



Hello and welcome to my latest newsletter, and would you believe it – my last newsletter of 2014! How about a few ‘Christmas Cracker’ jokes to start off this festive season:

What did Adam say on the day before Christmas? It's Christmas, Eve!

What do you call a train loaded with toffee? A chew chew train!!

What did Cinderella say when her photos didn't arrive on time? One day, my prints will come!



I love the corny jokes inside Christmas crackers! When you were younger, did you make your own crackers or did you buy them? I always ask this question during our Christmas Fun Quiz – ‘When was the first Christmas cracker invented?’ Do you know? Well, it was in 1846 by Thomas Smith. Thomas started selling bon-bon sweets at Christmas, then came up with the idea of including a ‘love’ poem or message for the men to give to women wrapped up with the bon-bon. In around 1860, Thomas thought about including a ‘bang’ as the wrappers were pulled apart. At first, these were called ‘cosaques’ but were soon changed to ‘crackers’ as we know today. The bon-bon sweets were replaced by novelty gifts and in 1900, Thomas's two sons, who took over the business after Thomas died, decided to add the paper hats as well. It wasn't until late in the 1930's when the ‘love’ poems were replaced by jokes and limericks.



Christmas Past

Did you make your own Christmas decorations such as paper chains? And did you have turkey or goose for dinner or did you have chicken? What do you remember about your Christmases when you were a child. This month, Community Visitor Sarah and myself are getting together to have a reminiscence afternoon and we would love to hear all about your memories of Christmas such as making your own decorations, receiving a fruit in your Christmas stocking etc. Can you imagine what the children of today would think if you gave them a piece of fruit rather than the latest computer in their stocking!!!! Come along to our Christmas Reminiscence session on Wednesday 10th December in the lounge at around 2.30pm and share your memories with us. It is guaranteed to bring a lot of laughter and surprises!



We're 20 years old!

Did you know that St. Dominics Residential Home is twenty years old this month? A lot of changes have gone on over the past two decades making St. Dominics the bright, vibrant home it is today and my team of volunteers and myself are working hard at trying to ‘display’ the history of St. Dominics on our Christmas Tree that is taking part in the local Kelvedon St. Marys Church Christmas Tree Festival, being held on 7th and 8th December. On this tree, you will find nuns, vegetables, dog, playschool, and much more. If you want to know more about this, read on in this newsletter as





I have written a brief article about the history of St. Dominics, and it will explain the 'odd' items that we are putting on the tree!

Our directors Mr and Mrs Warwick will be coming in on Tuesday 2nd December to decorate our main Christmas Tree for the lounge. Last year, we got an enormous amount of compliments on how beautiful the tree looked. I hope that Mr. Warwick hasn't lost his nerve for heights yet!!!

One thing that hasn't changed over the years in St. Dominics is our commitment to give our residents an exciting festive season of entertainments and activities to enjoy and Christmas wouldn't be the same without a Pantomime so this month, come and join us on the 'magic carpet' in the lounge for Aladdin!! Also lined up for you are entertainments from your favourite singers, and today (1st December), we have 'Care Home Entertainer of 2014' Brian Shaw coming in to start the ball rolling by giving us a lively and jolly morning of 1950's and 1960's music with a show called 'Let's Twist Again'!! Brian was also voted the Best Musical Performer at the National Vintage Awards 2014, so I am really proud to have him come along to St. Dominics to entertain you.

At the back of this newsletter, you will find our 'Christmas Extravaganza' events diary. I hope there will be something for everybody to enjoy. Don't forget, families and friends are also welcome to come along and join in the fun.

Looking back

Brian came in last month on Remembrance Day and gave us a fabulous afternoon of war-time memories with songs and laughter, and our residents were still talking about him a week later. What more could we ask for? Let's look back at more events we had last month

What a variety show!

Our residents thought Christmas came a bit early when they were treated to a variety show by 'Pat's People' last month. Wow, what a lively and entertaining afternoon we had! Pat gave us music hall songs (which we all joined singing along to), country and western trio Three's Company got us tapping our feet, and we had a gentleman playing the trumpet. There were cheers and applause afterwards and even the entertainers said they enjoyed themselves as well.



Our lovable entertainer Martyn got us all swinging along to his rock and roll songs made famous by Cliff Richard as well as Frank Sinatra and Matt Monroe songs (my favourite singers!!) and has nearly all our residents singing with him on his microphone.

I could hear residents' voices galore when singer and guitarist Shirley Anne came in and had us all singing all our favourite songs that we love to sing. Our residents Mary and Joycie absolutely amaze me with their memories as they know every word of every song sang, and there were a lot of songs!

