

Dedicated Carers Given A Day Out In The Gardens



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PEOPLE who spend their lives caring for others were given a free day out just to show how much their unpaid dedication is appreciated.

The National Garden Scheme's Mountain Ash at Newton Linford opened its beautiful gardens to give family carers a much-needed break from the constant pressure of their caring role at home.

They were given a guided walk by the garden owners and chatted with other carers, meeting new and old friends and benefitting from peer support, while enjoying tea and cakes in glorious natural surroundings.

Many of them had met on Zoom through the pandemic for peer support sessions, but this was the first opportunity to meet each other in person.

One carer said: "It's a lovely stunning garden. We've been on Zoom sessions together through Covid, but seeing everyone face-to-face is fantastic."

Another said: "Getting together in person with friends I've only met on Zoom calls and seeing this beautiful garden has been a real treat. We've been waiting for something like this for a long time."

The visit to Mountain Ash was part of a special programme of visits around the country. It followed a National Garden Scheme survey which found that 87 per cent of people responding to the survey said that having access to a garden or outdoor space during the lockdown had helped them relieve stress.

The days out are also being organised to help mark the National Garden Scheme's 25 years of support for the Carers Trust and unpaid carers.

Over that time, funding from the National Garden Scheme has helped the Carers Trust support about 438,000 unpaid carers a year through its network of partners, including The Carers Centre Leicestershire & Rutland.

In the past year, donations from the National Garden Scheme have been used to provide emergency grants to an estimated 18,000 unpaid carers, helping them to buy otherwise unaffordable items such as fridges, washing machines and respite breaks, and helping carers cope with the impact of the lockdown.

Kirsteen McVeigh, from The Carers Centre Leicestershire & Rutland, said: "The past 18 months has had a really negative impact on carers' mental and physical wellbeing, many of whom were already exhausted and stretched to breaking point by the pressures of caring for a loved one even before Covid arrived.

"We have been supporting carers throughout the pandemic with phone and online services, and although they have proved extremely beneficial, nothing quite beats being able to meet up in person – and being outside in such a beautiful garden environment is a wonderful added bonus!

"This visit wouldn't have been possible without the garden owners welcoming us to their home. We thank them for providing our carers with a relaxing and enjoyable day."

STRESS-BUSTING TREAT ALLOWS PEOPLE TO MEET