

LOOKS EAST

The Newsletter of the Rotary Club of Ipswich East - D1080 | 2025-26, Edition 9: 19th January 2026

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday 20th January at 12:55pm
Speaker meeting: Rob Adams - About Me (New Member's talk)

Menu: Scampi, chips and salad
D.R.: Bill Robinson & Robin Needham

Tuesday 27th January at 12:55pm
Business meeting

Menu: Chicken tikka masala
D.R.: David Knights & Nigel Farthing

Ipswich Bowls Club

CLUB OFFICERS 2024-25

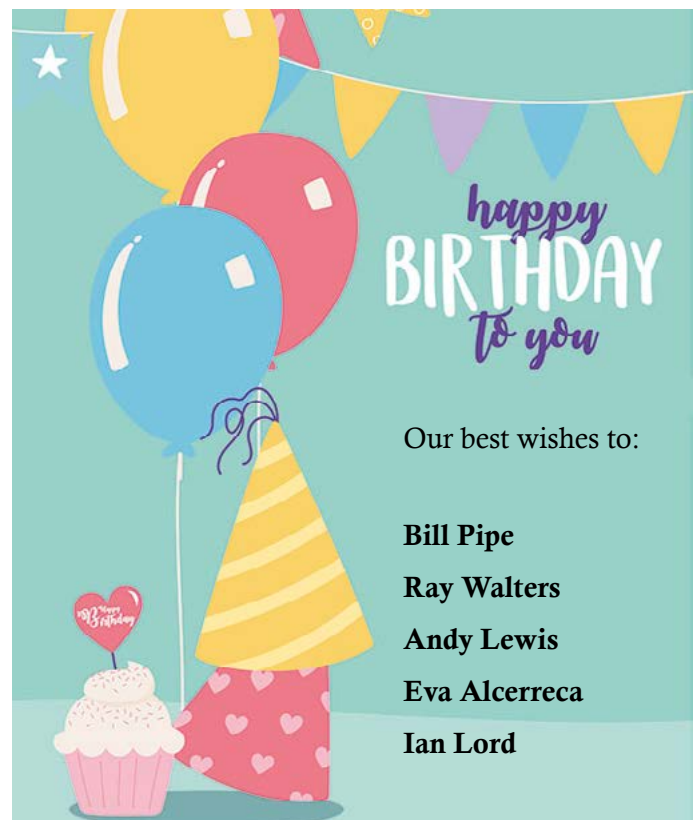
President Steve Flory
Senior vice-president Steph Mackentyre
Junior vice-president Eva Alcerreca
Immediate past-president George Woodward
Secretary Robin Needham
Treasurer Neill Keveren

Club service Steve Flory
Community service Andy Lewis
Foundation Bob Parker
International Liz Harsant
Vocational Ed Nicholls
Almoner Alan Forsdike
Environmental Lucy Trenchard

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MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT STEVE

Dear Members of Ipswich East Rotary Club,

As we head into the New Year, I wanted to take a moment to say thank you to everyone for what has been a truly great year for our club.

It has been wonderful to see such strong support and engagement, particularly at our lunches — with 35 attending over the past two weeks, it really shows the strength and spirit of Ipswich East Rotary.

I'm very much looking forward to 2026 and all that it will bring. I also know the club will be in very

safe hands when Steph takes over in the summer, and I'm confident the club will continue to go from strength to strength.

Thank you all once again for your continued support, commitment, and friendship. It really is appreciated.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy New Year.

Best wishes,
Steve

RECENT MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Craig Sennett - My Adoption and DNA

By Eva Alcerreca

On 6th January, we had Craig Sennett as our speaker, and we learned about his fascinating story of discovering his biological family kind of by accident. Craig was adopted by the Sennetts when he was 7 years old, after being fostered with different families for a long time. The Sennetts had fostered over 60 kids throughout many years, but decided that they wanted to go a step further with Craig and went for adoption instead of just fostering him.

He remembers the daunting day at the court when, at that young age, he was asked to make a decision regarding whether he wanted to stay with the Sennetts or not. Looking back on it, he realises what an important life-changing decision was put to him, and imagines how different life could have been had he said no to staying with them. As he put it, "Imagine if a child is faced with that decision, and that day the foster parents denied them something or they had a row... it is not a decision any 7-year-old should face." Luckily, nowadays there are many other safeguarding processes in place to ensure the child's welfare when he is put up for adoption.

