

The WAY Foundation

Charity No : 1072649

Chairman's AGM Speech 2010

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I hope that you will all go home from here having gained something from this weekend – not only having met lots of new people and making new friends.

But hopefully you will feel a little more confident, more positive and I really hope you will have enjoyed yourself.

As Lindsay Nicholson, our patron, said: “no outsider can understand that along with the tears there can be laughter too...”

And I like to think that is what is so brilliant about WAY – it's a place where you can really laugh again, even if you are laughing through tears some of the time.

So, we've done the fun part of the day, and now it's time to talk a little bit about what goes on behind the scenes.

When I came to my first AGM I was staggered at how much was being done just to keep the organisation going, let alone to help it grow and prosper.

I drove back along the M4 that weekend knowing that I wanted to be involved, and that rather like finding God, I had found something that was going to be very important in my

life. I'm sure there are one or two of you out there who will feel the same. Or at least I hope there are..!

We are required by law, as Martin has said, to file reports to the Charity Commission about what we have done over the last year.

I'd like to highlight our major successes and achievements and then talk for a couple of minutes about the next 12 months and beyond.

Shortly after I became Chairman Linsay Black agreed to be our new press officer. Linsay has professional PR experience and jumped into the role with enthusiasm that was a joy to behold.

She has been tireless in finding opportunities to get WAY into the mainstream media – not only responding to requests from journalists, but thinking of a WAY angle to stories that were already out there, like the recent film that came out about a widowed Dad. That led to two of our best articles this year – a double page spread in the Independent and a full page in the Mirror. I'd like to thank Simon, Andy and Des for agreeing to be interviewed for those pieces.

We've also featured in: Good Housekeeping, the Daily Telegraph, SHE, Daily Express, YOU magazine, Prima, the weekly news, Yorkshire Post, Edinburgh Evening News, Western Morning News, Northern Echo, Zest and Country Walking.

We did a run of radio interviews around Father's Day and International Widows Day last year – ironically that is the day I was widowed...! I sometimes wonder if there is a grand masterplan after all...

We were on about five local BBC radio stations and later in the year Linsay and I both appeared on BBC Breakfast to talk about the treatment of widowed people by financial institutions.

Helen Bridge, of our Merseyside group, was nominated for the Radio 4 PM award and the PM programme ran an incredible four minute piece, interviewing several WAY members on a trip to Chester zoo.

All these articles and news items are fantastic publicity for us. We have no advertising budget, so they really do a great job at getting the word out to potential members.

And over the year we have seen a 12.5% rise in members to 1800 from 1600.

On the PR front, Paul Hutt has also worked tirelessly at getting WAY's name better known in the 'bereavement industry' for want of a better word – making sure we are invited to the major conferences and finding opportunities for us to speak.

He and I gave a workshop at the Cruse annual conference in July last year.

Martin has represented WAY at two events for crematoria and funeral workers – which were, surprisingly, more fun than he had anticipated!

Catherine Raw in Harrogate spoke at a hospice consortium training event.

Linsay Black also represents WAY on a professional group that is working on developing coordinated Bereavement Services in Scotland.

Jim Drummond, Gaynor Williams and I have all promoted WAY at our local Cruse branches – there are probably others who have done this that I don't know about.

Promoting WAY does not have to be a scary thing to do. Mostly what it involves is going along to a meeting and telling a group of people about WAY. What we do, how we work with a local group structure, our chat room, message board and book loan service, and of course the weekends away and holidays. Then people ask lots of questions and then you have a cup of tea afterwards – and a biscuit if you're lucky.

By doing that at your local branch of Cruse, you will get the word out to the volunteers who see bereaved people every week, and you can guarantee they'll pass on a WAY leaflet if they have someone who fits the bill.

I can talk as often as I like to the Chairman of Cruse, but we really need to get the word out to people on the ground, around the country.

Likewise the police.

Every town has a police family liaison team – many of you have had your own FLO working with you following a traffic accident. And we need to make sure they know about WAY.

