

# INFORM

VOLUNTARY ACTION  
GWEITHREDU  
GWIRFODDOL

Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil • *Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Merthyr Tudful*

August 2024

## VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION AWARDS 2024

We've had a very busy June at VAMT, two significant and successful events took place, an in-person Volunteer Recognition Awards Event at Morlais Castle Golf Club which was compèred by the fabulous Andrea Byrne (below with Award winners).

The second event was our Volunteering Fair (see pages 3 and 4).

### VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



**Nathan Jon Pitman**  
Sponsored by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

### GROUP OF THE YEAR



**Merthyr Malayali Cultural Association**  
Sponsored by Comtec

### YOUNG VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



**Katy Richards**  
Sponsored by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

### SPORT VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



**Cadence Lowe**  
Sponsored by Active Merthyr Tydfil

### TRUSTEE OF THE YEAR



**Ann Marie Howe**  
Sponsored by Eight One Digital

### OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO VOLUNTEERING



**Shaun Llewellyn**  
Sponsored by Melrose IT Solutions

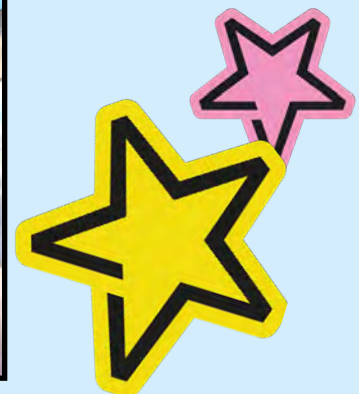






# Volunteering Fair

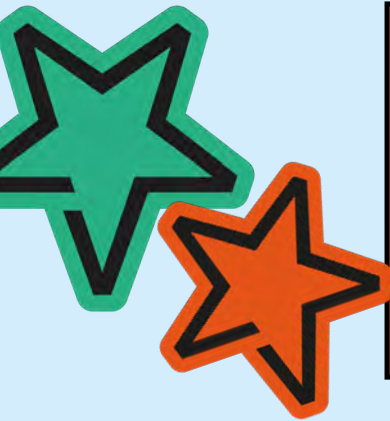
Our fourth Volunteering Fair took place on 4th June in the Town Centre, and gave member organisations a chance to promote themselves and their volunteering opportunities. Feedback continues to be positive so we have committed to organising two Volunteering Fairs every year one as part of our Volunteers' Week celebrations and the other at the beginning of the year in January.





# Volunteering Fair

VOLUNTEERS' WEEK



**Goleudy-Welsh for Lighthouse- has been a well established housing charity in Swansea for more than 3 decades. In Swansea we help prevent homelessness , provide housing and create opportunities. We strive to create connections for people who experience homelessness, housing crisis or trauma.**

In April this year we were successful in securing money from the Housing Support Grant that meant we were able to branch out and set up a Tenancy Support Service in Merthyr Tydfil. After a few hiccups we have now established a passionate team of four individuals to support the public of Merthyr Tydfil with any of their tenancy needs.

Our Tenancy Support Service offers support of a 'preventative' or 'low level' nature to vulnerable people. The support is to help people live more independently in their own homes or prevent homelessness. We are able to assist with:

- Developing life and social skills
- Feeling/staying safe at home
- Manage debts and money-this includes things such as rent arrears, claiming benefits and budgeting on a low income
- Setting up a new home or resettlement assistance
- Apply to get onto the social housing register
- Find out how to adapt your home
- Develop positive relationships
- Access employment, education, training, volunteering, social or leisure opportunities
- Look for services/support to develop independent living skills.

Support workers are there to help you to develop the skills and the confidence needed to empower you to manage your own tenancy and lead a fulfilling life.

