

Community Steps Newsletter

Autumn 2021

Rebuilding lives after stroke

Cymdeithas
Strôc | Stroke
Association



Photography competition

Recognising that the past year has been difficult and wanting to celebrate the positives in life, we held a Photography Competition focusing on 'What makes you happy'.

The competition was open to all stroke survivors and their families in Wales and TV presenter Sian Lloyd, Celebrity weather woman was kind enough to agree to judge the entries for us.

The photographs that were sent to us were truly wonderful. They were all very different but all showed what makes people happy. The winner was Jonathan Bird. Jonathan's photo showed him participating in his first Step Out for Stroke walk in Bridgend following his stroke.

The runner up was Geoff Smith with these photos of his dogs enjoying the shade on a hot day and of his garden.



We would like to thank Lounges Restaurants and Llinos Wyn Parry for kindly providing the prizes.

There are more of your photos to enjoy on the next page. Please do continue to share your photos with us and let us know what makes you happy!



David Austin



David Jones



Davied Bath



Donna Williams



Emma Foers
Beach scene



Emma Foers:
Rabbit in field



Eve Davies



Hilary Roberts:
Strawberries



Hilary Roberts:
Washing line



Michael Peters



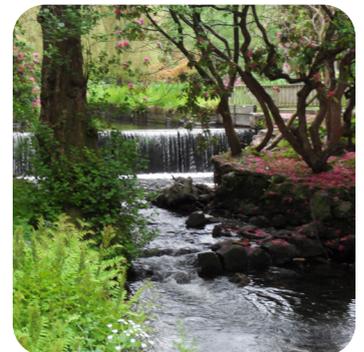
Rupert Owen
Ale, oysters, and cats



Rupert Owen:
My Pigs



Susan Edwards



Wendy Carey

Here are more of the lovely photos sent in for our competition. Dogs, cats, horses, rabbits and even pigs are some of the animals that make people happy, together with gardens, the countryside, beaches and the dropped kerb that Michael Peters successfully campaigned for so he could be more independent with his dog.

My Stroke – June 2020

Gardening on the 6 June I was meant to be
Finishing then with a mug of tea
After a while the stroke hit me
While my husband was talking to me

The words I just couldn't understand
So then he took my hand
And led me back into our house
And I was as quiet as a mouse
He tried to get me to speak but not a
proper word
So he called for an ambulance so I heard

The Paramedic said it's definitely a stroke
hospital for scans, meds and hope
Two weeks of treatment for me
with more blood tests and more scans you see
They said I had a large clot and a also a large
bleed and said that it was caused 'Aphasia'
stroke you see

Due to Pandemic no visitors for me
Just the catering staff giving me food and tea
And Drs and Nurses taking good care of me

Phoning home late to get my husband to talk
to me Just the sound of his voice made it better
for me

He never complained at what time I phoned
Just pleased to talk to me from home
Stroke therapy started for me
From some nice nurses comforting me
The therapy lasted over 2 weeks for me
And by the end of it all I could see
What they were trying to do for me

No speaking to friends and family I couldn't do
And it took a few months of hard work too
My texting was bad and spelling was worse
And under my breath I would curse and curse

The Stroke Association helped me in lots of ways
Months of exercises and talking and a good
sense of play
I am getting better but not like before
But trying to improve more and more

Now looking for some exercise to get me fit
And maybe a bit of dancing to liven me up a bit
Every day gets better, but just a few bad ones
All in all that's what it becomes
Hope from now on it will be better for me
So that I can see and speak to my friends and
family



By Hilda Williams
A stroke survivor who lives in Gwent

Thank you for sharing your poem, Hilda. We're pleased to say we're now planning some Creative Writing Workshops. Other upcoming activities include face-to-face stroke coffee meets in Caerphilly, Barry, Swansea and Tonypany. We will be running further online Stroke Awareness and Supporting People with Aphasia webinars. If anyone's interested in taking part, do get in touch with your local Community Steps officer!

Golf sessions

A project in Powys is encouraging people who have survived a stroke to try golf or return to the game they love. With funding from Wales Golf, the Stroke Association invited stroke survivors to a series of six sessions with an instructor at Lakeside Golf Club in Garthmyl.

