

In brief

Well-being checks helping students



Magna Carta student Blake

Teachers are ensuring their pupils are coping with the effects of the pandemic on their education and mental health – as well as taking to the front line themselves.

Regular phone calls from staff and well-being packs sent to each pupil are just some of the ways youngsters at Forest Hall School and Magna Carta Primary Academy are being cared for while their usual routines are disrupted.

Year 11s, who will likely miss their exams and end-of-school celebrations, were particularly vulnerable. Head of school Hannah Jones said: “They’re in a unique situation and we want to make sure they understand what’s going on and that they’re not getting anxious or worried.”

Meanwhile, the secondary’s teachers Kayleigh Trainor and Paul Conlon have volunteered to help on the medical front line.

Firemen are to drive ambulances

Stansted firefighters have volunteered to become ambulance drivers during the pandemic, in addition to their fire and rescue roles.

John Birnie is the first crew member to begin his training and others will follow shortly.

Crew manager Dave Morland said: “The NHS is facing demands on its resources the likes of which it has never had to face. They have reached out to their colleagues in the UK fire services for help and we have responded.”

Dog and Duck takes quiz online

A virtual pub quiz, hosted by the Dog and Duck, will be held on Facebook Live tomorrow (Thursday) at 8.30pm, following the Clap for Carers.

Regular quizmaster Patsy will be firing the questions for householders to answer from the comfort of their own homes. People are warned not to turn up at the Lower Street venue and to observe lockdown guidelines.

It is the pub’s first attempt at a virtual quiz and it said: “Depending on how it goes, we might do another.”

Sewing bees help protect NHS staff with drawstring bags



Abigail Newton and her daughter Scarlett with their home-sewn wash bags for NHS staff

Do you have any old pillowcases or duvet covers, or can you sew? If so, Abigail Newton needs your help to turn them into drawstring bags for NHS staff.

She appealed for help in Stansted and was delighted when several women volunteered. So far they have crafted 160 bags, but with the need for possibly thousands, she is appealing for more help and materials.

The mother of two, whose daughters Scarlett, 13, and Alice, 11, are also lending a hand, said nurses on the front line who had already received the bags were extremely grateful. “It means they can take their uniform off at work, turn the bag inside out and pick it all up with the bag

and then put it straight in the washing machine when they get home. Then it’s all ready to go again,” said Abigail. She lives in Takeley and is happy to collect materials from a safe distance which she then distributes to the sewing team of Ami, Judith, Joanna, Lesley, Karen and Tanya.

“I received a letter from a lovely nurse from PAH thanking us for our bags. It read ‘It’s pretty horrid working at the moment and then going home to our families – things like this make a huge difference.’”

To donate pillowcases or duvet covers that are in good condition, full cotton reels in any colour and ribbon, call Abigail on 07737 038664.

Volunteers coming together to build community spirit

Hollie Ryder

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An extraordinary workforce of volunteers is evolving in Stansted to protect and provide for the community in the coming weeks and months of the coronavirus pandemic.

Spearheaded by Stansted Surgery to help not only patients but anyone in need in the village and surrounding areas, a 110-strong army of helpers has deployed to tackle the crisis head on.

Splinter groups of fundraisers and volunteers have been conceived in the past week to ensure those on the front line are provided for as well as people isolated at home and in need of essential supplies.

Some 6,000 leaflets, designed free of charge by a villager, were delivered over the weekend. They have details of how people can seek help and support with the key message ‘Please do not struggle in silence – the wider community is here to help’.

Practice manager of Stansted Surgery, Teresa Buglass, said she felt overwhelmed and humbled by the community’s response.

“It’s hard to describe how I feel. You don’t know what’s going to happen when you ask people for help, but there’s nothing people won’t do and it’s very encouraging, makes us feel very well supported and very grateful. It’s quite humbling,” she told the *Indie* on Monday.

“It was on March 14 we first put out a call for volunteers and people responded immediately. Within two days we were up and running, and over the past week it’s escalated so that there’s now a group set up to fundraise for the food bank, while another is sewing scrubs for NHS staff.

“The Friends of Stansted Surgery have launched a fundraising page



Annie, 10, and Alice, 6, help with leaflet deliveries



Top, Rosie Paterson, 10, helped deliver the leaflets; above, supplies for the food bank



and so far have raised £2,240, which is brilliant. It has paid for the printing of the leaflets that went out over the weekend and they will use it to fund supplies for the food bank.”

The surgery is the central point from where people can access volunteer help. By emailing stansted.surgery@nhs.net or phoning 01279 813200, 01279 818051 or 01279 818057, staff will put you in touch with the right volunteer for your needs, from collecting prescriptions or food to dog walking or being at the end of a phone for a chat.

Philippa Bennett, who co-founded Friends of Stansted Surgery to support it with the delivery of these additional services, said they felt the need to help co-ordinate the volunteer response so that the surgery was not overwhelmed.

“When all these little groups

started evolving we realised it was going to need a bit more organising and that we were going to have to do some fundraising,” she said.

“The women sewing the scrubs had already bought some fabric but we were also going to have to buy for the food bank depot, so we started fundraising to supplement that and to make it more of an official group.

“There are also a lot of vulnerable people who don’t have social media so we organised the leaflets with the surgery and set up a gofundme.com page a few days ago with a target of £5,000 and we’re already over £2,000.”

Another co-founder, who wished to remain anonymous, said the surgery had been quick to respond. “They recognised that there was going to be a call for services over and above what they’re normally called upon to

do, supporting not just vulnerable patients but people who wouldn’t typically need their help.

“The surgery has given incredible steer and guidance and ended up with over 100 volunteers, each with their own strengths, and the service is evolving with incredible talents and skill sets.

“Groups of people are coming together to help and it’s building a great community spirit. This is the easiest campaign launched as so many people want to help out – the hardest part is making sure everybody has a job to do!”

She added: “The impact of this is going to be felt for some time so we are fundraising as much as we can to help out later. But the most important message is that if people need any help, the surgery will signpost them to where help can be found.”