## Meet the Team



**Ashleigh Moore**



**Pete Jones**



**Howard Jones**



**Jen Penfold**

**So if you are over the age of 16, are homeless or at risk of homelessness or need support to work through and overcome issues affecting your ability to live independently in your own home then please contact us.**

Telephone-01792 646071

Email [merthyrfs@goleudy.org](mailto:merthyrfs@goleudy.org)



## Community Trust Awards Grants to Local Groups



The Merthyr Tydfil Community Trust has recently awarded small grants to 11 local organisations. The recipients were 4Tom, St David’s Baby Bank, Aberfan Junior Wado Kai Karate Club, Cyfarthfa Gardening Club, Family Foxes School Partnership, Margaret Watts-Hughes Foundation, Merthyr Tydfil Poppy Crafters, Merthyr Wado Karate Club, Twynyrodyn Community School, Valleys Football Academy, and Ymlaen Merthyr Tydfil.

The Trust granted a total of £3,300 which is the total it had available. All the grants made were either £200 or £300. The number of applications received was unprecedented, this is an indicator of the demand in funding for small groups in the County Borough.

The Trust is run by volunteers and given the annual income of the Trust it is unlikely that the Trust will be able to award more grants until 2026 unless donations are made to the Trust. If an individual or company would like to make a donation, please contact Ian Davy at [ian.davy@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ian.davy@hotmail.co.uk)

You can follow the **Merthyr Tydfil Community Trust Facebook page**



The Trust’s website is <https://merthyrcommunitytrust.co.uk/>



**Merthyr Pride is back again this year, so save the date:  
Saturday 17th August 2024**

**Parade through Town Centre at 11am and back to The College Merthyr Tydfil, 12-6pm.**

**FREE ENTRY, NO TICKETS!**

For the latest info and updates, follow our main page:



<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550304612478>







## Friends of Nant Llwynog Park

We are lucky to have so many open green spaces, rich in heritage, landscapes and wildlife. Merthyr Tydfil and the Valleys have a wide set of such open spaces and parks based on the old industrial legacy of mining and quarrying. These places, if well looked after, function both as a resource for promoting good health and recreation, as well as enabling the study of natural history and biodiversity. Nant Llwynog is one such site and we have again applied for the Green Flag Award in 2024/25. We also work with Keep Wales Tidy in a number of areas. The Award has numerous key criteria to meet each year.

This year we suffered some serious storm damage in February which ripped through the pathways, one has since been closed from public use.



The restored wooden bridge with its newly installed ramp remains a popular feature.

This was the work of volunteers helping to make access easier for wheelchair users. Repairs are also needed at the Angling Pond and spillway into the park. We expect this work to start later this year.

Our 'community orchard' now contains more than fifty fruit trees. This is a great investment for the future and will enable community activities such as Apple Day. We are cultivating local and unusual varieties of fruit trees, such as 'The Pride of Merthyr' sweet apple, grown in Bangor by Ian Sturrock.

We have been organising some fun family activities this spring despite the wet weather. The winter seemed to last a long time this year. We have marked special days, like Bank Holidays and half term breaks. Local children love these events, with creative arts and craft subjects that both entertain and educate.



We are always pleased to work closely with the Borough Council and the Local Nature Partnership. We make regular written and verbal reports to the Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Partnership, and also attend the Green Outdoor Social Prescribing Networks run by VAMT and RCT. These play an important role in bring participants together to share ideas.

We put forward a nomination for Nant Llwynog and other local sites on the basis of excellent cooperation where the Community Council has helped with grant funding and providing equipment and other resources. It was for the One Voice Wales Environmental Project Award, and won a commendation. Congratulations to all!!

Contact [edawson1215@gmail.com](mailto:edawson1215@gmail.com)







## Rotary Club of Merthyr Tydfil

In recognition of the work of the Rotary Club of Merthyr Tydfil, Macmillan have erected a sign of appreciation on the fence of the garden, adjacent to their unit in Prince Charles Hospital. Our thanks to RABART for supplying the painting materials.



The club also played an active roll in raising funds for the Royal British Legion.



Rtn. Dr. Ganesh was presented a certificate by District Governor Mary Adams to mark his 50 years of membership of Rotary International in June.



