

# News Release

25 May 2010

## **Stroke unit volunteers celebrate first anniversary**

A dedicated group of volunteers are making a big difference to stroke patients on Dorset County Hospital's Hardy Ward.

Thanks to their support, patients enjoy regular lunchtime social events, which greatly boost their confidence before they leave hospital.

The programme celebrates its first anniversary in June and the volunteers are keen to hear from anyone who would like to join them.

Co-ordinator and Senior Physiotherapy Assistant Jan Negus said patients really appreciate the chance to sit around a table and have a relaxing meal.

"Having held sessions with the stroke patients it was suggested that they would like to go to the day room on a regular basis and eat their lunch at a table with other people," said Jan.

"Some of our patients have difficulty feeding themselves. They felt sitting around a table with others on the unit would give them the confidence to eat out in public with their family and friends once they have been discharged from hospital."

Lunchtime volunteers Val Atkinson and Sally O'Shea sit and chat with the patients, help cut up their food if asked and generally make it a pleasant interlude to a hospital stay.

Volunteer Marylyn Holehouse holds cookery sessions with the patients. "Male and female patients love this activity and look forward to it every week," said Jan. "Marylyn asks them what they would like to cook and they all sit around the table laughing and chatting and it helps build up confidence in being able to talk to others."

Another of the volunteers, James Taylor, is a college student who plans to become a doctor. He comes in during his holidays to chat with the patients and help with group activities in the stroke unit's therapy garden.

Jan said: "The volunteers are such an asset to the patients and to the ward staff. It's a year since we started the lunchtime sessions and it really has worked well."

Anyone interested in joining the lunchtime volunteers should contact Jan Negus on the stroke unit on 01305 255164 or email [jan.negus@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:jan.negus@dchft.nhs.uk)

**ENDS**

**Photo: Volunteers Val Atkinson and Sally O'Shea are pictured with Jan Negus and patients on the stroke unit.**

**For more information about this news release please contact communications manager Susie Palmer on 01305 254683 or [susie.palmer@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:susie.palmer@dchft.nhs.uk) or Jan Negus on 01305 255164, [jan.negus@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:jan.negus@dchft.nhs.uk)**