Judy Sarssam – Freedom of the Borough Supporting Statement from Cllr. Neil Dallen

Epsom & Ewell Talking Newspaper (EETN)

Judy is the leading light for Epsom & Ewell Talking Newspapers, a free local news and magazine service for Visually Impaired residents of the borough, which has provided blind and partially sighted people in the Borough with local news and information fortnightly for over 50 years.

Judy was involved in EETN long before I became Mayor in 2018.

Judy leads a happy group of Volunteers who have a recording Studio at Swail House and are very proud of their completely free service which has been running for over 50 years. During the pandemic this same local team of dedicated Volunteers produced the EETN from their homes.

The complicated procedure required careful management and organised deadlines, to enable the free service and free postal distribution to continue.

Every two weeks, Visually Impaired People receive a wallet containing the Talking Newspaper on a memory stick, for which the charity can also provide an easy to use audio player.

People with a visual impairment often feel isolated and lose confidence to navigate the world outside their familiar home surroundings.

Judy Sarssam, Chair of EETN and herself visually impaired has said that being unable to read any longer is a huge loss. Happily audiobooks are available but unless the visually impaired person is computer literate the whole world of print is not accessible.

Conquest Art

Judy is the President and a trustee of Conquest Art which is a National Charity which provides art groups locally for individuals living with disabilities or long-term health issues.

She actively promotes the charity and has been heard on BBC Radio Surrey talking about the charity and its aims.

Conquest Art aim to help people who live with disability or long-term illness by providing Conquest Art groups around the country and encouraging many more people to come and join them. Their group members find fulfilment through joining in, whatever their level of ability and disability, and experience a sense of achievement and satisfaction from exhibiting their artwork.

Everyone is encouraged to create from their imagination, develop their own style and work at their own pace in a friendly, non-competitive atmosphere. This is important,

as a person’s disability can sometimes affect their level of creativity but many who initially doubt their abilities are surprised at the results they achieve.

Using their simple methods, newcomers can soon get that first line or image on the page. From there they can develop their skills and try new ideas with help from the team volunteers. For members with particular needs we can provide specialist equipment such as head pointers, scented pens for the visually impaired or specially adjusted easels.

Again, Judy has been involved for many years and reminisces about Ursula, the Founder, who asked her many years ago, to try to steer Conquest Art, as much as possible, within the bounds of her ethos.

Summary

Judy Sarssam is an incredible lady who, despite her sight disability, has enriched the lives of many hundreds, if not thousands, of local residents of Epsom & Ewell through her dedication to both the Epsom & Ewell Talking Newspaper and to Conquest Art.

Her voluntary service and community leadership shows that Judy Sarssam has indeed rendered eminent service to the Borough of Epsom and Ewell and would be a fitting and well deserving recipient of the freedom of the Borough.