

# CEN Times

Newsletter produced by ContinYou (formerly CEDC),  
aimed at those who are promoting  
community-based learning for adults.

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July 2003 Edition :Citizenship in the 21st century and beyond

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**CEN** Community Educators  
to make education for all

**TIMES**

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## Citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond

This edition of CEN Times illustrates models of citizenship. Each project, in its own way, is extremely successful, but what does the future hold? In fifty years time, will volunteering be recognisable by today's volunteers? Will the curriculum of citizenship change and, if so, how? How will advances in IT affect citizenship?

I asked Malcolm Kigler, a GP and a key figure in Partners in Health Ltd for his thoughts.

RQVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme) recruits older people as volunteers. They don't join a programme as such, it's more a case of asking each of them individually what they like doing and offering them support in pursuing that activity in such a way that others are invited to get involved as well. RQVP is also developing a 'careers guidance' type of approach. Often people who get in touch with them expressing a desire to give something back to the community are not sure exactly how they might do this. To help stimulate people's ideas about what they might have to offer, RQVP has produced a directory of 101 ways that people have contributed to their community.

The role of information providers is likely to gain in importance over the next few years. There is so much information to communicate that doctors, for instance, are going to need to have information providers working alongside them in their surgeries; volunteers could be trained to act in this capacity. People who do not have access to IT will need most help from others in getting hold of the information they need. Older people may be the obvious candidates for this role.

In the United States, Roland Jackson did some research on why some students achieve high marks in science subjects. He examined over 1,000 variables, from the academic achievement of the teachers to the histories of particular families, and discovered that it was the quality of the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren that emerged as a really important factor. In other words, students whose grandparents spent quality time with them – taking them to places of interest, sharing their own interests, talking with them, reading books about science and the natural world with them – flourished in their academic studies. This evidence reinforces the importance of the contribution of mentoring to learning.

We know that there is a direct correlation between poverty and low educational attainment and poor health – learning champions can successfully work with people from such backgrounds in order to break the cycle of deprivation and social exclusion. In rural areas e-mail is proving an effective means of continuing a mentoring relationship, topped up with occasional face-to-face contact. So, children can keep in touch with their grandparents through technology, even if they see them only occasionally.

Heritage sites contain artefacts, plants and animals from all over the world. On the face of it, they appear to represent Britain's past, but they are in locations where examples of every culture of the world are to be found. It would be valuable to highlight the diversity represented by these collections. Volunteers with origins from different countries around the world might like to catalogue and show items relating to their cultural backgrounds to visitors, demonstrating their heritage and its links with Britain.



Learning through an interest in our heritage

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### In this Issue

'Citizenship' has become the latest concept to permeate the school curriculum. Yet, it can also be seen at the heart of many community initiatives. In this issue of CEN Times we will be looking at some projects both in and out of the classroom.

# Community Action Networks (CAN)

## Our vision

We aim to encourage new ideas, new thinking about society, and new ways of tackling social problems. These outcomes arise from connecting people in communities and in voluntary and not-for-profit organisations with those in the public and private sectors, so that they can share ideas and practical experience and begin to 'think outside the box'.

## Making a difference

CAN backs people who have the passion and drive to make things happen. It identifies, supports and raises the profile of social entrepreneurs – locally, regionally and nationally. It creates networks and connections, using both face-to-face and IT-based communications. It works in creative partnerships across the private, public and social sectors, reaching those parts of society that policy initiatives do not touch. It acts as a catalyst in promoting new, high-quality solutions and in encouraging entrepreneurship.

It recognises, encourages and releases the potential of people from different faiths, cultures, traditions and backgrounds, bringing them together in new and creative relationships to achieve real change.

'CAN has made a real difference to the way we work, the vision we hold for the future and the likelihood of being able to achieve it. CAN helped us break the disheartening isolation of working alone in West Cumbria, offering the oxygen of communication with others facing similar challenges.'

In Bromley by Bow, part of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets in East London, CAN has designed an integrated health centre and built it out of hand-made bricks. As well as being the place to see your doctor, the centre is also an exhibition space, a social meeting/celebration place and a therapy room that can also house a crèche or the toy library. In addition to prescribing medicines and arranging hospital appointments, the GPs are able to prescribe 125 practical activities which are run by local residents sharing their skills and interests with others – from gardening to yoga, from stone carving to aromatherapy. The projects and activities fall into broad categories, such as enterprise,

health, education, environment and the arts. The 'social prescription' model is only possible because the skills and talents of local people have been harnessed and are offered to others in their community. The overall result is a step change in the quality of life for:

- the patients whose overall health improves
- the people running the activity groups, who gain a sense of satisfaction
- the local community, which benefits from the wicker garden, the carvings, the water feature and other aspects of the centre.



Sharing skills



Improving the environment

## CEN membership

CEN annual membership fee is £50. The membership year is from April to March of the following year. Members of CEN are entitled to:

- *CEN Times* and *CSN Network* magazine five times a year
- *CEDC in action* three times a year
- notification of termly Community Education Briefing meetings
- an invitation to CEDC's annual conference
- discounts on some conferences and events
- further information about CEDC's activities.

CEN is an initiative taken in association with the members and executives of CEA.

For further details, contact John Grainger on 024 7658 8454, 0771 398 4683 (mobile) or e-mail [johng@cedc.org.uk](mailto:johng@cedc.org.uk).

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