

Fair Shares News

December 2020

GLOUCESTER

WELCOME TO THE DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

What a strange and challenging year 2020 has been. I'm sure everyone has felt a range of different emotions over the last 12 months, but it feels good to be ending the year with some optimism, with the first people receiving the Covid-19 vaccination. It has been an extraordinary global effort to get us to this point, and now it feels like there is light at the end of the tunnel. Hopefully by the middle of next year life will start to return to some kind of 'normal', and I for one cannot wait to be vaccinated so that I can hug my loved ones again!

For now, of course, our lives still remain restricted and Christmas will feel very different for most of us this year. To try and bring some Christmas cheer, we are making and delivering 100 hampers to some participants and others in the community. We will miss not having our annual Christmas Party and would have loved to have seen you all face to face. But we will see you all soon and we want you all to know that everyone here at Fair Shares sends their best wishes and **we hope you have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.**



SHARING FOOD

Well Covid has turned everyone's lives upside down including ours here at Fair Shares. We couldn't do our usual thing of encouraging people to help out in each other's homes or to come together for group activities or social events. Instead we've just tried to find opportunities where people can support each other in safe and physically distanced ways. For some that was about shopping or picking up prescriptions for shielded people. Others have been phoning and keeping in contact with those who may not have been able to see their friends and family because of lockdowns. One of the biggest things we did this year though was to start a new food project.

Since March we've been working with The Friendship Cafe and a whole team of community helpers to cook and deliver hot healthy meals every weekday throughout the year. Through many generous donations and grants, meals have been given out for free to a whole range of people who have been struggling for one reason or another. It was a way to harness all the amazing community spirit to make life better for people in a small but important way. This of course couldn't have been done without all the kind, generous and talented participants who have given their time to shop, prepare, cook, chop, wash, pack and deliver the food, and always with a smile.

In total, over 12,200 meals and 350 food parcels have gone out supporting over 600 people in the community. 82 people have given over 4000 hours of their time to help do this. The photo on the next page shows just some of these amazing community champions.



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A YEAR IN ART

The Fair Shares Art Project started the year with some great achievements with a project at the Phoenix Centre, repurposing pallet wood into usable storage and furniture. We also enjoyed an exciting upcycling construction project working with people from Greensquare Housing.

In spite of this year's challenges, there have been some really positive outcomes. Our Tuesday art group shared and learnt a number of practical skills including bag and cushion making, cake decorating and making bunting for our Allotment at the City Farm. We developed our drawing, paper craft, painting and mosaic making abilities and made remembrance poppy brooches to gift to others. We also found creative ways to share kind words of support and to express how we are feeling.

Overwhelmingly, our participants have shown incredible friendship to one another when it has been needed the most, and this year we have learnt so much more about each other than before. During the lock downs we have continued to talk and pass messages over the phone, and our friendships, understanding and appreciation of one another has grown so much this year whilst being apart. Wonderful moments have come out of these difficult times.



CHESS ANYONE?

Has the Netflix series the Queen's Gambit inspired you to get out your old chess board or made you want to learn the game? Well here's an opportunity for you. Fair Shares is linking up people who would like to play chess. Don't worry about your standard, we will try to match people so anyone can enjoy a game; this includes those who want to learn how to play, those still learning and those who may be more experienced players.

The idea is to play remotely by a variety of means. Just have a chess board set up and you can text, phone, send via Facebook or Whatsapp your moves. **If you are interested or would like to find out more please contact Chris from the Stroud Timebank on 07902 100 968 or stroud@fairshares.org.uk**

FAIR SHARES AND THE GEM PROJECT

The GEM Project (Going the Extra Mile) has workers in different community organisations across Gloucestershire who help people along the path towards further education, training or employment. It's for those people who may have been out of work for a period of time for many different reasons and just need a helping hand. Farhanah is our GEM Navigator Developer here at Fair Shares.

Dan's been a participant of Fair Shares since he was 16 and has been with our young people's project doing various bits of work in and around the community. He had also started a Motor Vehicle course at college. However, he unfortunately faced some difficulties in his life, which meant he was unable to complete his qualification. He continued to help out with Fair Shares though and after gaining more confidence and maturity through the work he was doing with us he wanted to start planning ahead with his life and career plans. This is where we introduced him to Farhanah and he signed onto the GEM Project.