The same goes for hospices. Wherever there is a hospice, we need to make sure they know about WAY – but more than that, that they are prepared to pass on a leaflet or our phone number to a bereaved partner who is struggling.

So if you can think of someone who should know about us – why not ring them and ask if they do?

One of the biggest achievements of this year was the survey of members we carried out last summer.

A third of our membership replied – 500 people – which is a fantastic response rate. And those answers will guide our priorities over the next couple of years.

Some 99% of members said they would recommend WAY to another young widow – which is a brilliant endorsement of what we are doing.

We have chosen areas where we need to focus our work in the future, including dealing with new members, organising more events and improving our renewal numbers.

We have launched – this week – our new website.

The one we had before had been a massive improvement on what was there until 2007, but it had been designed in a way that made it extremely difficult to update.

This new site, as you can see, is colourful, positive and gives a really good idea of who we are and what we get up to.

It is built on a Wordpress platform, which means we can update the news as easily as you would update a blog entry, by just logging in.

We also have photos on Flickr that feed into the site, so we will have a good range of pictures for people to see.

The website is set to become a fantastic resource for potential members looking for support – but also for current members.

The other new development has been Facebook.

Dozens of our members got together on Facebook last year and created a WAY group. In fact they created three WAY groups – one of them for Scottish members.

Having explored the area of social networking it became obvious that we needed an “official” presence on Facebook – or at least somewhere that we could communicate with members. We now have it and our online community is

growing every day. I would urge you – especially if you are already using Facebook – to check out our group and become a member. It will help you to get to know other WAY members from across the country.

So, in summary.

We have more members, we are communicating with them more often and trying out new ways to reach members so they know of all the opportunities WAY is providing.

But, as always, there is still so much more to do.

I hope that after today some of you will come forward to join our team and help make WAY *even* better than it already is!

Thank you

The WAY Foundation

Charity No : 1072649

General Secretary's Report for 2009

2009 for WAY was a tough year; we suffered difficult financial times like any other charity or small business. Raising money was harder than ever, members struggle to find the cash to participate in holidays and more expensive events; whilst our costs remain the same, our income from donations was hit the general financial downturn. But it is not really money that WAY survives on, our need for money is limited and if nothing else our member fees keep us running. More than most people we all know that money means nothing in comparison to time, we all understand that time is limited, how valuable time is and how it is important to spend it wisely. And it is time that WAY needs more than anything, your time. As new members we need your time to participate in WAY events, SWANS and holidays, we are a self help group and it is the investment of time that brings rewards. And as your membership continues we need your time again to volunteer, organise events, answer telephones, call members, send out books, monitor SWANS, talk to the press and many more jobs. WAY does not just happen it takes hundred, thousands of hours of all of our time and 2009 has been as hard as ever to get hold of this valuable commodity.

So how have we spent our time and do we get good value, good value for time perhaps?

Well we are like a small business and many things are similar. We have to advertise and promote ourselves and this year Paul Hutt has once again done excellent work in promoting us at trade shows and conferences; and generally raising the profile of WAY, whilst Lindsey Black has put us on breakfast TV and in numerous newspapers and magazines with her role as press officer. We can not escape money and to raise it Justin Greenbank has been racing ducks and collecting mobile phones to name just two items in his efforts as fund raiser, whilst Susan Abberton has been a much needed strong treasurer to control how we spend our money in difficult time. Linda Heywood and the telephone team have continued to answer the many calls that come in asking for information about WAY; Linda will be greatly missed as she stands down shortly after serving WAY for many years in numerous different roles. Gemma Greenbank keeps our control of our membership and runs all the admin for WAY; and Helen Farr looks after our literature.

Many of these areas may not be visible to WAY members, but they are important to our future and they all need time spent on them.

