

u3a members share their experiences for Loneliness Awareness Week

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Members share the impact that u3a can have on alleviating loneliness.



*Saxon Shore u3a member Marian (centre) attending her u3a creative writing group*

June marks Loneliness Awareness Week and this year, the theme is connection.

The u3a movement brings together people with time to spare in local, online and national communities where they develop their interests and learning. For people struggling with loneliness or hoping to make new friends, it can make a huge difference.

Sam Mauger, CEO of the Third Age Trust, says, "The u3a brings people together so that they can find new communities and new friends. For those times of life when we struggle and feel alone, when we have moved to a new area, or have been bereaved or newly retired and are looking for a new beginning, the u3a is a place to start. "

One of the members who has benefited from the community within u3a is Marian, who joined Saxon Shore u3a five years ago. She says, "As we get older, it becomes harder to meet and form new friendships, and more so when one has to move to a new area away from existing friends. This is the situation I found myself in at the age of 60 as a result of my marriage falling apart after 40 years.

"Never having lived on my own was a huge change for me and something that I did not cope well with at all. I knew I needed company of some sort and, despite feeling depressed and worthless and all sorts of other negative emotions, I managed to pluck up courage to look up and contact

my local u3a.

"And that's where it all started. I joined a crafting group. Then I heard about a family history group starting up so took the plunge and joined that as well. And I have never looked back! I belong to half a dozen groups as well as going on various organised outings.

She continues, "My circle of friends and acquaintances has been steadily growing. From first walking into the meeting hall and not knowing a soul, I now find there's not enough time to chat with everyone that I've got to know since I first joined my u3a nearly five years ago."

There are 1,000+ local u3as across the UK where members can join specific interest groups to explore topics as diverse as Egyptology, painting or walking cricket. There is also online activity - both locally and nationally - that can connect members who may not be able to attend face-to-face meetings.

Jane has been a member of Edinburgh u3a for seven years and recently, has found that the online activity of u3a in Scotland connects her with a wider community.

Jane explains why she joined the organisation, "My partner had died the year before and I was looking for new opportunities. Initially I joined a poetry group in person and I had a very full life with things other than u3a activities.

She continues, "During the pandemic, as a physically disabled person, my life narrowed to Zoom-orientated interactions. I am slowly venturing out, but I can see that in-person activities will not feature heavily in my life for a long while.

"I wouldn't regard myself as lonely, because I have embraced the opportunities that u3a has to offer, and I am in effect busier than I was pre-Covid. My three main activities with Edinburgh u3a and Online across Scotland are three poetry sessions, a month, a weekly French conversation meeting, and almost daily Laughter Yoga sessions. These are all on Zoom."

Find your local u3a, or join u3a online today and become a part of a movement of 400,000 members who connect together through learning. [Join u3a.](#)

Find out more about [Loneliness Awareness Week](#) on their website.