**CENTREPIECES AGM 2017 Held on 4 July 2017 at The Learning Centre, Bexley**

**Attendees**

Councillor Eileen Pallen, Guest Speaker

Isabel Losada, Patron

Andrew Grieve, Chair of Trustees

Mike Ellsmore, Trustee and Finance Director

Geoff Norris, Project Co-ordinator

Other Trustees 4

Guests 6

CIO members 21

A full list of attendees is held by Centrepieces

**AGM BUSINESS ITEMS**

1. **Centrepieces’ Chair of Trustees, Andrew Grieve**, welcomed everyone to the meeting
2. **Councillor Eileen Pallen** said that she had been a supporter for many years, and thanked Centrepieces for the invitation to speak. She is pleased that Centrepieces has agreed a new 5 year lease of The Lodge with Bexley Council. Mental health is currently on the national agenda, and needs more discussion and funding to move away from its image as the Cinderella service. Princes William and Harry talking about their own experiences have helped to remove the stigma felt by younger people. The quality of work achieved by Andrew, Mike, Geoff and the other trustees and volunteers is outstanding, and she expressed gratitude and thanks for what Centrepieces can offer to local residents.
3. **Apologies for absence** None
4. **Minutes of last AGM** Agreed as accurate
5. **Chair of Trustees report**

The Chair’s report had already been circulated and was on the website. Andrew welcomed Isabel Losada as the new patron. He thought Centrepieces had made real progress this year and thanked Geoff Norris for his huge time commitment and effort, and all the volunteers including trustees for the workshops, exhibitions and admin and financial support. Everything done for Centrepieces is entirely voluntary.

Pat McKinnon is a new volunteer who has made a film that will be a real contribution to promoting Centrepieces and its work. It is still a work in progress, due for completion soon. Centrepieces is indebted to Pam for her efforts. She is hoping to generate positive connotations around mental health and to take away the stigma felt by many. Recent comments by the royal family will contribute to this. The film will reflect the evolution of the charity. Funders can see what they are supporting and how we harness creativity. It will also attract volunteers, whose numbers have grown over the last year. Feedback on the film will be welcome including interpretations and perceptions, what is lacking or needs changing and which sections have the greatest impact.

The new website is finally up and running and includes a large gallery of artwork. Andrew thanked Cecilia and Christine for today’s catering. He informed everyone that Isabel Losada had donated some gifts of her book 100 Reasons To Be Glad, which she will sign on request.

1. **Finance Report and Accounts**

Mike Ellsmore informed the meeting that Centrepieces had had a good year. Receipts had doubled, and the level of donations was high. Reserves were up from £11,000 to £18,000. The financial position is stable and the charity can go forwards with confidence. The new lease of The Lodge gives security for the next few years. Gift Aid has been set up to maximise the value of donations. The main challenge is to deal with additional running costs of The Lodge under the new lease, but the message is upbeat. He thanked volunteers Jean Lyons and Annie Greywoode for their support in managing the finances.

1. **Co-ordinator’s report**

Geoff Norris told the meeting that his job was to ‘steady the ship’ and move it forward with the new ideas generated by volunteers, artists and trustees for workshops and fundraising. Fiona Barlow and friends recently held a silent auction of artwork at Chislehurst Golf Club and raised £2,000. Karen Larkin held a garden fundraising event in Eltham, and raised £800. Well done to both. Christie Cassisa has ideas for a partnership with Hall Place. This paves the way towards a stable, vibrant and autonomous charity with a high level of creativity. He thanked all the volunteers and welcomed Isabel as our new patron.

1. **Appointment of trustees**

Andrew Grieve stepped down as Chair, as required by the constitution, but was proposed again by Mike Ellsmore with several seconders. No new trustees are standing for election, and none are retiring. The existing trustees including the Chairman were re-elected en bloc.

1. **Any other official business**

None

**SPEAKERS**

1. **Isabel Losada, new patron**

Isabel said that it was a privilege to be asked to be the first patron of Centrepieces and to be at the AGM. She had given a lot of thought to Centrepieces and mental health. One in four people have mental health issues during their lives, but who are the three in four who don’t? Everyone has challenges – very few people are 100% physically healthy – but why does mental health have a stigma not experienced by the physically unwell? We all have to work at our mental health every day, and some challenges are greater than others.

Isabel’s mother and grandmother had died by the time she was 19, and she found herself alone with no family. She had to look after herself mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Her interests and focus are in things positive, creative and nourishing, to fill the mind. She has always been involved in the arts as an actress and dancer, and a writer about happiness and well-being. Her book, The Battersea Park Road To Enlightenment, is about happiness and what makes you happy and well-adjusted. Recovery is about maintaining well-being.