There are lots of activities going on in St. Dominics, such as quizzes, word teasers, art and crafts, gentle exercises, bingo, one to one, but nothing beats music. Music is something that people of all ages and abilities, especially those with dementia. enjoy

and can be a very beneficial therapy as it can help liven up their mood and awaken old memories of fun and happy times from their past. Each morning, I put on our favourite CDs such as 'Housewife's Choice' and there are songs that bring back so many memories, and it even makes me smile and think 'They don't make 'em like that anymore!'.

Shopping Afternoon

Did you enjoy our 'Indoor Christmas Shopping' afternoon last month? I hope you managed to pick up a bargain or two! We had a variety of stalls, ranging from crafts and jewellery, to hand-made chocolates and candles. The afternoon was well attended by family and friends, with everybody looking very relaxed and cheerful together and Margaret and I just cannot find enough words to say "Thank You" for supporting the afternoon. I have had a lot of compliments on how lovely the atmosphere was, so again, thank you very much for coming along.



The 'Partylite' candle stall did a raffle whereby we were given £50 from that raffle, as well as two people winning £25 worth of Partylite Goods.

My sincere thanks go to a wonderful lady by the name of Joyce Wilkinson, who lovingly knitted a beautiful 'snow family' that consisted of a snowman, snow lady, and snow children, and she also knitted small decorations for our shopping event. (Joyce also knitted the nuns for our Christmas Tree!). I raffled the snow family, and the lucky winner was our carer Donna. Congratulations to Donna. My thanks go to Trixie who also contributed to the raffle with a lovely hand-made Christmas table display, and Carol Bennett gave us a box of very pretty Christmas baubles (which was won by Trixie!). All in all, we raised a fantastic amount of over £162 for our residents amenities fund and received a lot of items from the stall holders which we will raffle off before Christmas.



May I also take this opportunity to thank Lee, our chef, for baking dozens and dozens of delicious mince pies especially for our shopping afternoon, thanks to our strong men of St. Dominics who helped bring over the tables and I must also thank Margaret, Gloria and June for their kind help on the day.



If you didn't see any bargains at our Shopping Event, don't worry, we have booked an afternoon out to Poplar Nurseries on Monday 8th December. If you wish to come along, please let me know as soon as possible as the seats on the mini-bus are going fast! Family members are very welcome to come along too.

A surprise visit

St. Dominics were absolutely thrilled to have a phone call a few months ago from a gentleman named Barry who is a member of the Braintree Male Voice Choir asking if we would like them to sing to us. Barry said he will pop in to 'access' the space that we have in the lounge. When he came in to St. Dominics, he got his tape measure out etc., going round the lounge and Margaret and I thought it very strange at first. Then I realised why he was measuring up – there are 45 members in the choir and will he be able to fit them all in!! Barry phoned again soon after and said he and his choir will be arriving on Sunday 30th November and there will only be around 20 members of the choir arriving. Wow, what a fabulous entertaining afternoon they gave us,



by singing Christmas Songs and Carols, telling us stories and reading a poem. We all joined in singing along with them, and the choir was chuffed when I told them that we have our very own choir and that we should get together someday! One member of the choir told me later that they came along 'in reflection of Keith Coleman BEM's time here', who was, until recently, a resident here in St. Dominics.

You are all brilliant!

As mentioned earlier, we do a variety of activities and I am absolutely astonished and amazed that despite our residents' lack of sight, movement in arms/legs, etc., that they can show me what they can do when it comes to carpet bowls. Sheila, Isobel, Ed, our two Joyces, Betty H, Betty C, Mona, Dorrie, Pauline, Nana, and DC are first class 'bowlers' and how they can hit the 'target' I'll never know!! Girls and boys – you are all fantastic - Well Done!



Are we ready to party?

St. Dominics Christmas Party will be on Sunday 14th December starting at 2.30pm. We hope that many of our residents' families and friends will be able to attend. Once again, there will be a Christmas Raffle, with a lot of fabulous prizes. The raffle tickets will be on sale at the front foyer very soon.



Our Fun Christmas Quiz



Of course, we can't let this year go by without our annual Fun Christmas Quiz where teams of residents, staff and families battle it out to become the brains of St. Dominics! Mr. Banning has agreed to be our quizmaster again so there will be no cheating! (Are you listening Jean Dolmor!!) There will be prizes for the winning team and a booby prize for the losers. The quiz will be on Wednesday 3rd December at 2.30. Come along and join us, the more laughs we have, the merrier!



Christmas Lunch

Any member of our residents' family or friends wishing to have Christmas lunch with them here at St. Dominics are very welcome to do so. Please let a member of staff know if you wish to have lunch here, and how many are coming, so that we can cater for enough people. We don't charge for this, but if you would like to make a donation to the residents' fund, it would be gratefully received. It will also be appreciated that if you wish to take a resident out for Christmas Day, that you let Jean Dolmor know or a senior member of staff.

Sad Loss

It is with deep sadness that our resident Gladys passed away last month. Gladys was a very sprightly and independent 102 years old, always smiling and ready for a joke with me! Gladys really enjoyed our entertainments and would stand up with me for a little 'wiggle' to the music. St. Dominics will miss her, and our condolences are with Gladys' family at this sad time.