Dr Ganesh, a past District Governor himself, has made a huge contribution to many charities including " End Polio Now ". A charity supported financially by Bill & Melinda Gates which has virtually eradicated Polio in the world. The photo shows a sponsored walk around Cyfarthfa Lake to raise funds for that cause.



It was a pleasure to have Ian Gwilyn from the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, which commenced in 1956, talking about the many thousands of young people, throughout the world who had benefited from taking part in its activities and are still doing so.

To his surprise Rtn Colin Parker produced a photograph of himself receiving the gold award outside Buckingham Palace in June 1962. (Colin is 2nd from left).



The Club continues to support the local foodbank and have contributed over £2500 in goods over the last year.





## Multiply Merthyr Tydfil

**Not a numbers person? Count on Multiply Merthyr Tydfil to put that right.**

Numbers are everywhere in our lives and our goal is to help you become confident with numeracy to help you navigate a wide range of situations with ease. Our classes are created to not only make numeracy easier but to teach practical skills and most importantly, have a lot of fun along the way!



Imagine learning numeracy while cooking up delicious recipes, becoming culinary kings and queens by measuring ingredients, converting units, and adjusting portions to transform abstract numbers into mouth-watering dishes. Or you may be more of a crafts person who would thrive in our sewing, patchwork or crochet classes. The precision of the measuring and cutting fabric, the uniqueness of creating a patchwork quilt, a perfect blend of logic and artistry, through to the counting and sequencing skills needed with crochet. Whatever your interests and passions, stimulate your learning with Multiply Merthyr Tydfil.



You can find our classes in locations convenient to you across the whole of the Borough. We use venues at the heart of the community so you can learn alongside existing friends and also make new ones along the way. We also understand that learning can be a whole lot easier and more enjoyable when you have friendly and expert tutors by your side. Our locally based tutors are not only knowledgeable but also approachable, making sure that you feel comfortable asking questions and seeking help - whenever you need it.

Our classes do more than teach numeracy skills; they foster creativity, critical thinking, and perseverance. By joining, you can discover that numbers aren't a chore but a powerful tool you can use to create and innovate.

**And the best part of all this? It's all completely free!**

Get in touch with the team to book a class through our website - [www.multiplymerthyrtydfil.wales/](http://www.multiplymerthyrtydfil.wales/)

Whatever your interests, learn your way with Multiply Merthyr Tydfil.







## Merthyr Malayali Cultural Association

### Celebrating Cultural Diversity: MMCA's Spring Music Festival and Community Initiatives

The Merthyr Malayali Cultural Association (MMCA) recently hosted the Spring Music Festival on May 12th, an event that brought together community members for an evening of music, dance, and cultural exchange. Held at the Merthyr Labour Club, the festival was a vibrant celebration of both Indian and Welsh cultures, featuring performances by local artists and members of our community.

The festival kicked off with an engaging children's program by the Welsh group 'Do Re Mi Canu,' who delighted the young audience with interactive games and activities. This was followed by a mesmerizing performance of Welsh pop songs by the group 'Paid Gofyn,' which captivated everyone present. Our community members also showcased traditional Indian dances and musical performances, adding to the festive atmosphere.



A highlight of the evening was the live food counter by 'Tasty Delight,' a new Indian restaurant in town, offering authentic Indian cuisine at exclusive rates for the event. Attendees enjoyed a variety of delicious dishes, providing a taste of Indian culture and enhancing the multicultural experience of the evening.

Looking ahead, MMCA has several exciting events planned. Our annual Sports Day is scheduled for August 3rd at Afon Taf High School, promising a day of fun and friendly competition. But the highlight of the year will undoubtedly be our Onam Celebration on September 8th at Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School. This unique event is a must-see, where everyone comes dressed in traditional attire, and cultural programs vividly showcase our rich traditions. The highlight is the traditional Onam feast, served on banana leaves, featuring a fully vegetarian menu with more than 30 items.



The MMCA Spring Music Festival and upcoming events are more than just entertainment; they are opportunities to strengthen community bonds, celebrate cultural diversity, and provide a platform for local talents to shine. These events are made possible by the generous support of Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT), for which we are deeply grateful.