Craig says he was lucky in that he found out he was not the Sennetts' biological child when he was very



President Steve and Craig Sennett

young, aged 5 or 6, and so he didn't go through the crisis many older children, or even adults, experience when they find out.

He never made an effort to look into his biological family, because to him, the Sennetts were his parents and that was all he needed. However, one day a few years ago his daughter Maddie asked him if he would be willing to take a home genealogy

test, because she was also curious to know about their origins, and he agreed.

What came from that was a new world of family history and the discovery of lots of relatives, most of which are in the Appalachian region of the US. He learned that his dad had been in the Armed Forces, based in Bentwaters while he was in England, that he has 3 half sisters, and about 176 extended family members. He also learned that his dad committed suicide many years ago.

All this information would be a lot to handle for most people, but Craig really took it in his stride and looked at it from the bright side: he now had a much bigger family than he would have ever imagined.

His newly found family in the US have been very welcoming, and he has visited them and taken part in the family gatherings they organise, and they are constantly in touch.

He concluded by saying he still feels and considers himself a Sennett, and although he is grateful for having discovered this new side of his history, the love and respect he has for the Sennetts is the most important to him, because they helped him become the man he is today.

It was a very interesting talk, and after letting Craig answer some of the many questions members had, John Barbour gave the vote of thanks.

Rob Hart - CEO of Genesis Orwell Mencap

By Bill Izzard

Ipswich East's connection to Genesis Orwell Mencap runs deep, so members were delighted to welcome CEO Rob Hart to lunch, and hear how this wonderful charity is doing.

Rob has been in charge for five years after moving from a career in construction. He is now building a different career and oversees this organisation that helps provide adult learning disability services. From the Genesis centre in Wright Road Ipswich, they offer day care services for adults with special needs, complex disabilities and profound and multiple learning disabilities.

Almost 190 adults are being assisted each week, and as Rob explained, that includes support in the home and community, help with day-to-day tasks, an evening social club and supported living. Rob outlined two of the best known of Genesis' services: the Green Bike Project and the Genesis Garden Furniture workshop. Rob told members how both of these projects work and how they are both profit generating.

Quite a few Rotarians have purchased a Genesis bench, table or bird box, with comments at the meeting including how well they have lasted, over 25 years in one case, and how well they are constructed. Following a question from the meeting, Rob explained how when Genesis's first took their



benches and tables to the Suffolk Show they were met with scepticism that the work being produced was actually made by the adults. (See Tony Baker's background words below for what happened next!). Rob also mentioned the charity provides its own transport, and members recalled how we have helped with sponsorship of its minibus.

Looking to the future, Rob said there is a continuous programme of improvements and highlighted how the skills kitchen, where adjustable height worktops will be installed, was just one example of how the charity continues to be as inclusive as possible.

Rotarian Tony Baker gave the vote of thanks and commented that he couldn't recall so many questions for our guest speaker from Rotarians at a lunchtime meeting.

The Genesis of Genesis

By Tony Baker

In the early 1990s, the Rotary Club of Ipswich East staged an event designed to promote charities in the local area. The lead figures from the club were Rotarians John Whyman and Alan Maylin. An attendee at the event was Graham Bailey. Graham was inspired by the event to start a charity for the benefit of people with learning difficulties and disabilities. I can understand that there was a catalytic reaction between John Whyman and Graham Bailey. Both were members of the fire service and John Whyman was always enthusiastic and positive with the ability to motivate people.

Graham Bailey started a small charity to support the families of people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Graham had a daughter who had both physical and learning difficulties and therefore he had a strong motive to provide help for the many families that were experiencing financial problems at that time. He founded Orwell Mencap under the umbrella of the Mencap organisation. Soon afterwards, he commenced the Genesis Project to produce high quality garden furniture. The project was located in first floor premises in Holywells, which entailed hauling equipment and materials upstairs then carrying finished furniture back to the ground floor level.

An opportunity arose in the mid-90s to take over extensive premises in Wright Road behind the Ipswich Transport Museum. The premises had been used as a furniture repository but had laid unused for eight years and had been subjected to vandalism. The premises were in a dilapidated condition. With the assistance of the Borough Council, County Council and with money from a European Fund and the Lottery, the project was put together. Graham with a small band of volunteers, by sheer blood sweat and tears, turned the premises into a site of excellence. The way was open to provide a wide range of services for people with learning disabilities.

