



## A Star is Born

At 12.10 pm on Wednesday March 25th at the Sunrise Club Meeting four members stepped forward and volunteered to run a new 'User Group' or as we prefer to say 'Union' to represent the Customers of Slough Mental Health Services. The name of this union: "Union of the Star" or US for short.

The founding members of our union are:

Nigel Oliver: Chair  
Rosie Evans: Vice Chair  
Angela Kidd: Treasurer  
Kamran Khan: Secretary

Following the announcement a vote was taken and 89% of Sunrise Members present supported the new group. It was agreed that members of the group would attend Sunrise members meetings to keep in touch with the views and concerns of our members. This is not the end of our story but a fine beginning, we salute the members of Sunrise, first branch of the union.

Well that was the news, but some of you may be wondering where the name came from. Well as some of you may know, the orange star is the symbol of the mental health department at Wexham Park and possibly other hospitals. The women's movement has the female symbol, the gay movement has the pink triangle, but the mentally ill have had no symbol until now. All the names we are called are



derogatory, 'User' being one of the worst. We who have slept in the 'house of the star' (psychiatric ward) are united by the colours of our minds, we are the union of the star. The full name abbreviates to US which has a wonderful feeling of unity and togetherness - "if you've got a problem talk to US". It should be noted that people without problems can talk to us too - we'll need all the help we can get.

It was the doom of SMHUG to lose touch with its people. US will not make this mistake, we will establish branches at other centres, other groups and in the community. These branches will email their members concerns, their decisions, their news to our website where action may be taken swiftly without waiting for a monthly meeting - so we will keep in touch with our people wherever they are.

The website will also inform all branches of any news, meetings or negotiations we may be involved in and the results thereof. It was

the doom of SMHUG that its people knew not what it did. The world wide web shall know what we shall do. This paper and word of mouth shall speak unto the webless.

Where do we start ?

Number 1

**Don't Cut Sunrise !  
Don't Shut Sunrise !**

It is a simple task to allay the fears that Thursday closing has caused. The management need only make a written declaration that their will be no further cuts to drop-in services signed by their head of department and our members will stop feeling nervous and insecure.

Number 2

It's time they stopped calling us 'Users' - none of us call ourselves users and if we called a stranger in a pub a 'User' we might get punched in the face or at least start an argument.

It's an insult, we don't need that, so lets not take it.

I suggest we insist on being recorded at LIT meetings as 'US members', 'Star Members', 'Stars' or 'Customers'.

The first step on the road to happiness is to be happy with yourself, sometimes you must forge a new image to make this possible.

## A Vision of The Future

Our purpose is to obtain for our members a fair deal - justice. We ask no more than any other group in society, we seek equality. We ask for bread, peace and land - A meal at our centre (which we're prepared to pay for!), the right to relax in peace and safety and not be forced into the community against our will, our own centre - a piece of land to call our home. The old, the homeless, the physically disabled, those with learning difficulties, racial groups, alcoholics, drug addicts, criminals, any minority you can think of have these things - all we ask is equality.

As we face life's challenges we learn the ways to deal with them. For instance we may get a scary letter telling us we need high rate DLA to get a bus

pass. We ask a lot of people before we find out we can get a bus pass with lower rates of DLA provided we have a letter from our care manager / doctor detailing our disability. Once this fact is known people should not have to go through the whole process again. They should not have to re-invent the wheel. The union website shall have a database of Handy Hints and this and any other useful facts our members may discover shall be freely available to all. By sharing our experiences we can make life easier for each other.

Other features of the website could be an online art gallery, poetry section, anything our members want to suggest.

The management should not think it our purpose to

overthrow the Trust and the Council and establish a Mentalist Republic.

If they are prepared to be honest, treat us like adults and listen to what we have to say we will try to build with them a mental health service that will be the envy of all Berkshire. We do not seek the impossible, we seek the best possible deal for our members.

As the union spreads and new branches are formed there will be opportunities for social events and sporting tournaments between branches. Pool, Darts, Bowls whatever we want. The sporting facilities at Sunrise have been used for similar events for the disabled. We can't be all work and no play or life will get dull.

## Mike Paxton Remembered

On Mike's 60th birthday Reverend Allen Walker who led Mike's funeral service blessed Mike's commemorative bench in the grounds of Sunrise. We celebrated his life with fine weather and a buffet lunch.

We who knew him shall not forget.  
All that he built that was later destroyed  
We shall build again  
Today we seized our destiny  
In our own hands  
He would have liked the bench  
He would have loved what we did today  
We can do no more to honour to his memory  
Than to continue his work  
And strive for justice for our people.

Ron Habgood, much loved character of Sunrise, remembered in SMHUG for his thundering speeches, died last week. He roared what we were all thinking. He was noisy but he was right. Rest in peace Ron.

Remember the dead but fight for the living !