Join us in these upcoming events and experience the warmth and hospitality of the MMCA community. For more updates and information, please follow us on social media : [https://www.facebook.com/mmcawalesuk?locale=en\\_GB](https://www.facebook.com/mmcawalesuk?locale=en_GB)



## Gellideg Wellbeing Centre

The Wellbeing Centre in Gellideg, Merthyr Tydfil, is the first Passivhaus community centre in Wales. Owned by the Gellideg Foundation Group, it was opened in September 2021.

The building offers state of the art facilities including a magnificent three storey round room, a community hall, a training room, chill out room, meeting rooms of various sizes, offices and a mezzanine. There is public Wifi access throughout the building and a smart board, projector and conference camera; all available for meetings. We are fully accessible with disabled toilets on every floor, accessible kitchen facilities and a lift. We hire out our spaces to partners and individuals from all sectors at very reasonable rates. We have a carpark to the rear of the building and disabled parking bays outside the community hall.

The Centre is a unique resource in Merthyr Tydfil, and is a welcoming space that supports people to make more positive life choices.

For further information on prices and how to book please contact [marcus@gellideg.net](mailto:marcus@gellideg.net) or give us a ring on (01685)383929



### Round Room

The impressive Round Room is two storeys high, with wood panelling and an oak floor. It is light and airy and created to be an inspirational space. It can be used for meetings and conferences with a projector and screen for presentations. There is also a conference camera to allow for online meetings. Up to 60 people can fit comfortably in this space.



### Community Hall

The largest of the spaces within the centre is the Community Hall. With a sprung wooden floor, it is suitable for physical activities as well as meetings, conferences, play groups, and community lunches. It is a light airy room on the lower ground floor with disabled parking bays next to the front door. The room holds 48 people for sedentary activities and 80 with a theatre style lay out.



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### Upstairs Meeting Room

A large airy meeting room available for either meetings or as separate work stations. Private and discreet, the office is accessible by lift and a buzzer system. There is a tea trolley for refreshments and a large screen for presentations. Accommodates up to 20 people.



### Office

Lettable office space with 2 desks and fantastic views. Private and discreet, the office is accessible by lift and a buzzer system. There is a tea trolley for refreshments.



### Chill Out Room

The Chill Out Room is available for presentations, meetings training or small functions. It holds up to 30 people and has a television and smart screen. This circular room has brightly coloured soft furnishings and has a kitchen next door.







## Who are Sense?

A charity that has been established for over 60 years, Sense has developed an unrivalled depth of knowledge, skills and expertise to help people with a broad range of complex disabilities, and those who are deafblind, learn to communicate and express themselves. We believe that no-one should be isolated or unable to fulfil their potential. We help people to develop the skills to enjoy everyday things like having a conversation, enjoying friendships and living independently.

## Virtual Buddying project

The Virtual Buddying project is open to anyone with a disability aged 5 years and over that may be experiencing isolation or loneliness.

The project works by matching a disabled person with a virtual buddy for a weekly call online or over the phone. Some matches choose to keep their calls to a social chat whilst others like to build skills together such as cooking and playing instruments.

Virtual Buddying helps reduce isolation, improves self-esteem and confidence, helps improve communication, social and independent living skills and gives all our buddies something to look forward to every week!

### For more information:

- Watch what Virtual Buddying means to [Chapman and his buddy Gabriella](#)
- Check out our website and [sign up for a buddy](#)
- Learn more about [volunteering](#) with us

### Get in touch:

Lauren Heath – Virtual Buddying Project Coordinator

**Email:** [lauren.heath@sense.org.uk](mailto:lauren.heath@sense.org.uk)

**Phone:** 07876 870949



## Your Community Needs You

### Become a Community Assistance Volunteer

If you have time to spare, you could give a helping hand to an older person in your area to keep them active and connected in your community. We're looking for volunteers in your area.

### Use your skills and local knowledge to assist others

The Community Assistance Project provides practical help and emotional support to older people so that they may participate in, and develop links to, their community.