Graham decided that it was necessary to expand the marketing opportunities for selling the garden furniture and therefore arrangements were made to hire a large stall at the Suffolk Show. The stall was staffed by people with learning disabilities and Genesis staff. Graham was devastated. The

furniture had sold well but a common comment from customers was that the furniture had been made by the instructors and the people with learning disabilities had swept the floor. Graham Bailey was determined to eradicate that perception.

The following year Genesis returned to the Suffolk Show with the furniture and the machines that produce the component parts. The woodwork workshop was stripped of the machines and they were transported by van and lorry to the show site where Graham mounted a working demonstration. It was an instant success with the noise and activity attracting people to the stall including Princess Anne, who spent considerable time talking the people with learning disabilities and with Graham. The demonstration was deemed to be Best in Show and Genesis received the Cup that year and for many more to come. Graham had succeeded in his desire to show that people with learning disabilities could make a contribution to our community. The icing on the cake was that Princess Anne agreed to officiate at the formal opening of Wright Road premises in 1999.

In 1999, the club decided to mark the event, by having a Millennium Project. A decision was reached to fund a Pottery at Genesis which was opened by President Mike Steward. The pottery continued for some twenty years and produced the Rotary Coasters that were presented to speakers at our Speaker Lunches.



President Chuck Cooper of the Rotary Club of Ipswich Massachusetts presenting Graham Bailey of Orwell Mencap Genesis with a cheque for \$1000 during the visit of the American club in 2002.



Ipswich East RC helped provide the Genesis minibus

President Chuck Cooper headed an exchange visit from Ipswich Massachusetts in 2002. He brought a cheque for \$1000 donated by the Americans to be used for charitable purposes. It was decided to fund a sophisticated sewing machine for use in one of the work rooms at Genesis.

As with many growing charities, there came a need for professional management of the organisation and a CEO was engaged. One of the first CEOs was our Rotary colleague Nino Serritello.

The Rotary connection continued in many ways:

- Inner Wheel tended the Sensory Garden with Joy

Harris and Mitzi Tyler leading the band of helpers.

- John Goodship was a Trustee for some ten years.
- Marleen Robinson was the Company Secretary.
- President Steve Flory attended Genesis meetings.
- Liz Baker's nominated charity as Chair of Inner Wheel in 2011 was Genesis and over £1000 was raised for equipment for the Woodwork Workshop.
- Many club members gave support in different ways.
- Many club members purchased garden furniture from Genesis.

It is pleasing to see that Orwell Mencap Genesis continues to go from strength to strength. It is an example of the many charities that the Rotary Club of Ipswich East has been able to nurture and support.

I apologise if I have failed to report a contribution of a member our club, but what is really important here is that our support of Genesis is just the tip of the iceberg. There are numerous other charities and good causes that have received similar if not more support from the members of the Rotary Club of Ipswich East.

Long may it continue.

Fire Station Tour

By Tony Baker

On the wettest and darkest night of the winter 12 Rotarians and partners braved the elements on Thursday 15 January to visit the Ipswich East Fire Station on Ransomes estate.

We were warned that if there was a 'shout' and the fire fighters were called into action there would be no one there to greet us but fortunately it was a quiet night and we had a very pleasant two hours at the Station. We were greeted by the 'White Watch' personnel (four male and 3 female firefighters) who gave us a comprehensive talk about their work and answered many questions before touring the building.

We were shown the accommodation they use whilst on duty waiting for a call, their uniform room with all their protective clothing and then a tour in small groups around the fire tenders. The



fire tenders are equipped with the most amazing array of equipment—from the variety of hoses and the cutting equipment to the ladders and the road signage used at the scene of a fire. Members



were given the opportunity to sit in the driver's seat of the vehicles but, despite some plaintive requests, we were not able to go for a drive with the blue light flashing.

It was a fascinating visit and we were incredibly impressed with the dedication and professionalism of the staff that we met. They are very brave people to do this dangerous work for a living.

And yes, they still get calls to rescue cats from trees, although their most recent request was to free a duck trapped in a drainpipe!



