

Hafal Road To Recovery Campaign Exhibits Pembrokeshire Talent

Hafal's Road to Recovery Campaign took place in Tenby last week, hoping to raise awareness and break the stigma that is often associated with people who suffer from mental illness.

Hafal, meaning equal, are Wales' leading charity for people with serious mental illness and their carers. "Hafal Pembrokeshire's Recovery Programme is a modern approach to dealing with mental illness, empowering clients and families to take control of their lives and achieve recovery. Hafal is managed by its members, people with experience of serious mental illness and their families, drawing on years of experience." says Hafal's Bethan Lynam.

The Salvation Army provided a venue and refreshments where Denise Clements said: "I worry people who struggle with mental health issues are often forgotten, we wanted to show our support, everyone matters".

Bethan Lynam and Hafal Volunteers organised the campaign, where 309 people signed *Road to Recovery* postcards containing a message on key campaigning issues. Amongst these visitors was High Sheriff of Dyfed, David Pryse-Lloyd saying: "I was very pleased to be invited. It is good to see what is going on, especially as it is something that one would not necessarily know about."

The High Sheriff visited exhibits, including the *Road To Recovery* microbus, currently touring Wales, and enjoyed an organ recital performed by Katerina Mikuszka who said: "I'm delighted both by the exhibition and the fact that I'm playing for such a friendly audience. I dedicate this recital to my family, especially my father, 86, who's in hospital."

Another talented artist exhibiting work was Rita Carter. "I was so moved by Rita's painting "Details of a Welsh Love Spoon", representing the intertwining of a family facing mental health issues." reports Sharron Hardwick.

Jewellery, card making, poetry and excellent pottery exhibits were on show, with photographs by Hafal's camera club members. Gail Collins was proud of her three year old granddaughter's photographs, part of the exhibit.

Eight year Hafal volunteer Brenda said: "It's as if something is taken away from people as they face mental illness. Here we see people coming in, gaining confidence. It's like a new gift of creativity is born, replacing what is lost."

Tracy Rodway, who led art workshops said:“We're here to raise awareness about people with mental health problems. We all have talents. Hafal helps people focus on their talents, developing a new way of life, providing constant encouragement.”

Pembrokeshire COAST (Creating Opportunities and Skills Team Alliance) exhibitor, Steven Barnett shared: “Hafal prepare participants to build confidence and skills. Once they are ready to progress, they come along to COAST, where we help them gain further skills, preparing them for volunteering, training and work.”.

Dave Smith from Hafal's new *Expert Patient Trainer Project* said: “With Comic Relief 's three year project grant to develop a training service, and nine people on our induction course, this is a rolling project. Our training gives a voice to guide and influence the future of mental health services and reduce stigma.”

Hafal's campaign demonstrates their success in providing vital services to many local people. For more information visit: www.hafal.org , call Tel: 01834 844177 .