Full training and ongoing support provided by the Age Cymru Partnership.

For further information or to register your interest email:

[CAPvolunteer@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:CAPvolunteer@agecymru.org.uk)

or call:

**07425 422 270**



Ariennir gan  
Lywodraeth Cymru  
Funded by  
Welsh Government



Age Cymru is a registered Charity 1128436. Company limited by guarantee and registered in Wales and England 6837284. Registered office address Ground Floor, Mariners House, Trident Court, East Moors Road, Cardiff CF24 5TD. © Age Cymru 2024



## WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We are in need of volunteers to work in our Merthyr Shop.

**Any time you can spare no matter how much will be greatly appreciated.**

Please help us keep your local Hospice shop open and contact us on  
**01495 717277** or email  
[\*\*fundraising@hospiceofthevalleys.com.\*\*](mailto:fundraising@hospiceofthevalleys.com)



## A few hours a month can make a world of **difference...**

Work with us to rebuild lives after stroke. By supporting our stroke group, you can share and learn new skills and get hands on experience of supporting people on their road to recovery.

Volunteers required for all Groups in Wales  
Days and Times vary. Contact us for more information.

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Telephone: **07515 596775**

Email: **beverley.boulton@stroke.org.uk**

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Find out more at **stroke.org.uk/volunteer**

Rebuilding lives after stroke

**Stroke**  
Association



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Registered as a charity in England and Wales (no. 21019) and in Scotland (2003789). Also registered in the Isle of Man (no. 948) and Jersey (No. 221) and operating as a charity in Northern Ireland.

017 225 308





## Could you volunteer for Hope Rescue?

Can you spare some time to help out at events or collections locally?

With the welfare crisis ever growing, we need to raise more funds to be able to help so many dogs be safe, healthy and find their forever homes. In order to do this, we call for your help!

- Some of the ways you can help support Hope;
  - Help at local events by manning a stall
  - Attending local collections, usually at your local supermarket
  - Becoming one of our local collection tin coordinators
  - Join our Handmade by Hope Team
  - Be part of a volunteer fundraising group in your area

For more information please get in touch by calling 01443 226659 or emailing [fundraising@hoperescue.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@hoperescue.org.uk)

To sign up, please scan the QR code below



Registered Charity Number: 1129629





## CTM Mental Health Forum

Dates to be confirmed

To join the Forum or for more information contact [sharon.jones@vamt.net](mailto:sharon.jones@vamt.net)

## Health and Wellbeing Forum

At the Voluntary Action Centre, 10am - 12pm  
**Wednesday 21st August**  
**Wednesday 20th November**

This Forum is open to third sector colleagues and aims to provide a platform for providing third sector services operating locally and regionally. It further serves to ensure engagement with the sector around strategic developments within both Merthyr Tydfil County Borough and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board area.

To join the Forum or for more information contact [lesley.hodgson@vamt.net](mailto:lesley.hodgson@vamt.net)

## The Children, Young People & Families Forum

At the Voluntary Action Centre, 10am - 12pm  
**Thursday 12th September**  
**Thursday 12th December**

To join the Forum or for more information contact [emily.whiteman-cranston@vamt.net](mailto:emily.whiteman-cranston@vamt.net)

## Food Prosperity Network

VAMT was approached in Autumn 2018 by Food Sense Wales to establish a network, focused on food poverty in Merthyr Tydfil, a partnership approach involving third and statutory sectors.

The Network has gone from strength to strength supporting affordable food provision such as Food Pantries and Food Banks to develop, support each other, share good practice and ensure a co-ordinated approach to supporting communities and families. This was particularly evident during the pandemic and now during the ongoing cost of living crisis.

All meetings are via Teams at 10am, dates are below.

**November 6th 2024**

For more information on how to become part of this vibrant Network contact [karen.vowles@vamt.net](mailto:karen.vowles@vamt.net)

## Volunteer Managers' Forum

At the Voluntary Action Centre, 10am - 12pm  
**Wednesday 18th September**

To join the Forum or for more information contact [frances.barry@vamt.net](mailto:frances.barry@vamt.net)

## Diary Marker!!!

VAMT's AGM will be held on **26th September 2024** at Merthyr Tydfil Football Club.