AROUND IPSWICH

Inner Wheel's Upcoming Trivia Quiz Night



Inner Wheel's next event is a Trivia Quiz, which will be held at Tuddenham Village Hall on Friday 6 February, 7:00pm start.

Food will be provided, but please bring your own drinks & nibbles. The cost is £15 per head, with all proceeds going to St Elizabeth Hospice. Tables of 6 preferably.

To book your table, please email rosej.watson@sky.com by 31 January 2026.

Inner Wheel's Annual Walk & Brunch

Photos by Steph Mackentyre



Thank You from Young Carers

Via Andy Lewis

We received some great feedback from the Young Carers Night Out organised by Dave and Mick. Dave received the following thank you note, and you can see some photos in the next page.

Wow! What a fantastic evening!

We can't thank you and all of the Ipswich East Rotary members enough for your overwhelming generosity and ongoing support in gifting this amazing opportunity to our young carers. Please could you share our sincere gratitude with your members.

A massive thank you for coming along and seeing our young people in action. It's always a pleasure to see you and Mick, and it was great to meet your President Steve Flory, and that he could come along and see for himself what your funding provides in the support of our young people.

We have received lots of great feedback from parents as well as the young people themselves, and I have added some of the feedback below -

One parent texted me - "Thank you for inviting H along, she has had a tough couple of months, and it was so lovely to see her smiling again, I can't thank you all enough!"

J told us before he left - "Thank you for letting me come to the Clip 'n Climb event, it was great to have some fun. I was a bit scared, but I made a new friend, and he encouraged me to climb right to the top, it was great!"

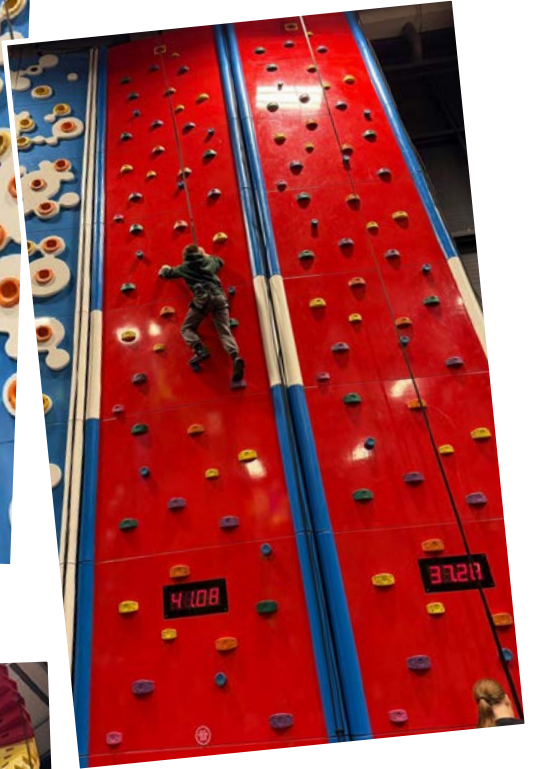
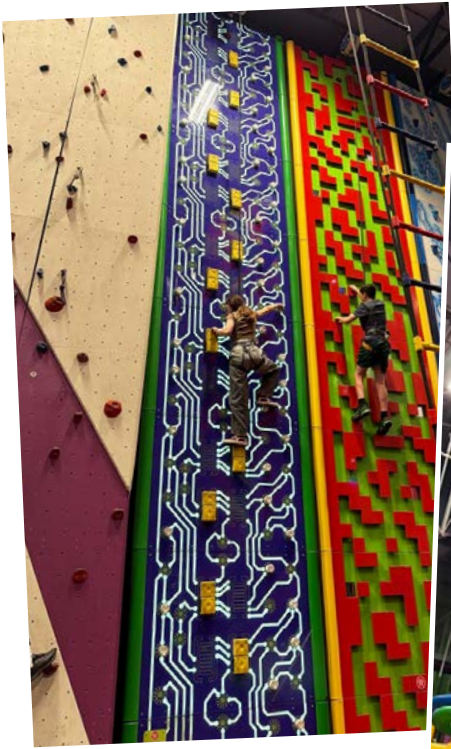
Another parent emailed - "Thank you to everyone who helped put this activity together. I always worry my daughter feels left out, but to see her confidence grow throughout the evening, and then talking about it all the way home in the car was the best feeling. Thank you again and have a great Christmas!"