Sharon Sinclair, the Mid Wales Community Steps Officer for Mid Wales, said: "It is a great opportunity for those who have had a stroke to try something new or return to a game if they've lost some confidence since having a stroke. It's also a great opportunity to get some exercise in the fresh air and meet likeminded people. After someone has had a stroke, it's really important to keep the body moving with gentle exercise such as walking.

"We often find that some people recovering from a recent stroke are a little anxious and may have worries about whether they can hold the club, hit the ball or even walk or stand for an hour. But it's very gentle and we have an instructor on hand who can help with everything," added Sharon.



The support from Wales Golf has meant we could also offer free golf sessions in North Wales. These are running at Northop and Llandudno's Maes Du courses.

The weather has been very kind and attendances at both courses have been excellent. The participants have said how much they are enjoying both working with the golf professionals and how glad they are to finally be able to meet and interact face to face.

After the sessions it has been really nice to see so many of the participants stay on in the cafe at both venues and chat over a tea or coffee.

Here are a couple of pictures from the Llandudno sessions:



Peer Support returns to face-to-face meetings

Members of Carmarthenshire Younger Men's Peer Support Group were very keen to meet up at The Phoenix in Gorstlas near Amanford in August, after months of only being able to meet on zoom.

Although we have done our best to meet up on zoom during lockdown, nothing is as good as having a chat and a drink or lunch with people, in real life. Members of Carmarthenshire YMPSG had a bumper turn out of thirteen people at their second face to face meeting and welcomed two new members.

For some people this was their first opportunity to meet fellow stroke survivors. The group was established three years ago when it was realised that a number of younger male stroke survivors wanted to meet people with shared experiences in the type of place that they felt comfortable. Amanda Cox, Volunteering and Community Steps Officer for South West Wales, has been supporting the group since lockdown. Amanda said "It was brilliant to see everyone face to face after so many zoom meetings. It was also so much easier for people to talk to each other in the pub and to get to know each other."

Peer support can be really important to anyone who has had a stroke. New stroke survivors are often keen to talk with someone who has been through the same experience as them. Knowing that others have survived and recovered can be very reassuring. It helps people to realise that they are not alone.

Equally, for stroke survivors who had their stroke a while ago, being able to encourage others and to share their experiences is very positive. It's great to feel useful and to have a change from being the person who was helped by others, to being the person who can help others.

There are a number of Working Age and Peer Support groups throughout Wales that are supported by the Community Steps team. Contact your local Community Steps officer for more details.



Stroke survivors are bowled over?

In February 2021 we brought our partnership with Bowls Wales online and began our virtual bowls for stroke survivor sessions. Participants were supplied with equipment and only needed a small space at home to be able to take part. The bowls coach went through the basic fundamentals of playing, including grip and delivery technique. The sessions were inclusive and adapted to ensure all individuals could take part.

It was fantastic to see everyone's confidence growing week on week and by week eight, the participants took part in their first 'Indoor Bowls Co-vid Cup Competition.' At the end of the sessions, Alan said "It was like a good holiday, sad when it comes to an end but lots of new friendships and memories to look back on." As a result of the sessions, a number of participants have gone on to visit their local bowls centre and we continue to work with Bowls Wales to

provide further support both virtually and in person. If you would like to find out more about the bowls sessions, please get in touch.



Introducing... Sharon Sinclair Community Steps Officer, Mid Wales

"I joined the Stroke Association in January this year. Prior to this, I was working full time with another national charity, working with volunteers and delivering commissioned services in Mid and North Wales.

"Music has always been a consistent part of my life, and attending live gigs has always been a passion. I love to volunteer and believe volunteering gives a great insight into different experiences. Over the years, I have volunteered to help organisations large and very small.



I presently volunteer with the National Trust for a half day at the weekends as a room guide, and help out the catering team when they are really busy.

"My wonderful experience at Attingham Park, Shrewsbury, in 2019 allowed me to work alongside the National Gallery touring exhibition focused on conservation and environmental champions. I also like to walk the grounds in the evenings after my shift, just me and the deer at the end of the day."

Sharon is pictured here with her horse Dolce and Douglas the donkey who shares her field. Sharon said: "During lockdown they kept me busy with daily care visits, sometimes before or after working hours. I would 'talk to the animals' whilst sorting out their care, alone in the field in total tranquillity."

If you'd like to be supported by this project please get in touch:
CommunityStepsWales@stroke.org.uk or **01745 508531**
