

Project designed to give Hibs fans a chance to remember loved ones returns next month



A project designed to give Hibs fans a chance to remember loved ones has met with great success, with more than 500 fans taking part.

GameChanger worked in collaboration with NHS Lothian's Health Promoting Palliative Care Project to deliver a 'To Absent Friends' event at Easter Road stadium in November 2016. The event was part of the national 'To Absent Friends festival which takes place in the first week of November each year.

Supporters were given the chance across two home games to sign specially designed pages with messages, illustrations and photographs of those they had lost, and hundreds took part.

The documents created, four large portfolios, were today handed over to the Hibernian Historical Trust to form part of the Club's collection of club documents and artefacts.

Because the project was so well received, supporters are being given the opportunity to take part again this season, with the upcoming matches against Dundee on November 4th and St Johnstone on November 18th, when the pages will be available in the home stand concourses. They will also be available for those unable to make matchdays in the ticket office and clubstore. The Club is grateful for the support of Paramount Printers for the project.

Leeann Dempster, Chief Executive of Hibernian, said: "We are delighted that this was so successful. The Club is often contacted by supporters who have lost loved ones, seeking some

kind of way to remember them, and Absent Friends gives us a real and appropriate way to do that. The portfolios will be on display so that supporters can see for themselves the messages and tributes, and they will then be kept carefully by the Historical Trust.”

Jeanette Byers, Project Support Manager for the Health Promoting Palliative Care Project, who helped organise the Absent Friends event, said: “We were amazed and very moved by the overall response. It shows the way in which football is a unique part of people’s lives. The important part the football club plays in the lives of families and the community was obvious from many of the messages. We are very pleased that Hibernian has engaged with us because this has shown how people can come together and share their personal experiences of grief. Talking about bereavement, death and dying helps us to recognise what is important to us as individuals. It highlights the importance of planning ahead: Make a will, arrange Power of Attorney, have ‘that’ conversation with those close to you. “Further information can be found at <https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk>

To Absent Friends’ is a people’s festival of storytelling and remembrance. The festival is curated by the Scottish Partnership for Palliative care and supports opportunities of all kinds to remember, celebrate and tell stories of loved ones who have died. (www.toabsentfriends.org.uk).

The Health Promoting Palliative Care project is supported by NHS Lothian, Marie Curie and Edinburgh & Lothian’s Health Foundation.

Hibernian fan Julie Roberts, who lost her father to the asbestos-caused cancer mesothelioma, has written the foreword to the portfolios. Her “Life with Hibs – Julie’s Story” was told in a video by the Club, and touched thousands.

Julie said: “I know how important the Club has been to my

family, and continues to be, and how many of our memories are tied up here at Easter Road. I hope supporters will again make use of the opportunity to remember their own Absent Friends.”