R said - "I was so scared at the start because everything looked so big and I didn't think I could climb anything, but I tried and I did it! Thank you, I loved it!"

I have added a couple of photos taken on the evening as I thought you might like to show these to your members.

So from me, everyone at the young carers team and all our young carers you kindly help and support, have a wonderful Christmas, and our very best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year!

Sue Henry
Young Carers Adviser
Suffolk Family Carers



Ipswich East - From the Archives

By Tony Baker

In 1970, Rotary in Ipswich was booming. The Rotary Club of Ipswich had been chartered in 1923 and had reached the point where it was considered that membership was at an optimal level. It was therefore decided by the District Governor that a second club should be formed in Ipswich. The District Extension Officer, Bert Butler, persuaded local Rotarians Budge Burgess of Woodbridge Rotary Club and Jack Annis of the Ipswich Club to act as the local Extension Officers and to facilitate a second Rotary club being formed in Ipswich. The recruitment area was prescribed as being the east side of Ipswich as being either a place of work or a place of residence. Hence, the Rotary Club of Ipswich East was conceived.

John Mitson, a local solicitor, became the lead figure of the new club and he started the process of recruiting the members of the new club. He quickly recruited John Palmer, John Button's predecessor as Castons, and Hollis Drake, the manager of Lloyds Bank. It must have been a daunting task as it was necessary to achieve a membership of 26 to be a viable club and to be chartered.

Amongst the early potential club members were Jack Earwaker, Lewis Tyler and Micky Philpot. Jack was running an architect's practice in town and Lewis was the proprietor of a television business. Over the course of early 1971, twenty nine potential club members were identified. Dick Jeffery was recruited by Hollis Drake. Dick was working in his Opticians business in Aldeburgh at that time and committed numerous undetected speeding offences as he flew backwards and forwards along the A12 to attend lunch time meetings. Jack Earwaker

recruited Bill Pipe, who was managing the family furniture business, and Mike Steward who ran an electrical contracting business. Bob Dunnett, who was a garage proprietor in Woodbridge Road, and Richard Porter, the owner of a newspaper distribution business, were recruited by Lewis Tyler ably assisted by Micky Philpot. Tony Doncaster, father of Jo Banthorpe and Jeremy Doncaster, was a local vet whose partner in the practise was an active member of the Rotary Club of Ipswich.

The first informal meetings were held in the Golden Lion as prospective club members came together. An Inaugural Meeting then took place at the Golden Lion on 29 June, 1971, when the princely sum of £3.75 was paid for lunch. The club had achieved the goal of becoming a properly organised club with sufficient members to be a viable Rotary Club.

The Charter Presentation was conducted in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Ipswich, on 12 October 1971 when John Mitson was confirmed as the first president of the club. Arthur Nicholls, Ed's father, became the secretary and Hollis Drake became the treasurer. Twelve months later an inner Wheel Club was formed with Mitzi Tyler as the first president.

Club membership has steadily grown over the years and we will celebrate the fifty-fifth Anniversary of our charter in October as we continue the ongoing development of our club. We like to think of ourselves as the most active club in Ipswich, and Club Council continues to plan how that will remain so.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rotary Foundation Day Coming!

By David Chittick

Foundation Day is a celebration of the Rotary Foundation. This is an annual event and this year it is being held at Breckland High School in Brandon, 9:00 for 9:30AM start on Saturday 31st January.

All Rotarians are invited to come along and enjoy the day. Registration is required for logistics purposes. There are 4 ticket options that can be viewed on the website to the right.

The Rotary Showcase is comprised of tables providing information of successful Rotary Foundation Projects that local clubs have been involved in recently.



<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/rotaryineastanglia/1991844>

Rotary Showcase & Foundation Day

EVENT SCHEDULE

09.00	Main arrival and registration
09.25	Please take your seat
09.30	Introduction & Welcome
	Presentations on:
	A Global Grant
	A District Grant
	Brief updates from Clubs in the Project Showcase
10.30	Coffee Break
	& visiting the Project Showcase Tables
11.00	Presentations on:
	Peace scholars
	Global Scholars
	End Polio Now
	Foundation Fundraising
	Foundation Awards
12.20	LUNCH
	& visiting the Project Showcase Tables
13.30	Choice to attend either workshop – finish at 15.00
	GRANT QUALIFICATION WORKSHOP
	CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP WORKSHOP



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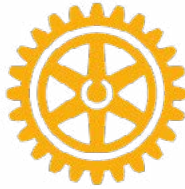
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- ✓ Promote relaxation

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SUFFOLK
Community
Foundation



It's RYLA time!

