

# *Dover Counselling Centre says Goodbye to Janet Johnston* 17

by Merrill Lilley

**O**n 16th October I attended a gathering at the Counselling centre to mark the retirement of Janet Johnston and to welcome her successor, Paul Atkinson.

In her speech Janet said she wanted to thank all those who had supported her dream to create a generic counselling service for South East Kent in 1988. Obviously the centre aimed to continue to provide a service for those affected by the Zeebrugge disaster and the Deal Barracks bomb but to extend the service to support anyone struggling with emotional difficulties related to more individual disasters within families.

In particular she thanked, for their support over 15 years, Dover District Council, Dover Harbour Board, P&O, Hoverspeed and their parent company Seacontainers, Kent County Council and Health Trusts.

She said that the reality of what the centre had become had exceeded her dreams. Its commercial services now covered Kent and beyond. Its community services which were set up for Dover, Deal and Sandwich now served many more people who came to Dover from all over Kent, especially if they needed support following trauma. Sixty or so counsellors covered the county in thirty venues for the commercially contracted work and thirty of these also worked out of Dover. There were six supervisors for the counselling and administration team, ten people who provided training to organisations and eight psychological debriefers.

The centre had a board of ten directors, all volunteers. Two had been directors since inception, Michael Krayenbrink and Bill Moses, the current Chairman. Of the others, Pat Milner was a fellow of the BAC&P (British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy), Claudine Nutley was the

director of Kent University's Counselling Course, Pam Brown, a retired academic and sculptor, was the Chair of Fund Raising, Bob Fautley, retired Chief Inspector of Police, who was in charge of the coroners' team following the Herald disaster, Penny Brown was from Christians Together in Dover and Ann Gilham, the company secretary. The admin. team was composed of people who are amazingly committed to their work and most of them had experienced tragedy of one sort or another. Janet said that one customer in particular, Mac, had ensured that the quality of the Dover Counselling Service was known to all Health Trusts across Kent. She found the day an emotional one and said the transition was confusing. She intended to continue her commitment to ensuring the survival of the centre and would be helping there one day a week now that she had given up the bigger responsibility into the capable hands of Paul Atkinson, her successor. Her role would be to obtain more contracted work and support fund raising efforts.

Speaking to the assembled guests she said she hoped they would continue to be helpful. The financial needs of the Centre would increase from January 2003, when the six years of National Lottery subsidy ended. The notion that counselling was provided by volunteers should be scotched. The demand was great, with 220 new referrals each week. Counselling was a profession that, for most counsellors, provided their only earnings, although much ancillary support and equipment was provided by volunteers and donations.

Janet ended by asking for any suggestions for potential new customers or ideas for fund raising and thanked everyone, once again, for their support.

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