

Rotary Presentation Evening: 'Santa Float' Donations Recipients – 20 April 2023

at the Mercure Bolton (Georgian House)

It was a pleasure one again to be invited to the evening on behalf of Westhoughton Community Network (WCN). It is a lovely and humbling evening when you see and hear from the local charities chosen to benefit from the generous donations from the Westhoughton public who greeted Santa and his elves as he toured the streets of Westhoughton for 2 weeks in December and spent a Saturday with sleigh bells a-ringing outside Sainsbury's. As ever the Rotary Club of Westhoughton is quite overwhelmed by the generosity of the community – this year receiving £5,640 in donations.

The evening begins with a meal and some catching up with friends, before organiser, Rotarian Jim Yates, did the introductions thanking in particular Kia for the car loan, Booths for storage of the sleigh, the volunteers for helping out in very cold, sometimes treacherous conditions – with special thanks to the local Guides leader elves! With Rotarians fewer in number and getting older, it is quite a demanding undertaking. The Mayor, Cllr. McGeown, was in attendance.

The format being that recipients are called up to be presented with their cheque and in their thank-you speech have an opportunity to tell the room a little bit about their charity and cause. It is a very humbling experience hearing what these mostly volunteers do, the passion they have and the importance of what this financial support means to them in terms of carrying on with their activities. The passion and emotion often coming to the fore. It was quite clear that the impact of Lockdowns and more recently runaway inflation has hit hard in terms of organisation viability, people getting involved, security of tenure and of course finances.



'Santa Float' recipients 20/4/23 | Photo by Phil Wood (RCW)

Recipients:

1. **Inner Wheel**
Established for the wives and daughters of Rotarians, the ladies not only support the Rotary Club but do charitable work and seek to develop friendships and interests for their own members.
2. **Remap**
Set-up up to engineer bespoke solutions to help the disabled to make lives better and easier, particularly children.
3. **Senior Solutions**
What was once 'Westhoughton Visiting Service', now a vital community support and social outlet for older people, with new initiatives such as their Warm Spaces, making a difference.
4. **Wednesday Club**
Social group which meets at Tempest Football in Chew Moor providing an outlet for older people often on their own.
5. **Kidz2gether**
Horwich-based charity supporting children affected by autism and autistic spectrum disorders: services include drop-ins, clubs, activities and events promoting social understanding and emotional and physical well-being.
6. **Bolton Dementia Support**
Provide high quality services responsive to the needs of people living with dementia and their families and accessible to every person who receives a diagnosis of any and all types of dementia in Bolton.
7. **Samaritans**
Charity that is on hand to provide support and a friendly, non-judgemental voice in times of dire need and stress.
8. **Friends of Westhoughton Station**
Begun in 2013, an impressive and popular project that through enthusiastic volunteers and weekend workdays has tidied-up and, with flora and various installations, brightened-up the train station. Local support much appreciated.
9. **Blessings in Disguise**
Children's charity raising money to provide a range of essential and special needs equipment, planned activities, family support and free life-enhancing experiences for terminally ill, disabled and disadvantaged children and young people.
10. **Prostate Cancer Support**
1 in 8 men will get prostate cancer! Higher risk if over 50 or family history. Charity to raise awareness of the disease aiming to minimise distress and save lives through early detection and treatment, and to fund more research into cures.
11. **Hog Haven (hedgehog rescue)**
These creatures are under threat from building and a lack of care and thought by humans. Voluntary local rescue centre looking after and rehabilitating any injured, underweight or orphaned hedgehogs. Seek to educate and make people aware of their habitats and habits. Please take care with mowers and strimmers!

12. **North West Blood Bikes**
Vital service using motorbikes to deliver blood supplies to where needed around the North West. Using volunteers riders, this speedy and mobile specialist delivery service saves lives.
13. **Fortalice**
Support and refuge service for victims of domestic violence trying to escape their abusers and make a fresh start, bringing some hope and respite for the women and children affected.
14. **The Guides Association**
Thanked for their help with the float. Busy organisation with several local groups providing an important social and development outlet for young girls through Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Ranger groups.
15. **Wingates Band**
World-renowned elite local brass band and local Westhoughton institution celebrating 150th anniversary this year. Mostly voluntary in make-up - musicians and support. Concerts and Competitions keep them going. Performing at Bolton Music Service event at Bolton Albert Halls on 26th April.
16. **Westhoughton Assist Service (WAS)**
Began as a Covid/Lockdown errands and food-parcel service; developed into a service supporting those in need and going through tough times – food, energy, clothing and even furniture. Advice service. Based The Hub. Grateful for support from community and local businesses.
17. **Derian House** (not present)
Children’s hospice caring for seriously ill children and young people across the North West - 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Bringing some brightness into the darkest of days for both children and their families.
18. **Bolton Hospice** (not present)
Provide expert care and support for local people facing life-limiting illnesses, and supporting their families facing the death of a loved one. An independent charity providing its services for free, supported by donations and its charity shops.
19. **Parkinson's Society** (not present)
Group offers friendship and support locally to people with Parkinson’s, their families and carers. Local group meetings and get-togethers for mutual support, social interaction and activities.

Rotary President Stuart Bailey closed proceedings, formally thanking everybody with special mention to the Westhoughton community. The new tracking app proving a great success in 2022, they will be back again with Santa in December.

Finally, cheque recipients assembled for a group photo.

A lovely evening, well done all!

And a BIG BIG thank you to the Rotary Club of Westhoughton.

WCN