The date for RYLA is set so Ipswich East needs to find, register and support candidates ASAP. There are 25 places to fill as the course is again being run jointly with District 1070.

Dates: **22nd to 29th August 2026**

Place: **Grafham Water Centre**

Cost: **£860.00 per delegate**

Age: **18-26 years** (applicants must be at least 18 years old before the course commences)

Please let Ed Nicholls or Secretary Robin know of anyone who would like to attend this fantastic course.



ROLLING CALENDAR

Date	Event
19th January	Evening social: Curry night.
20th January	Speaker meeting: TBC. Partners welcome. Details and registration via Wild Apricot.
27th January	Business meeting. Details and registration via Wild Apricot.
31st January	Rotary Foundation Day. Details on page 11.
3rd February	Speaker meeting: Douglas Rintoul - New Wolsey Theatre. Details and registration via Wild Apricot.
6th February	Inner Wheel Trivia Quiz Night. Details on page 6.

Date	Event
10th February	Speaker meeting: Nick Hulme - CEO Ipswich & Colchester NHS Trust. Details and registration via Wild Apricot.
17th February	Speaker meeting: Keith Miller - About Me (New Member Talk). Details and registration via Wild Apricot.
24th February	Business meeting. Details and registration via Wild Apricot.
31st March	Fifth Tuesday: Elective Orthopaedic Centre visit. Email Bill Robinson if interested.

At a glance: If you want to get an idea of what we have going on when, make sure to check out the calendar page on our website: <https://www.ipswicheastrotaryclub.co.uk/calendar/>

You will be able to see what kind of events we have coming up, and you can also check against that when organising activities to avoid any clashes.

DUTY ROTARIANS AND LUNCH MENU

Date	Duty Rotarians	Menu*
20th January	Bill Robinson Robin Needham	Scampi, chips and salad
27th January	David Knights Nigel Farthing	Chicken tikka masala
3rd February	Alan Forsdike Catherine Forsdike	Shepherd's pie
10th February	Martin Westlake Alison Baldry	Cumberland ring
17th February	Karen Finch David Chittick	Chicken wrapped in bacon

If you're unable to be a duty Rotarian, remember it is your responsibility to look for a replacement, and please notify our Secretary Robin as well as Steph Mackentyre of any changes.

*Dietary requirements/Vegetarian option available upon request, please contact Steph Mackentyre at info@inviewpublicity.co.uk

ONGOING COLLECTIONS

Remember we have an ongoing collection of ring pulls, as well as ink cartridges, which you can give to **Andy Lewis**.

The ring pulls are sent to the Philippines so that people there can make crafts to be sold, which helps them support their families.



John Button is still collecting postage stamps (they can be used ones), so if you're lucky enough to still receive any post with those, keep them and make sure to give them to him.

The Ipswich Rotary Club is collecting spectacles, which get forwarded to SpecSort York. After sorting and grading them, they're taken to Africa. Please contact Peter Rogers at: peterrogers327515@gmail.com.



UPCOMING PROJECTS UPDATES

We have a few projects and activities coming up, and volunteers are (usually) welcome. Please contact the relevant club member and join in!

- **Greener Ipswich** has created a series of planters in Ipswich TC which need watering. The plan is to get rehabilitated prisoners to do this work in the longer term. Help is needed to drive a van with a tank of water in the back around the town to do the watering. Please contact Andy Lewis if you can help.

- **FareShare** - are in need of van drivers and stores people 2 hours per week or per month. Please contact Andy Lewis if you can help.

- **Community Action Suffolk** are looking for volunteers and to come to our Club to talk about the work they do. Please contact Andy Lewis if you can help.

And that's it for today!

Just the usual reminder: to send photos, news, articles, stories, announcements, or any material (yes, even jokes) for publication in the newsletter, please address them to:

iercnewsletter@gmail.com

The deadline to receive items for publication will be the Friday prior to the next issue (so for the next issue, that will be 30th of January. Needless to say, I would be very grateful if members kept the deadline in mind for a timely publication of materials.

— Editor

STAY PAWsiTIVE!



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