

Christmas Shoebox appeal



Last year Teams4U distributed 38,000 gift-filled shoeboxes to Belarus, Bosnia, the Ukraine and Romania. The Teams4U charity also works throughout the year with local people in these countries to help improve the quality of their lives. From 2018 Teams4U will be operating in their own warehouse on the Wirral, collecting shoeboxes for children.

Dave Cooke, the founder of the original Christmas Shoebox Charity, has never been a stranger to risks or the dedication it takes to start up a charity! In 1990, after seeing breaking news with images of the orphans from Ceausescu's regime in Romania, he decided, with the help of some friends, to get an aid wagon together and drive it across Europe, hoping the medical supplies, beds, blankets and clothes would radically change the horrific conditions in which these children were living. What he didn't know was that those few thousand shoebox gifts that went across with the convoy from Wrexham would grow into the biggest shoebox programme in the world!

In 1994 Operation Christmas Child was amalgamated with the American-led international charity Samaritan's Purse. Dave resigned from his job as Contracts Manager for a window installation company and became the Overseas Projects Manager for Samaritan's Purse, delivering shoeboxes all across the world while developing their Soccer programme and Second Chance programme which take sports and games to street children and juvenile convicts.

From those years of pioneering new programmes and visiting new countries grew the seeds for Teams4U. Seeing children without family or community, traumatised through abuse, war and poverty, laugh and play again through the sports programmes empowered Dave to make that the focus of T4U.

Dave founded Teams4U in 2006 after experiencing the atrocities of the Beslan crisis in 2004 when over 300 people were killed in a school attack in Russia. From his experience working as an International Projects Manager for Samaritan's Purse, he was invited to take a team of volunteers into Beslan to be part of the rehabilitation process there. Out of that harrowing situation, Dave realised the difference short-term teams can make and wanted to set up an organisation that could give anyone the opportunity of travelling abroad to assist children in crisis.

Dave told *Heswall Magazine*: "I want to give people who aren't able to give up their day-to-day lives the opportunity to go overseas and make a difference. Most of us have jobs, families, mortgages and bills to pay. We can't all spend months or years abroad. But I don't want that to stop people from travelling to the third world, getting off the tourist route, and meeting the needs of the children there. From whatever walk or stage of life you're in, I want to give you the opportunity to travel with Teams4U."

If you don't fancy volunteering abroad, the charity has returned to the simple model of giving a shoebox for a boy, a girl or a family box at Christmas time. If you would like any more information about how you can help, or would like to volunteer in our Wirral Warehouse, please contact Anne Preston (email anne_preston22@hotmail.co.uk or telephone 0151 645 2351).



You may have recently seen Spiderman running through the streets of Heswall. It was in fact Paul Parry from The Way Fitness.

He did a 12-hour fitness-athon and also led (and joined in with) 12 fitness sessions in return for donations. He raised £1,000 for the Spider-Ede appeal to help poor Edie (from the Wirral) get the treatment she needs in Mexico to fight the rare brain tumour (DIPG).



New Soroptimist President



At the recent Soroptimist International Club of Heswall & Districts AGM and Change of Insignia Dinner, Maureen Sayer was inaugurated as president for 2018 – 2019. Past President Veronica Cuthbert welcomed Maureen to the role and wished her a successful and enjoyable year.

Maureen's inaugural speech highlighted education as her theme for the year, because of the different roles she has held during her career both in the NHS and Further Education. She has worked both in Wirral and Liverpool as a nurse, health visitor and health advisor, and lecturer. She was the Advanced Health Improvement Practitioner for the Cheshire and Merseyside Bowel Screening Programme covering eight Primary Care Trusts and subsequently the Liverpool Health Promotion Specialist for Cancers until she retired three years ago.

Her chosen charity is SUDEP Action, which offers support to people bereaved by epilepsy, provides information on SUDEP (Sudden Unexpected death in Epilepsy) and risk in epilepsy, sponsors research and education to prevent future deaths, involves people to help effect change, and captures data across the UK through the Epilepsy Deaths Register.

Internationally, SI Heswall is supporting Women, Water & Leadership, along with the Meru Women's Garden Project.

Heswall Soroptimists meets every second and fourth Thursday during the month, at Prenton Golf Club. As well as the formal meetings, members are also involved in a variety of community and fundraising projects and enjoy a lively, fun-filled programme of social events. New members are always welcome.