Of course there are many areas that do involve you the WAY members, the WAY magazine organised and edited by Vicky Anning, the book loan scheme run by Sue Moynihan and today's AGM event put together by Theresa Gartland-Jones. Then there are numerous holidays, Centre Parcs continues to be massively well supported organised by Sharon Whitehead-Nawaz every October and the February trip to Centre Parcs run by Nick Kneeler, we also have skiing with ????, caravanning on Fathers Day run by Debbie Greaves and I am pleased to say there are too many others to list today.

During the past year we have invested much effort into our communications, apart from the magazine we now have a professional email service that is being used for regular member updates. This service will also be used for updating volunteers and will provide more reliable communications regarding renewals and contact with new members. Effective communication between the whole volunteer and member base is key to our future success and the work we have done last year will be rewarded this year. Facebook is another new venture for WAY, intended to complement

SWANS and offer both member facilities and an advertising media, Facebook is a marvellous opportunity and one we have great hopes for in the coming year. But it does not mark a move away from SWANS, which offers more specialised facilities particularly for members that can not get to events or meetings.

Currently we have about 80 volunteers and the vast majority of them will not be mentioned in this speech as they unfortunately do not get into the limelight. These volunteers do the hardest of jobs, the area contacts, probably the most important role in WAY. It is perhaps worth looking at our official aim as a charity, *to provide a social and support network to help young widows and widowers rebuild their lives after they've been shattered by the death of a partner*. This support is most useful in the local group where WAY members support each other at local events and meetings. This is the area where WAY most needs your time. Area contacts can only run successful events if people come along, a group can only become supportive if people spend time to contact others in their area and a group can only flourish if local members put some thought into what they want the group to do. An area contact can not do it all, they need others in the group to support them, our most successful groups are run by a team of people who share the responsibility. The more time we all deposit into WAY, the strong WAY will become and the benefits for all of us will be greatly enhanced.

Despite a difficult year WAY continues to be successful, in the majority of areas we have seen improvement, holidays are increasing, the magazine is looking better all the time and our press & promotions are excellent. But we need more time, more than anywhere at a local level to help run and organise local events and meeting. If every member organised one simple meeting per year we would have 4 events per day across the country. It does not have to be a holiday it can be a coffee in Starbucks for members who have dropped the kids off at school and have an hour to spare.

WAY is your charity; invest some time in it, organise, volunteer or stand for the committee.

THE W.A.Y. FOUNDATION

(The Widowed and Young Foundation)

CHARITY NUMBER 1072649**ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2009****INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**

	2009	2008
	£	£
Income		
Members subscriptions	9,045	10,230
Members renewals	4,590	10,455
Members renewals on Just Giving	12,950	
Donations	5,552	3,949
Charibands	0	209
Christmas Card Sales	60	392
Bank Interest	0	936
Gift Aid	2,437	200
Just Giving	0	1,545
Other donations	2,113	722
AGM	8,540	1,396
Holiday	350	1,680
Total Receipts	45,637	31,714
Expenditure		
Telecoms and Website	1,963	3,702
Advertising and promotion	9,916	1,031
Postage	1,578	3,110
Staffing costs	8,948	6,345
Printing & copying	642	4,403
Committee expenses	3,216	2,737
Christmas Cards		700
Grants to local groups	2,610	2,597
Holidays	2,032	2,342
AGM and other meetings	13,538	7,362
Insurance	1,074	1,069
Other	882	1,382
Just Giving	207	211
Total Expenditure	46,604	36,991
Net (deficit)/surplus for the year	-£967	-£5,277

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BALANCE SHEET

	2009 £	2008 £
CURRENT ASSETS		
Bank Current Account	19,627	10,689
Scottish Widows Bank Deposit Account	0	19,905
Lloyds Bank Fixed Term Deposit	10,000	0
	<u>£29,627</u>	<u>£30,594</u>
FINANCED BY:-		
Accumulated surplus brought forward	30,594	35,871
Net (deficit)/surplus for the year	-967	-5,277
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M.T. Smith

Martin Smith
General Secretary

Susan Abberton

Susan Abberton
Treasurer

John Pestell

John Pestell F.C.A., C.T.A.
Independent Examiner

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