Talking cures are not always much fun – you talk to one person for a long time and do not always see improvement. People need to feel loved – Centrepieces puts colour on a canvas and artists can express their story through painting, sculpture and creativity. They can express themselves in other ways than words and rather than be lonely or sad, receive love and support from a group of people who talk and laugh with them. Centrepieces gives people a reason to get up, develops their skills and allows them to produce outstanding work. Centrepieces is a fantastic way of improving mental health and she is proud to be its patron.

Andrew Grieve thanked Isabel for her speech and said it was clear that she understands what Centrepieces is about. He endorsed her concept of well-being and positivity.

1. **John Exell, Artist**

John has been involved with Centrepieces since its beginning 18 years ago and has seen many changes. He thanked all the volunteers, without whom Centrepieces would not exist. He used to be a keen sculptor and ran a breeze block workshop but lost a leg 18 months ago and now concentrates on drawing. Artists can be a bit crazy. Some are outsider artists, untrained with mental health issues, other are trained but understand others’ problems. Centrepieces offers opportunities for therapeutic art, not art therapy.

1. **Fiona Barlow, Volunteer**

Fiona described how she had had counselling for anxiety because of a number of problems in her life. She found it difficult to make decisions but knew what she needed; people to share her problems with who could support her. She was referred by Re-Instate to Centrepieces. It was magical to her to see people drawing and smiling.

At Centrepieces she felt she could do things; there was no intimidation and no-one who said ‘you can’t do that’. She had experience as a teacher and with social media, and knew she wanted to be part of Centrepieces. It gave her a sense of purpose and for her it was important how she felt when she left the Lodge – she could achieve a lot, it was a safe space, there were no labels, people aren’t judged, you can talk or not and there is no over-emphasis on mental health. She has exhibited at Capital Arts in Eltham and worked with Karen to lead workshops. She feels that she has come home and that she belongs to something, with a group of people who care about each other.

1. **Diana Donkor, Volunteer**

Andrew introduced Diana by saying that he was always reassured when she was in the office, as he knew that everything was ok. Diana explained that she had started at Centrepieces a year ago when she wanted to come back to work after her four children had grown up enough. She was looking for something to belong to and found Centrepieces on the BVSC website. She finds it an amazing place, and she is always in the background working hard and getting on with things. She is still here now because of the people and the place. She loves coming here every day to work, and it has given her back more than she expected in return for her commitment. She thanked everyone at Centrepieces for the opportunity given to her.

1. **Christie Cassisa, Artist and Volunteer**

Christie said she had enjoyed listening to the other speakers with their theme of ‘belonging’. She has her personal view of what a mental condition is. Her father had anger issues and they led a spartan life with no boundaries given. She had to find her own way and was always looking for a place to belong. At art college, she was understood, but felt lost when she left because people did not understand her. She had a breakdown and was admitted to hospital but couldn’t express herself in words or talk to anyone but could draw – doodles, doors, and other things that depicted how she felt.

At that pointed she knew she wanted to go back to painting, and felt able to be an artist. She didn’t want her life to be grey and monotonous, there had to be more than that. Only she could help herself. She found Centrepieces by chance and immediately saw messages from the art and uncomfortable images. Geoff calms everyone down! Now there is a creative team with energy and spirit. Her workshops help others to come out of themselves in the same way that she did. She showed the meeting a group texture painting made at her workshop – it broke the idea of what art is; it had colour, memories, enjoyment; it allowed people to express and reach inside themselves. It was painted outside The Lodge, about memories with the theme of summer. If people find painting fun, then confidence comes with it. They encourage and understand each other, and no-one is an outsider, or depressed, or in the minority, without family.

1. **Film**

We watched Pam’s new film about Centrepieces, which featured many of the artists and volunteers who had been involved over the years, and everyone was invited to give feedback. Andrew thanked Pam again for making it. It will be available on the website when finished.

**AWARDS**

1. **Jackie Grieve Inspire Awards**

The Jackie Grieve Inspire Awards were established in 2016 to recognise outstanding contributions to Centrepieces and as a lasting memorial to Jackie, a Centrepieces artist, who died of cancer.

This year’s winners:

**Trevor Whiting**, for outstanding artistic development

**Karen Larkin**, for outstanding personal development and creative leadership of workshops

**Jean Lyons**, for outstanding financial management of the project

**Diana Donkor**, for outstanding commitment to the project and excellent arts administration

Bouquets of flowers were also presented to Denise Tarrant and Fiona Barlow in recognition of their leadership of workshops this year

1. **Closure of meeting**

Andrew Grieve closed the meeting by declaring it a great success and thanking everyone for coming.