and its knowledge in identifying those small local charitable organisations best able to use the money to make a real difference.

Grassroots Grants

Grassroots Grants, funded by Office of the Third Sector (OTS) and administered by the Community Development Foundation (CDF), recognises the vital contribution these 'grassroots groups' make to improving our communities.

Over three years, Grassroots Grants will support the sector in building stronger, more active communities with two complementary approaches. An £80 million grants programme will make small grants available to grassroots groups across England. An innovative £50 million endowments match challenge will enable local funders to raise donations on a matched basis and invest them to sustain grassroots funding into the future.

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Essex Community Foundation is delivering the Grassroots Grants programme in Essex. For more information visit www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) is the Lead National Partner appointed to administer, support, monitor and evaluate Grassroots Grants on behalf of Office of the Third Sector (OTS).

CDF is the leading source of intelligence, guidance and delivery on community development in England and across the UK. Our mission is to lead community development analysis and strategy to empower people to influence decisions that affect their lives. For more information, go to www.cdf.org.uk

Office of the Third Sector

As part of the Cabinet Office, the Office of the Third Sector leads work across government to support the environment for a thriving third sector (voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, charities, cooperatives and mutuals), enabling the sector to campaign for change, deliver public services, promote social enterprise and strengthen communities. For further information, please go to www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/thirdsector