

# CAMBRIDGESHIRE ACRE CASE STUDY

## COMMUNITY LIFE AWARDS

Each year Cambridgeshire ACRE organises an awards programme that celebrates the very best of community life. Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors there are an exciting variety of categories within the Community Life Awards, all offering recognition for achievements and a substantial reward for the winners.

The awards are the perfect opportunity for communities to focus on their achievements. By working together for a common cause, communities can build a platform for future development, safeguarding the long-term viability of local life.

This case study sets out how the winners of the awards in 2008 went about their community endeavours.

### Village of the Year

For the second year running Huntingdonshire dominated the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough village of the year competition, claiming the top three places. After Little Paxton's success in 2007, when it claimed the overall title, the villages of Elton, Abbotsley and Covington took the honours when the winners were announced in September.

**Elton** was presented with the title of Calor Village of the Year during the awards evening at Burgess Hall, St Ives. Abbotsley was in the runners-up spot and Covington third.



Judges said they were impressed with Elton's large number of active groups and societies, its website, quarterly magazine, and the Elton Society, which supports the entire community - and all of this for a community consisting of just 730 people. Judges said: "Newcomers are warmly welcomed in person and are given useful information and encouraged to attend events. "However, the focus is not just on new additions to the community as there may be existing residents in need of some assistance.

Almshouses, car share schemes, dog walking and deliveries by the luncheon club ladies are all part of the service in Elton."

**Abbotsley** is even smaller than Elton – about 380 residents – but still managed to impress, especially with its well-known scarecrow festival. In addition to the annual scarecrow invasion, Abbotsley also charmed the judges with the village's "caring and active" community.

**Covington** joined its two larger Huntingdonshire neighbours (just 73 adults and seven children live there) on the honours board, despite strong competition from much larger communities. However, the judges were impressed the residents had refurbished a Victorian schoolhouse into a modern hall where there are clubs and classes for all tastes – belly dancing anyone? Covington also has its own website. Chairman of the judges, Hazel Williams, said: “Covington really is an example of a village with small numbers but a big community spirit and we urge other similar places to follow their lead.”

## **Volunteer Awards**

The volunteers who keep Cambridgeshire’s communities thriving were also recognised for their efforts at the gala awards evening held at the Burgess Hall, in St Ives.

The winners were chosen from groups, villages, towns and organisations from across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with volunteers being recognised for their commitment, passion and willingness to put others ahead of themselves.

*For commitment and inspiration:*

**Patricia Tickner** was selected to receive an award for her many involvements such as her role as chairperson of Benwick Village Hall, activities as Parish Councillor and role as founder and Chair of the Benwick Residents Association. She works tirelessly to meet her aims and dedicates many of her evenings to advancing community life.

**Freddie Kramer** has volunteered at Flag Fen for 21 years and has shown remarkable dedication during that time. He has taken on numerous roles and responsibilities and has helped to make Flag Fen the popular attraction that it is today. He has not let the use of a mobility scooter stand in his way and continues to run guided tours of the attraction while also training numerous other tour guides, ensuring his vast knowledge is passed on.

**Patrick Bennett** was selected for all his efforts at The Fenland Project - he is an inspiration to the many people he assists. He organises day trips for centre members and ensures that all that attend the centre are treated with care and kindness, no one is left out and new members are encouraged to join in and become involved in activities. He also finds the time to produce booklets to record the activities of the centre and to create a weekly quiz.

**Steve Thorpe** worked tirelessly to turn his idea of founding and running a charity to enable deserving children to have a day out watching their favourite football team into a reality through the Free Kicks Foundation. He has come up with numerous ways of raising money and has created an active network of help with the project. His drive and determination have resulted in a charity which is sure to grow, expand and provide many children with an experience they can treasure forever.

**Heather Merryweather** dedicates a huge amount of time to her community through her role as vice-chairman of the Parish Council and her activities on various committees. In addition to this she works at Kidney Research UK and has organised a Sports Leadership course for young people. Thanks to her efforts these young people have been given opportunities and

increased confidence and the growth of the village has been appropriate and in line with the village identity.

**Tony Goryn** dedicates a large amount of time to running sports facilities and clubs within Great Wilbraham, he not only teaches and coaches youngsters at cricket he also finds the time to assist with the upkeep of the grounds and act as bar steward for the Village Social Club. The benefits to his local community are outstanding and the development of the young people he coaches is a great achievement.

*For impact on others:*

**Kim and Beth Waterhouse** have had a considerable impact on the lives of others in Dullingham, they are heavily involved in local activities from making land available for Scout camps and fundraising, providing food at fundraising events, organising the day-centre bus, tending the churchyard, arranging printing and distribution of the village newsletter and many, many other activities besides. They have worked tirelessly to keep their community together and deserve a great deal of praise for their ceaseless enthusiasm and the positive impact they have had on their community.

**Douglas Adams** was elected as a town councillor to represent the west ward of Huntingdon in May 2007 and has risen to the challenge of increased emphasis on community participation. He has initiated discussions with sports clubs and had a very positive impact on Huntingdon's sports community. He freely gives his time to a number of charities and organisations and has made an enormous impact on the lives of a great number of people.

