

Chairman's Speech, AGM 2009

It seems incredible that it is now 10 years since we launched the Lawrence Home Nursing Team in a packed Chipping Norton Town Hall in May 1999. Last week, during our annual street collection, we made available on our stall all the original documentation. It is always an inspiration to reread the original blue print, written by Dr Martin Lawrence just three weeks before he died, but it was also very sobering to read about our earliest meetings and the immense goodwill shown by so many that the LHNT should be a success.

The most overriding and pressing issue was that we had to be sure of raising between forty and seventy thousand pounds every year into the future to ensure our long term viability. This was a daunting prospect and one which most people simply said could not be achieved. We were all understandably reticent about starting something so potentially worthwhile; only to eventually have to face the very realistic prospect of having to wind it up, because it was not financially sustainable. Many were at that inaugural meeting and I was given the job of presenting our plans to the several hundred people in the Town Hall. I remember being big on vision and enthusiasm but rather less certain on concrete practicalities. There was heartfelt goodwill and support from everyone and at the end of the night we had raised close to one thousand pounds. I remember Cicely Maunders saying that if this was the start she was determined to make sure that all would be well... and Cicely is never defeated!

Ten years on, no one present at the Town Hall that night could have imagined how successful we would be. Over the past decade we have established a stable workforce of magnificent nurses and have achieved a sustainable and stable financial basis. We have been able to offer our service and meet the needs of nearly every patient referred to us and now stand as a beacon and model for the shape of community palliative care for the future. Martin Lawrence would have been immensely proud of what we have achieved.

Jenny Nolan has been our nursing co-ordinator from the start. It is a very demanding role and nationally the turnover of similar services is high. Jenny has a fantastically pragmatic, practical and reassuring approach; so essential to families and patients. She has achieved so much for us. We now have 18 nurses and tremendous goodwill and commitment from them. We have all the support we need and are working increasingly closely with other related services to bring a wider range of options to the care of our

patients. The nurses are our public face and do so much to ensure we achieve the highest possible standards.

Our work is only made possible by the unstinting work of our fundraising group headed by Nikki Knott and with the immense support of Lesley Stobart. Again Nikki has been on board from the start and is completely tireless in her commitment to raising funds and organising events. The Carol Concert at Ditchley Park this Christmas was an excellent example of the exceptionally high quality events that she puts on and the enthusiasm she can generate. Nikki has said so often how exceptional Lesley Stobart is in supporting her; as a relatively new trustee Lesley's contribution has been outstanding and invaluable.

We continue to have support from the community and it was a wonderful surprise that the "Nortonians" put on an excellent concert in memory of Robert Brain, all proceeds to us. The evening raised a good four figure sum and illustrates the initiative shown by people to raise money on our behalf. We hugely appreciate such events and do encourage people to support us in original and innovative ways. Our supporters, spearheaded by Jill Mavin, clubbed together this year to produce an excellent cookbook which has been a great success. We continue to aspire to the creation of smaller geographical fundraising groups to support Nikki and her team. We would love it if people could volunteer to make this a reality in the near future. Cicely Maunder is amongst our most energetic and effective fundraisers. We are so pleased that, despite an exceptionally difficult year, she remains so committed to us and we thank her for all her support over the years.

Robin Coates is our treasurer and does the tremendous, but often unacknowledged, job organising and managing our finances throughout the year. Although we are no longer brand new a steady income remains vital and being a local charity we continue to rely heavily on the local community as our major source. We have made leaving a legacy to us very simple and would like people to carefully consider this option, as over the years this has been our most valuable source of income. I remain amazed and deeply appreciative of the wide range of places and people from whom we receive donations.

I am sorry that one of our original Trustees, John Cutter is standing down this year. He could not be with us today but sends his apologies. At the very beginning he immediately gave us his support and time by volunteering to be a Trustee. As a successful businessman he has offered some very useful contacts and has been helpful with advice and support at various times. We wish him all the very best for the future. I am delighted that Dr Rosemary

Williams has agreed to become a trustee in place of Dr Peter Davison and that Jane Cannon is going to take over the nursing trustee role vacated by Rosemary Moss last year. Both have been involved with the LHNT during the past 12 months and we are extremely grateful to them for committing to support us. In addition Dr David Edwards from Whitehouse Surgery and Dr Helen Bayliss of Charlbury Medical Centre have agreed to attend Trustee meetings with a longer term view. We greatly appreciate this medical interest from two of our key practices.

Unfortunately, our guest speaker tonight Valerie Stangoe, End of Life Co-ordinator for the Oxfordshire PCT had to send her apologies and could not be with us tonight. We will be having a Q&A session to replace this. Nationally we are moving closer to a community based palliative care programme and in the near future PCTs will be obliged to organise such services. We look forward to working with Valerie and her team to ensure that this is supported throughout the county. Jenny Nolan and I have had a number of meetings with senior officers at Katherine House to help them with their recently launched community service. It is great to help them after all that they have done for us over the years. At the end of March we had our Commission for Social Care Inspection and again did extremely well.

As we move into the next 10 years we can be proud of what we have achieved but also reassured that our model of care is likely to be the gold standard that is aspired to nationally. As the End of Life Strategy is rolled out I am keen to support others in achieving the quality of care we can provide. As ever our core and simple ideals remain at the heart of all that we do. In developing for the future we wish to work with other organisations, both locally and nationally to integrate additional services into our core role.

I so appreciate the tremendous support that we are receive.

Dr Jonathan Moore