

PRESS RELEASE

Date: 9th October 2019

Elderly residents publish book on National Poetry Day

Following the launch of a project in March, elderly residents from the community have released a poetry book named 'Rhymes of our Times'.

The collection was published last week on National Poetry Day, 3rd October, by local care provider Optalis and celebrates the experiences of older people, providing readers with an insight into the lives of older generations.

The book also boasts endorsement from Sue Holderness, the actress well known for her part as Marlene in *Only Fools and Horses*. Sue has become an ambassador for dementia, drawing on her own family's experience, and has written the foreword for the book, as well as contributing a poem composed about her parents.

To celebrate the book unveiling, the social care provider hosted a launch day event at Windsor Day Centre. Julie Harris, Head of Non-Regulated Services, welcomed everyone to the event and explained how the idea for the poetry book came about.

Jodie Reichelt, Customer Experience Champion, then gave a brief overview of the poetry project that has been running across Optalis' services, as well as demonstrating how the social workers run their poetry session with clients. Guests also got to enjoy homemade cream tea.

Optalis, who provide care services across Berkshire, developed the concept for the project to give their customers an opportunity to express their feelings through poetry, stimulating the mind. Activities were organised throughout Optalis' Older People Services, giving people a range of ways to participate, meeting different interests and abilities.

Many of the individuals who have contributed to the poetry book are those living with dementia. It has helped them to share life experiences, and in some instances overcoming some of their challenges with memory loss and communication.

Julie Harris, who conceived the idea, commented; “When you read the poetry book, you become captivated by the art created by our customers. It’s been a cathartic experience, giving them a chance to relive some of their fondest memories whilst being creative.

“To ensure they got the most out of the activity, we supported their creative process by showing them photographs and recording the thoughts that the images evoked. In another activity we invited them to reflect on their past achievements by considering what their hands would say if they could speak. We also held reminiscence sessions, encouraging people to recollect cherished childhood poetry.”

They continued; “Overall, it’s been an amazing experience. The work in Rhymes of our Times has already enthralled readers, and we’re excited to now be sharing the inspiring work with the general public.”

The book is now on sale in libraries across Wokingham, Windsor and Maidenhead, as well as Optalis, for a small price of £10. Proceeds raised from the sales of the book will be used to fund equipment that will further enhance the provision of activities across Optalis’ older peoples’ services.

Optalis’ Windsor Day Centre also runs Dementia poetry sessions each week for their older people groups.

Optalis strives to make a positive difference to the lives of customers, offering genuine choice and enabling them to fulfil their potential.

For more information about Optalis, contact 0118 977 8600 or visit www.optalis.org.

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Notes for Editors:

Optalis provides care and support services on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and Oxfordshire to older people and adults with disabilities. For more information about Optalis please visit our website at: www.optalis.org

The Windsor Day Centre provides a caring and stimulating environment for older adults enabling them to maintain social contact and personal care in a safe setting thus preventing the need for residential care.

For more information about this release, contact Natasha Jones at Conteur on 01905 670881 or email natasha@conteur.co.uk