

Cuppa and a chat mean so much

By Ben Ireland

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A BAND of intrepid volunteers has created a social hub for old people in Carlton for almost 30 years and is now in the running for a community award.

Age Concern, which has a cafe, day centre and lunch club nestled among its charity shop in Carlton Hill, is among the contenders for this year's outstanding community project in the Pride of Gedling Awards.

The awards are run by Gedling Borough Council and the Post to celebrate pillars of the local community.

Secretary Derick Ferguson said: "We provide companionship for people who might be lonely or isolated. If they want to pop in, they can have a cup of tea and a chat or spend the day with us."

The centre has 50 volunteers helping to sort clothes and

items in the charity shop, making tea, coffee and snacks, cooking lunches and organising activities. Up to 24 people can attend the day centre and there is space for ten more at the lunch club.

"We are in an ideal location,"



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Derick Ferguson

said Derick. "We're right in the heart of the shops and on the bus route. People can pop in while they do other things, like pop into the butcher, the bakers or the greengrocers."

Age Concern also organises trips to see rural Nottinghamshire and recently took mem-

bers to Southwell and Gunthorpe for an evening out.

"Younger people take these sorts of trips for granted," said Derick. "But for people who otherwise would not get out, it makes a very special afternoon. One couple told me, 'the two days we spend with you make our lives worth living'."

The centre teamed up with New College Nottingham, where students performed movements to go alongside stories told by day centre visitors in a stage production.

Derick puts the success down to the commitment of the volunteers, adding: "They are all so enthusiastic and come up with their own ideas."

Shirley Ellis, 81, of Frederick Avenue, Carlton, makes sandwiches on Wednesdays and Thursdays, which are often the busiest days of the week.

She said: "When I first started, you were lucky if you got tea and toast but it's grown into a successful tea bar. It's a hub. There's always someone there who listens to you, which is important."

"I've had a lot of fun volunteering, I don't think people realise how much fun you can have by giving up your time."



Guests and volunteers at Age Concern in Carlton enjoy games. Pictured are Jean Higgins, left, and co ordinator Tracy Pearson.

PICTURE: ANGELA WARD



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