**Derek Moore** was one of the founding members of Fenland Disability Sports Forum, Fendis, and has seen it grow from strength to strength. Fendis seeks to raise awareness and make improvements in the provision of sports for people with disabilities throughout Fenland and Derek has provided many ideas for new projects and activities and has been a driving force behind much of the success leading to a range of sustainable activities for disabled people. He has touched the lives of many people and continues to do so, dedicating a large amount of free time to supporting activities for disabled people.

**Carol Hebbard** has made a huge impact in Little Downham by being the driving force in setting up and developing a youth club in the village, she has overcome many hurdles and barriers and has been instrumental in creating a place where young people want to be. Described as someone who 'made the difference' she has supported young people and encouraged them towards future training and careers that would not otherwise have considered. It is not just the people who attend the youth club that have benefited from her efforts, the village has seen a reduction in vandalism and the young people in the village are seen in a more positive light.

**Rodney Vincent** moved to Stuntney 10 years ago and has proved to be a very valuable addition to the village. He set up the village website and is active in keeping it up to date with photographs of village events, scenery and messages from past residents. A diary of village events is maintained, providing a valuable resource to the local community and encouraging involvement. In addition to this he finds the time to act as coordinator for Neighbourhood watch, is a member of Stuntney Village Council and on the committee of Stuntney Social Club.

### *Volunteer Community Organisation Awards:*

**Adam Parker, Sharon Cox and Kay Baxter** were all nominated to receive volunteer awards separately but the judges felt that all their efforts and dedication at **Hunts Mind** should be recognised together as they are working towards the same goal. All three individuals have given up a great deal of their free time to set up and facilitate groups at Hunts Mind, they have supported and encouraged others, building confidence and providing positive role models. Their dedication has proved to be an inspiration to many people and the impact they have made on Hunts Mind has been phenomenal.

The volunteers of the **Cherry Hinton Branch of St John Ambulance** give their time to provide first aid cover for activities benefiting children and adults in the Cambridge/South Cambridge area. Without their services it would not be possible to run many of the events and competitions that take place in the area. They deserve thanks and praise for enabling people to take part in athletics and sporting events and for encouraging active communities. In addition to volunteers giving up many weekends they undergo regular training in first aid techniques which is a further demand on their time. Through enabling many activities to go ahead in a safe environment they have made a huge impact on the lives of many people and are a true inspiration.

**Fridaybridge Senior Citizens Club** was started in March 2006 and has seen its membership double from 30 to 60 with more people keen to join. The committee and members have worked tirelessly to create a happy and friendly club which offers activities such as curling, bowls, board games, entertainment and days out. People attending the club are able to access information on facilities and find answers to any questions they may have. It is not just the physical and mental exercise which benefits the club members but the ability to enjoy a social life and meet people in the community.

### **Aspects of Community Life**

**Children & Young People in the Community**, sponsored by Archant, publisher of The Hunts Post, Ely Standard, Wisbech Standard and Cambs Times

Winner: *Little Downham Youth Club*



The group was said to have made a real impact on the village by giving young people an outlet and somewhere they can get involved in positive activities. The club has built strong relationships with the young people who attend, leading to the development of a youth council, giving the young people a voice and input into the wider community.

**Older People in the Community**, sponsored by Age Concern Cambridgeshire

Winner: *Burwell and District Day Centre*



The centre impressed the judges by providing the older village residents with a stimulating environment and wide variety of entertainments throughout the year. Although funding is frequently tight, excellent freshly cooked food is provided in a relaxed atmosphere. Members are encouraged to try new experiences such as Scottish dancing and also given the opportunity to reminisce and look back at days gone by.

**Environment and the Community**, sponsored by CPRE Cambridgeshire

Winner: *Chatteris Town in Bloom*

The group has worked with businesses, other community groups, residents and local authorities to make the town a more attractive place to visit, live and work. Volunteers create and maintain floral displays and permanent planted areas around the town as well as creating areas to encourage wildlife and leisure.



Highly Commended: *Parson Drove Street Pride Group*

A great variety of projects have been undertaken by the group with the assistance of residents and organisations, including litter picks, weed clearing and bulb planting to name but a few. The group have formed links with the village primary school, youth club and police to assist with the environmental enhancements and ensure as many people as possible are involved and aware of the issues facing the village.

**Sport in the Community**, sponsored by Living Sport



Winner: *Werrington Joggers*

The joggers group is totally inclusive and is open to anyone regardless of age or ability. The judges were impressed by the community focus of the group and the safe, fun and friendly way in which everyone is encouraged to appreciate the benefits of exercise.

**Community Building of the Year**, sponsored by Sanctuary Hereward

Winner: *Over Community Centre*



This building offers a great space and sports facilities that are used by numerous clubs, societies and associations. All ages of the community are catered for with a free Christmas lunch available to village residents aged over 65, and treasure hunts and

colouring competitions for the younger members of the community.

A key message from all the groups and individuals who entered the 2008 awards was that taking stock of their achievements had been a truly worthwhile experience and that it was fantastic to be publicly recognised for all the good work they do.

*Case Study compiled from interviews with all winning groups and individuals.*