We will also be looking for nominations to join our Board of Trustees – more information will follow.



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# INFORM

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## New staff at VAMT

We are really pleased to introduce two additional members of staff to our team, based on new collaborations with Invest Local Ynysowen and Transport for Wales.

Verity Lewis will be supporting the development of a new Community Rail Partnership to focus on the train routes between Treherbert, Aberdare and Merthyr and Pontypridd/Cardiff. The role will include engaging with communities along each route and focussing on issues such as social inclusion, health and wellbeing, economic development and tourism. To find out more contact [Verity.Lewis@vamt.net](mailto:Verity.Lewis@vamt.net) or ring **07553 147616**.

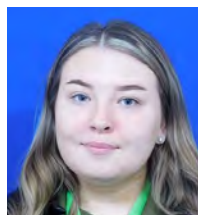


Laura Brosnan-James is the new Community Development Officer for the Invest Local Ynysowen programme. Laura will be working with the community and the local steering group across the Aberfan and Merthyr Vale area, supporting community action. If you'd like to know more, contact Laura direct at [laura.brosnan-james@vamt.net](mailto:laura.brosnan-james@vamt.net) or on **07919 771810**.



## Goodbye to Ellie

We would like to wish a fond farewell to **Ellie Luke**, our Business Support Officer since January 2022. Ellie has been an integral part of our team at VAMT, and we wish her all the very best in her future endeavours.



## BLOG AND BULLETIN UPDATE

Keep up to date with all the latest news via our Blog and Bulletins.

New Blog is up and running, have you subscribed yet?

Click [vamt.net/en/updates/](http://vamt.net/en/updates/) scroll to the bottom of the page, enter your email address and click "subscribe".

If there is anything you would like to share on our Blog or in the Bulletin then please email Fran at [frances.barry@vamt.net](mailto:frances.barry@vamt.net)

**That's all from VAMT for now.** We welcome any comments on this newsletter, they can be submitted to [info@vamt.net](mailto:info@vamt.net)

## YOU CAN BE PART OF THIS MAGAZINE TOO!

To feature in the next edition of Inform please submit your articles to [frances.barry@vamt.net](mailto:frances.barry@vamt.net) by Friday 27th September 2024

### Voluntary Action Centre

89-90 Pontmorlais, High Street,

Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8UH

Tel: 01685 353900

email: [info@vamt.net](mailto:info@vamt.net)

[www.vamt.net](http://www.vamt.net)

## VAMT Team

**Sharon Richards**  
Chief Officer

**Laura Johnson**  
Business & Finance Manager

**Claire Williams**  
Operations Manager

**Frances Barry**  
Lead Officer – Volunteering  
and Communications

**Karen Vowles**  
Lead Officer –  
Community Development

**Lesley Hodgson**  
Lead Officer –  
Health & Wellbeing

**Susan Jones**  
Community Co-ordinator

**Sharon Jones**  
Mental Health Service User  
Involvement Officer

**Emily Whiteman-Cranston**  
Community Resilience Officer

**Ian Howell-Morgan**  
Community Co-ordinator

**Laura Brosnan-James**  
Community Development  
Officer – Invest Local Ynysowen  
programme

**Verity Lewis**  
Community Rail Partnership  
Officer

## Board Members

**Dr Hefin Jones OBE**

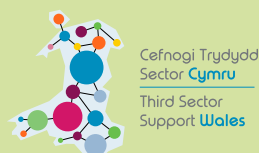
**Anne Roberts MBE**

**Kayleigh Nor-Val**

**Michael Ronan**

**Nicola Mahoney**

**David Hughes**



Cefnogi Trydydd  
Sector Cymru  
Third Sector  
Support Wales

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The views expressed in this edition of Inform are not necessarily those of Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil.  
Croesawir erthyglau nail ai'n ddwyieithog neu'n uniaith Gymraeg.