Welcome to our home: St. Dominics wishes to welcome Barbara to our home. We hope her stay here is a happy one and make a lot of friends amongst our staff and residents.

Story of St. Dominics

Originally a convent and convalescence home, St. Dominics was ran by nuns, led by Sister Mary. The home had 17 residential rooms and 2 extra bedrooms for visitors. Because money was tight, the nuns had to buy Army reject furniture for the rooms and also had the rooms painted Army Green! The vegetable garden (now the staff car-park) was huge, and they had to employ three gardeners to maintain the garden, and the nuns sold the vegetables to the local community. There was a tin hut (where our quiet room and long corridor is) known as the Guild Room, and this was hired out to villagers for parties and meetings. It was later turned into a pre-school. In 1994, the nuns retired, and Mr. Banning and Mr & Mrs Warwick bought St. Dominics.

In 1995, four additional rooms were added to the bungalow section of the building, and Sister Mary was invited to officially open this for us. Mr. Banning remembers; Sister Mary drove down from up north with another nun. Sister Mary loved her wine and even though she was driving back up the M1, she still had a few wines on the occasion!

More building work took place a couple of years later when the upper floor (rooms 32 to 39) was added. During the summer of 1998, the roof over rooms 1 to 7 had to be removed, so the residents had to vacate their rooms. Where did they go? You might ask! Mr Banning brought porta cabins into the grounds for the residents to stay in whilst the work was going on. Unfortunately, it rained for 2-3 weeks solid whilst the roof was off! Mr Banning recalls Sheila, the manager at the time, wearing her wellington boots to wade through the corridor to the laundry room! The residents, however, absolutely loved the fact that they were staying in porta cabins – some said it was like being on a camping holiday. There was a dog called Snoopy in the convent that used to be driven in the car by a little Irish nun Sister Mary Dymphna, who was a terrible driver! So much so, that people thought Snoopy was driving! Snoopy stayed on in St. Dominics, sleeping by one of the resident's bed upstairs.

The pre-school moved to another part of the village in 2007, and was then demolished to make way for yet another extension. By now, St. Dominics was really growing and had become an established residential home in Kelvedon.

St. Dominics now has 39 rooms and employs 52 members of staff, and are also privilege to have volunteers such as June, Gloria, Margaret, Amy, Sarah, Nuffy the dog, and not to forget Anne and her PAT dog Lily. The home has gone from strength to strength over the years, engaging in many events within the community, as well as enjoying many activities within the home.

Our Heroes of St. Dominics

This is the time of year that we are reminded to think of others, and I'd like to remind you to think of our "unsung heroes" of St. Dominics who also care for our residents. Where would we be without our housekeepers Pauline, Christine, Karen, and Sam who keeps your rooms clean and smelling fresh, our laundry lady Linda who lovingly irons your clothes each day. Our maintenance men Tom and Andy who keep our garden tidy, and also keep St. Dominics in good working order! Not forgetting our kitchen staff: Carol, Lee, Jeff and Ciel, who provide us with excellent tasty meals each day. Our administrator Nicole who sits so quietly in the corner upstairs drowned by mountains of paperwork making sure that we get our wages in the bank on time! Assistant Administrator Gill, who is forever running around looking for me! Last but not least, will you all join me to thank our Home Manager Jean Dolmor, her 'elves' Tracy and Lisa, and, of course, our carers who have helped make St. Dominics such a charming, warm, inviting, vibrant place to live and work at. Finally, I personally would like to thank all the residents, families, staff and our volunteers for their help and support that I have received over the past year during activities, events, and outings. Thank you so much.





Birthdays this month:

Wednesday 3rd

Thursday 4th

Tuesday 9th

Thursday 18th

Isobel

Lysbeth

Ray

Betty H

Before I go, I found the true meaning of the word 'CHRISTMAS' and thought I would share it with you;

C is for the child born that night to be our light

H is for holy is His name

R is for rejoice with gladness and joy

I is for Immanuel, God with us

S is for the star that led the Wise men to Him

T is for truth and grace that was sent our way

M is for Mother Mary laying Him with swaddling clothes in the manger

A is for angels singing songs of joy

S is for salvation



Finally, do you know your pantomimes? Here are a few questions to test your knowledge:

1. Who is Widow Twanky's son?
2. What did the Fairy Godmother need to make Cinderella's coach?
3. What did the giant at the top of the beanstalk say?
4. Name the seven dwarves?
5. What did the Evil Queen ask her mirror?
6. What did Jack get in exchange for the cow?

Q What did the cow say on Christmas Morning?

A Moooooey Christmas!

Q What members of the orchestra can't you trust?

A The Fiddlers!!



ST DOMINICS WISHES YOU ALL
A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS