



News Release

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39 Southend Veterans trip-it to Chelsea

This summer, 'SSAFA Southend Veterans' Club' travelled to The Royal Hospital Chelsea on their very first day trip, giving the veterans many opportunities for reminiscing, laughter and catching up with old forces friends.

The club, which is run by Michele Everett, SSAFA's Divisional Secretary for Southend & Rochford, was set up in January 2016 and now has 75 people attending – 39 of whom attended the London outing.

Supported by five incredible SSAFA volunteers and with two wheelchairs at the ready, the troop who went to London consisted of 39 veterans. Some of whom were Royal Marines, two Artic Convoy veterans (both 92 years old) and two from the local Royal Artillery Association.

They met the coach at 9.30am on 26 July at The Royal Naval Association club on East Street, Southend, where the local SSAFA office is based. They then made their way to The Royal Hospital Chelsea, returning at 7pm, making it a long but enjoyable day for all.

Whilst at Chelsea, the club were taken on a tour of the grounds and the Royal Hospital, meeting Chelsea Pensioners for a story and a hand shake, with their slap up lunch of fish and chips or chicken and chips taken in the mess hall.

SSAFA Southend & Rochford division funded the coach and lunch; however everyone paid their own £5 entrance to The Royal Hospital Chelsea. The charity raised the funds for the day out by holding a charity golf day back in June at Ballard's Gore golf course. Whilst they were in Chelsea, they met up with Alistair Sword, the Chelsea pensioner who was a guest at the recent golf day.

It is hoped that with further donations, SSAFA can expand the Veterans' Club and put on more trips and support those that have already given so much.

SSAFA volunteer and Southend Veterans' Club founder Michele Everett says: "Some of our veterans have dementia, some terminal cancer, and we wanted to give them a fantastic new memory to talk about for years to come. Sadly, for some veterans it may be the only time they leave Southend this year and we at SSAFA Southend & Rochford wanted to show them that they are worth it!

"We all had such a great time, but the best part of the day was to see the veterans enjoying themselves with lots of smiles and laughter.

"Members of the club chatted to many of the Chelsea pensioners who were so welcoming to us, with their shared sense of humour being the lasting memory from the day.

"Some of the veterans even managed to contact friends who are Chelsea Pensioners at the hospital before the visit and arranged to meet them after lunch, which was so wonderful.

"On the coach home, the veterans said it reminded them of days out that they had had years ago. The atmosphere was an extremely happy one and then they even surprised us volunteers by asking when the next day out would be! Good on them!"

To donate:

To help keep your local veterans smiling, you can donate vital funds, games, musical equipment or your time to the SSAFA Southend Veterans' Club. Please contact Michele at the local SSAFA team on 01702 463 113 or email southend.ssafa@btinternet.com

About the club:

The 'SSAFA Southend Veterans' Club' is the brainchild of Michele Everett, a SSAFA volunteer from Southend. The weekly club, set up only seven months ago, provides local military veterans with a place to relax and socialise. The Armed Forces veterans, along with widows and widowers of veterans, share stories, play games, have a sing-a-long and enjoy some well-deserved home-made meals with endless mugs of tea.

Funded purely by vital, public donations, the club takes place at the Royal Naval Association on East Street in Southend-On-Sea, every Thursday afternoon from 12:00hrs – 16:30hrs. It is open to Armed Forces veterans of all ages.

Every Thursday, a homemade two-course lunch is provided at 1pm sharp, prepared by Michele Everett and the other SSAFA volunteers. After lunch, veterans are able to chat, play cards, games, darts and pool or get the guitar out, which usually ends in a group sing-along of old songs.

SSAFA Southend works locally with social workers to identify lonely or vulnerable veterans and the charity's volunteers aim to help those in any way they can by doing home visits and assessing their needs.

To become a club member:

To become a club member and attend the club each week or to enquire further for a relative, friend or member of your community, please contact Michele at the local SSAFA team on 01702 463 113 or email southend.ssafa@btinternet.com to register your interest. Proof of service is required for veterans and proof of family service is required for military widows or widowers.

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About SSAFA:

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity (formerly known as the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen & Families Association), provides lifelong support to anyone who is currently serving or has ever served in the Royal Navy, British Army or Royal Air Force including reservists, and their families.

Each year, our professional staff and network of more than 7,000 volunteers help some 60,000 people, ranging from World War Two veterans to the families of young servicemen and women wounded or killed in Afghanistan.

For more information visit www.ssafa.org.uk and follow us on Twitter: @SSAFA .

About SSAFA Southend & Rochford Division:

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