



health campaign

Helping to 'Energise' carers

LAUGHTER rings out from the small room in Charlestown's Energise Centre as people sit down to a game of bingo and a cup of tea.

The group, made up of about 20 carers who look after disabled or sick friends or relatives, meet for two hours every week. For some, it is the only time they get to themselves.

But in 2004, Carer Support Worker Sue Hinder decided to start the project to help local carers of all ages get a bit of valuable 'me time', while providing essential emotional support.

Angela Greenway, 44, of Kersal, looks after son Charlie, 16, who suffers from severe attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and mood swings.

Sue said Angela was a "mental wreck" when she first attended the group. But she is now the group's main fundraiser, and has started regularly attending her local gym.

"I am now starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel," Angela said. "Charlie's in college now and he's not as bad as he was, but I still have my



problems with him. The group has encouraged me. I have passed my MIDAS course, so I can now drive a minibus, and have also passed a first aid course."

Ann Johnson, 60, from Weaste, cares for her 38-year-old son, Roy, who is partially sighted, has a brain tumour, mobility problems, and needs 24-hour care.

Ann - who also suffers from thyroid problems herself - heard about the group from the Citizen's Advice Bureau, and has been attending for about eight months.

She said: "What gets me down is that I have to think for Roy. It's too much. But when I can talk to somebody, it's like something's been lifted from me. You know you are not on your own and everybody is so support-



FROM the left: Ann Johnson, Angela Greenway and Vivien Monk

ive to each other. I was getting depressed. But now I feel more confident in myself."

Vivien Monk, 60, from Charlestown, has cared for her husband Philip, 52, for the last eight years after his vertebrae was damaged in a bus accident. But 18 months ago, she herself had a stroke, and now has limited mobility on her left side.

"We help each other out," she said.

"I started going to the group in 2004. Sue is always there for advice. We would be lost without her."

The group, set up with New Deal for Community (NDC) cash, offer acupuncture sessions, counselling for carers and their families, as well as the day trips out to Blackpool, the Trafford Centre, and Bury Market.

Attendees even get the chance to have a much-needed pampering ses-

sion at Pendleton College.

But the group, whose current funding will only last until July 2009, faces an uncertain future. Angela, together with other group members, has managed to raise around £800 by holding tombolas, a car boot sale at Salford precinct, and an Elvis night.

Ann said: "The Government is saving money by not paying these carers - they need to look after them."

For more information, contact Sue Hinder, CHAP (Community Health Action Partnership) Carer's Support Worker, Energise Healthy Living Centre, 3 Douglas Green, Salford, M6 6ES, or call 0161 743 0088.



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