

Smile around the Isle Sunday 27 May 2007

Congratulations to the 54 participants who took part in our annual sponsored walk, **Smile around the Isle**. On Sunday 27th May 2007, these hardy souls walked 10 miles around the beautiful Isle of Cumbrae to raise funds and raise awareness for the Bucket and Spade Appeal.

All the proceeds donated to the Bucket and Spade Appeal will go to help families whose circumstances mean they have the most to gain from the stress relief that a holiday can bring.



The picture opposite shows the Vice Chair Lila Sneddon, and some members of her branch taking part. Unfortunately the Chair was booked on a family holiday so was not able to take part. Lila said "how nice it was to see so many people give of their time to participate in the walk. We all live such busy lives and I know what a sacrifice it is to fit in just one more event in our busy diaries. However, we could not have asked for a more beautiful day. A very big thank you and also to all the staff from West Campbell Street who joined us in our walk



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and assisted with the organisation of it". Andy Douglas (member of Regional Committee) wished to mention that a "special thanks should go to the 5 members of the Scottish Young Members Committee (especially Daniel Robertson who travelled from the Shetland Islands".

In the meantime, branches can still donate to this worthwhile cause. Please contact either Eleanor Haggett or Kevin O'Neil Information Development Officer for more details.

Meet the New Chair of Welfare and Trustee for Scotland

I would like to thank the Scottish Welfare Committee for giving me the opportunity to introduce myself both in my role of the 'new' Chair of UNISON Welfare but also as their Link Trustee to the Board of Trustees.

My name is Maureen Le Marinel, I was born in a small village in Rufford a small village in Lancashire, and I am one of seven. I now live with my partner Michelle near Chorley in Lancashire; we had our Civil Partnership in September 2006.

When I left school I worked in sewing factory and then a photography laboratory, at 19 I joined the Women's Royal Army Corp as a Radar Operator following training I was posted to the Isle of Benbecula on the Outer Hebrides, and loved it. In 1983 I was discharged and following a short time unemployed I secured a job with Lancashire Constabulary as a Communications operator in one of the control rooms. I have been with the force for over 24 years. I became a NALGO Steward shortly after taking up my post and have been an activist for over 23 years.



My Trade Union history is

- Assistant Secretary of Police Sector Committee from 1987 - 2006.
- Branch Secretary of the newly formed Lancashire Police Staff Branch 2006 to Present Day.
- Member of the Regional Police Committee over 16 years.
- Member and committee member of the North West L&G Self Organised Group for over 16 years.
- Police Service Group Executive member from 2002 - Present Day.
- Member of the National Executive Council from 2001 - Present Day holding the Women's Seat from the Police Staff Service Group.
- Member of the Service to Members Committee, General Purposes Fund Committee, National Health and Safety Committee.
- UNISON Welfare Board of Trustees being elected Chair of UNISON Welfare in 2007.

I am extremely proud to have been elected the Chair of UNISON Welfare as I believe that the Charity is second to none in assisting our members and their families in hours of need.

I also look forward to working with the Scottish Welfare Committee as their Link Trustee contact with the Board of Trustees to raise any issues or concerns that they may have in the year between Annual General Meetings.

The Farepak fiasco, one year on

It is a year since Christmas hamper company Farepak collapsed. What was UNISON Welfare able to do?

150,000 savers lost £40m when Farepak went bust on 13 October 2006. Farepak was owned by European Home Retail, a company chaired by Sir Clive Thompson, who is a past president of the CBI.

Those affected included thousands of UNISON members, many of whom had saved £500 or more. Help from the official rescue fund amounted to 15p in vouchers for every pound lost, but UNISON Welfare was able to increase this to at least 50% or more for over 700 members who applied to our special fund for a grant.

UNISON Welfare was the only benevolent charity in the UK to mount such a response.

And has anything happened since then?

UNISON Welfare has jointly commissioned research with the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, based on interviews with UNISON savers, to evaluate the impact on their lives.

The full report is to be presented to Parliament in November, but research shows that:

- Farepak victims say they have not had compensation and that because nobody has been held responsible they feel they have not had justice;
- most of the savers were women who were being 'prudent' and used the scheme to manage household finances and paid a high cost as a result;
- many had saved with Farepak for decades and were given no warning that their savings may be at risk;
- some victims had been forced into a cycle of debt, despite being careful savers;
- many victims still want to know where their money went and want those who ran Farepak to be held accountable for the loss of over £40 million.

So what conclusions have the researchers reached?

Dr Basia Spalek of the University of Birmingham, who conducted the research, said: "The idea that Farepak savers could protect themselves from the company's collapse is clearly challenged by this research.