"I have been volunteering since I was 16, particularly in gardening and DIY type roles. I'm really keen to pursue an outdoors based career, possibly with the National Trust but as I haven't been very strong with my studies I thought I might need a bit of help to get back on the right path."

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Working with Farhanah, Dan has been building his educational profile. GEM gave him his very own laptop so he could complete various online courses including English and ICT skills to help build his CV ready to apply for jobs. He has also taken on several new Fair Shares opportunities at our woodworking workshop, the allotment and the City Farm.

“Fair Shares and The GEM Project have helped me find out who I am. Not only has it helped me with moving closer towards work, but Farhanah has also helped sort out my life skills. I’d definitely recommend them to people who may be struggling, it’s helped me move forward and get on the right track again.”



If you'd like to find out more about GEM or would like help to look for work or further training, please call the office on 01452 415900 or you can email Farhanah directly on farhanah@fairshares.org.uk



DOWN AT THE ALLOTMENT

Despite everything that has happened this year, the allotment has been a symbol of the success of teamwork and optimism. We've shared plants, produce and stories, learnt and shared skills, enjoyed food, conversation, sown, tended and grown.

So many people have contributed to the project and we would like to thank everyone who has been involved, in whatever capacity or amount of time. We are very much looking forward to next year and our many exciting plans!

Since the summer, we've begun to focus on improving some areas of the site to help enable us to offer more activities and make it easier for visitors and participants to access and use the space. We now have a decking area around the pond, a fruit cage and will shortly be developing a covered area will provide more sheltered areas for courses, workshops and other activities.

The allotment will be closed now until the 4th January, when we will welcome everyone back and launch into the new growing year. As well as our aspirations for another successful season of vegetable, salad and flower growing, we hope more people will be able to come to socialise and enjoy the allotment. We are also planning to hold a seed swap event in February and offer some more workshops, learning opportunities and activities for children and adults - as always, keep an eye out on our Facebook page for up-coming events and to follow the allotment developments.

If you have any ideas, questions or are interested in getting involved with the allotment then please contact Rachel on 07365 623462 or by e-mail allotment@fairshares.org.uk



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AND FINALLY... A MESSAGE FROM SUE

The end of the year is often a time for reflection and thankfulness.

There is no doubt that for many people it has been a difficult year especially for those who have been unwell, are on their own, isolated or unable to get out, or lost income. These problems all have a long lasting impact on our lives.

Throughout the pandemic Fair Shares has sought to offer support: by cooking and delivering fresh, nourishing meals, by shopping, and collecting prescriptions, by keeping in touch with folk and helping people deal with some of the problems that the pandemic has thrown up.

As Chief Executive I would like to publicly thank everyone who have supported and enabled us to offer such fantastic help to those who are experiencing problems as a result of Coronavirus: The wonderful participants who have day in, day out turned up to help with cooking and delivering food, shopping and the like. Too many people to mention by name but you may have seen photographs of some on our Facebook page and at the beginning of this newsletter. The Fair Shares staff team have worked tirelessly throughout the whole of the last nine months to 'make things happen', but also those behind the scenes, who also play an important but less visible role. At Fair Shares we really do work as a team and I'm proud to be part of that team.

And finally a thanks to our funders, partners and supporters who keep us going financially, We have been grateful for the way funders have allowed us to use their money flexibly, have provided emergency funds to enable us and others to survive and who have shared our worries and concerns.

So at Fair Shares we are thankful for all the help we have received and all the kindness we have witnessed.

Covid-19 hasn't gone away but Fair Shares will still be here, doing what we can to help those in our communities who need it most and sharing a little kindness.

Best wishes – Sue

WE'RE ALWAYS HERE!

Please always remember that the core of Fair Shares is about people helping people. It's about all of us in the community sharing skills, abilities and experiences with others. It's about how we can all grow stronger together by being good neighbours.

During these strange times this is more important than ever and we have seen throughout the year just how much of a difference a small act of kindness can make to someone else's life.

If you're at home, shielding or isolating and are struggling and need a hand, please give us a call. If you have some time on your hand and would like to get more involved and help out where you can, please also give us a call.

Covid rules are changing every day - We will always do our best to ensure we can connect people to help each other out but only in a safe way and following all the regulations.

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Our office will be closed between Christmas and the New Year and we hope to be back on the 4th of January. We look forward to speaking to you then. Take care and lets all have a much better 2021!



In partnership with
**THE NATIONAL LOTTERY
COMMUNITY FUND**



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