

Food Facts Friends buy their own van

The charity Food Facts Friends in Penicuik has just taken delivery of their new Citroen Berlingo van which they say will be a massive help in collecting stock for the community shop from local supermarkets.

Mark Wells the project manager and founder of the charity raised around £3,000 with a sponsored walk, and Chairperson, Reg Dunbar, set up a Go Fund Me page. Little by little the charity raised almost £20,000 in the past year to buy the van from their local Arnold Clark dealership and put it on the road.

Arnold Clark have a community fundraising team and when the charity approached them for help they offered assistance in two ways – money in the form of a grant, and also discounted prices on vehicle hire until they were able to buy a van. It was the local Environmental Health team which had stipulated that the charity's volunteers could no longer use their own cars and vehicles, and that the charity should have its own.

Reg also wrote articles for the local press, but it was his daughter-in-law who works for Sodexo who came up with a donation of £1,000 from her employers which really got the fundraising off to a good start.

Reg said: "We had the £1,000 and then someone just walked into

the community shop and donated £750 which meant the fund was really growing.

“Robertson Trust donated from their van fund as well as the local charity, The Oracle Trust.

“The van cost £18,300 and it cost around £1,000 for insurance.”

Having their own van is a saving for the charity even though it will require maintenance. Until they had their own, Food Facts Friends were hiring vans at a cost of around £800 a month – and that was a discounted rate from Arnold Clark.

Mark and Reg explained that they are both very grateful to businesses which have been extremely generous with donations in kind, including Macsigns based in Mayfield who provided the signage on the van and also at the shop on John Street, and Edinburgh Liners who fitted out the rear compartment all at no cost to the charity.

Reg said: “Everyone is very helpful to Mark. He is very persuasive but he is also the sort of guy who works hard and people recognise that. They are willing to help the charity because of that. I encountered it when he told me I would only have to go to two or three meetings a year, which has turned into a few hours every week.”

Mark said when he set up the charity in 2016 he did not envisage working as he does now. He explained that in the week prior to us meeting the charity had provided food for 90 people in one day which he thinks is quite sad, but you can tell that he is proud that the organisation is able to step into the breach and help local people who need it.

The pantry which opened in January has around 120 members who come in to stock up from the shelves filled with surplus food and flowers from local supermarkets including M&S, Lidl, Greggs and Costco.

The number of people using the charity's services is growing, particularly in the face of rising energy bills, and so the worry is that there will not be enough stock. If you are able to then the charity will always welcome some tinned goods or other long life food for the food bank.

Reg also pointed out that the charity needs many new volunteers. He said: "We need a few more volunteers. A lot of them do a good few hours, but if we got a few more that would be a great help to everyone. Mark is here almost every day and he really needs some time off."

Anyone who wishes to help the charity can apply by email foodfactfriends@gmail.com



L-R Mark Wells Project Manager and Reg Dunbar, Food Facts Friends. Photo: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam
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Food Facts Friends community shop at 42 John Street.
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Food Facts Friends new van. Photo: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com



Chiara Mann (16) . Photo: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam
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Reg Dunbar Chairperson of Food Facts Friends. Photo: ©
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