"Policy discussion should be focused on the long-term impact of financial harm and the appropriate regulatory responses, rather than the obsession with reducing consumer rights and company responsibilities."

Head of UNISON Welfare Julie Grant said: "Apart from the financial help already given to members, our efforts are concentrated on supporting savers in their quest for justice and ensuring they are better protected in future.

"More needs to be done to support and compensate victims of corporate financial mismanagement and fraud. Farepak has exacted an emotional and physical as well as financial cost on those affected.

"Services like victim support could have a role. But we want to see a regulatory framework in place that prevents events like Farepak from happening."

But what alternatives are there for saving?

There are many different ways for members to save. The important thing is to compare what's on offer and choose a method that best matches your needs and circumstances.

The Office of Fair Trading has a website at consumerdirect.gov.uk, which has specific information on saving for Christmas, added since the collapse of Farepak. For more general advice on savings schemes, including for Christmas, visit moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk, which is run by the Financial Services Authority.

Credit unions are run by their members for their members, and offer more flexibility than the banks or building societies - especially for those on a low income or with a poor credit history.

Some credit unions offer Christmas savings accounts where you cannot take your money out before November without notice, so you won't be tempted to take it out. You can also earn interest so your money will grow.

Members of credit unions with savings are protected by the Financial Services and Compensation Scheme, which is the same level of protection offered to customers of banks and building societies.

To find out if there is a credit union you can join, contact your local authority or visit www.scottishcu.org for the Scottish League of Credit Unions.

For more information about UNISON Welfare or an application form for financial help or a wellbeing break, contact UNISON Welfare welfare@unison.co.uk, tel: 020 7551 1620 or visit unison.org.uk/welfare.

Welfare care swung into action when Les took ill

By Eleanor Haggett

While attending UNISON's welfare Conference in Bristol earlier this year, Les Chalmers, the well known and respected welfare officer from Aberdeenshire, took ill with a suspected heart attack.

Fortunately for Les, Dave Knowles, a paramedic from West Midlands was also there. He quickly assessed the situation (accurately) and insisted that Les remain still while an ambulance was called.

The ambulance arrived and Dave reported his findings to the crew. These were quickly relayed to the waiting Emergency Team at Bristol Royal Infirmary. Within seconds Les was taken straight to the hospital emergency area.

On examination Les was informed that he had a blood clot and if Dave had not insisted that Les not move, the clot would have moved and been fatal.

I and Andy Douglas, another Scottish delegate, visited Les immediately he was admitted to the coronary care unit. Dave was still there. Les's wife and family were kept apprised of the situation and phoned on a daily basis.

When we had to leave, Sue Nash, Bristol Health Branch Welfare officer carried on visiting. The hospital staff made us feel very welcome and took the time to keep us up to date with Les's condition. The information was always honest and detailed - greatly reassuring both us and Les.

All staff displayed the highest degree of professionalism, commitment and skills which we relayed to the family.

"I am very lucky to be here," said Les of his experience. "I can't thank enough all those who helped me out and gave me support, especially Dave, who really saved my life, and Sue who visited me all the time I was in hospital."

Les also paid tribute to his Scottish colleagues, especially Eleanor Haggett and Andy Douglas, and to the Aberdeenshire Branch, who offered him any support necessary and sent him and his family all their good wishes. Les returned home just a week after his attack and needless to say, was back in harness within a few short weeks.

The Scottish Welfare Committee would like to thank all delegates who took the time to enquire and send their regards. Our sincere thanks also go to all staff at Bristol Royal Infirmary to Sue Nash and Dave Knowles. Such care, compassion and commitment does UNISON Welfare much credit.

On behalf of the Scottish Regional Welfare Committee may we wish you all a Happy Healthy and prosperous New Year for 2008.

Help us update our records

The Scottish Welfare Committee is currently updating their database of Scottish Branch Welfare Officers, so that they can communicate more effectively. If you would like to be kept informed of what's happening with the committee then please assist us by forwarding your contact details to:

Kevin O'Neil Scottish Welfare Committee Secretary UNISON House 14 West Campbell Street Glasgow G2 6RX. Tel 0870 7777 006 Email: k.oneil@unison.co.uk

Please include preferred postal address and if you have access to email, then please also include this.

Name

UNISON Scotland Branch

Address

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Email Address

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This bulletin is produced by UNISON Scottish Welfare Committee. For further details contact Kevin O'Neil, Information Development Officer, UNISON House, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow G2 6RX. Tel. 0870 7777 006 k.oneil@unison.co.uk