

Thistle Foundation launch new wellbeing centre with Tai Chi display



Two Edinburgh women who are recovering from depression and teach Tai Chi classes in their community launched a new wellbeing Centre in the Capital earlier today.

Liz Deeming and Margaret Hendry were practising their Tai Chi in the sunshine just beside the site of the new Thistle Foundation Centre for Wellbeing to announce the opening of the Centre.

The £3.5 million Centre will benefit people living with chronic health problems and disabilities and will also be open to the wider community in Craigmillar.

At the Centre thousands of people will have access to activities like Tai Chi, Pilates and gym facilities as well as free mindfulness and lifestyle management courses that focus on exercise and nutrition as ways to improve wellbeing.

The new centre will extend to 1500 square metres and will be located on the site of the former Tudsbery Centre, a disused clinic at the heart of the old Thistle estate, and is set to open its doors in early 2016.







Every year the Thistle Foundation directly supports hundreds of people with chronic conditions from depression to diabetes through their lifestyle management courses, their gym and activities like walking and Mindfulness courses and indirectly supports thousands more.

The charity has found many people who live with long term conditions spend up to 10 years before accessing the support they need to manage life better with their condition. And that people who struggle to cope with physical problems also suffer from anxiety and depression.

Liz, from Leith, is one of four volunteers who lead the Tai Chi classes after coming to the Thistle classes because she

was struggling with health problems.

A year and a half ago, Liz was feeling isolated and down. This week Liz, 35, will be a qualified Tai Chi leader and since she started coming to the classes she has also started a University course part time.

When she first came to Thistle Liz was suffering from depression. The former support worker has generalized anxiety disorder and was struggling with a stressful job.

Liz said, "Tai Chi really helps with anxiety and depression. It chills me out, even when I am teaching. Before I came to the classes at Thistle I had no confidence. I was really low. It has helped me make friends and that's a big thing for me. I was so isolated before. It has given me confidence to do other things like going to University."

Liz and the Tai Chi volunteer leaders have started sessions in other venues in the community to help give others free access to the sessions, including a popular class for over 60s, which picked up an excellent achievement award.

Margaret, 59, has been a volunteer in Thistle's gym at their Craigmillar base for two years and now she teaches a class twice a week.

Since doing a lifestyle management course at Thistle Margaret has turned her life around. Her healthier lifestyle and new outlook also helped her stop smoking.

Margaret said, "My back pain has eased as a result of being more active. Training as a tai chi teacher has helped a lot and it feels good to be helping others.

It will be great to see lots of new people getting access to the classes and all the other Thistle courses and activities at the new Centre!"

Over 70 years after the original Thistle estate was built to

help veterans, their new Wellbeing Centre will be a fully accessible community hub and the official headquarters for the pioneering charity to continue its work both locally and nationally.

Around 1600 people come through the doors of the current Thistle building every month.

Diana Noel Paton, Chief Executive at Thistle Foundation said, "As a health and wellbeing charity, we support people to rebuild their self confidence, to take control over their lives and their conditions, cope better and be able to contribute to society more – reversing a downward spiral of ill health, improving wellbeing and cutting the costs of acute health care."

"Building a new facility on the site of the old Tudsbery Centre will help us continue to support people to live the life they want. It is hugely important to us to keep our historical links and connections with the estate and the community – and the new Centre will ensure we can support the regeneration and growth of the wider area as well."

Tai Chi classes at Thistle are on Monday and Wednesday lunchtime. Check out the website for class times or call 0131 661 3366.

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