

Features

Meet the 'Pink Ladies'

Two years ago, Suzi Rose and her pals set up the Speen Supporters' Group to raise money for hospice charities. Since then they have raised £15,000 and done much to get rid of the idea that hospices are places of doom and gloom. Rachel Sixsmith reports.

FOR Suzi Rose and her friends in the Speen Supporters' Group, the colour pink is more than just a symbol of femininity.

For these twelve determined women, pink represents their positive approach to cancer – a disease that has affected all of them in some way.

Suzi explains how she and her friends became determined to raise the profile of hospices – where cancer patients are treated – and which are often misconstrued as being full of 'doom and gloom'.

"We are aiming to educate people because the common misconception is that hospices are unhappy places when in fact, the people who work in hospices have a very strong sense of humour – ensuring that their patient's lives are as full of quality as possible."

Pink is a continuing theme for the Speen Supporters' Group, which was formed in May 2001, when Suzi and her friends became aware of the plight of local hospices strug-

gling to raise necessary funds.

Since its formation, the Speen Supporters' Group has raised around £15,000 for five hospice charities, including the South Bucks Day Hospice in Amersham Hill, High Wycombe, and Iain Rennie Hospice at Home, which brings nursing support to patients in their homes.

'The common misconception is that hospices are unhappy places'

Suzi explains: "One of our first events was a supper for the locals in Speen, which included an informative speech by a representative from each of our chosen charities. We learned that the hospice movement, above all, improves the quality of the limited life of patients coping with terminal or lifelong illness, supporting the families and relatives emotionally and physically."

After this successful talk, the girls held a number of fun events – such as a Spring fashion show in Wycombe's Town Hall, a New Year's Eve party, a ramble, theatre supper evenings and a 'naff night'.

Suzi laughs: "Everything considered to be tasteless was on show during 'naff night'. We had a naff quiz, we served naff nibbles to our guests and the naffest outfits were paraded for all to jeer at. There was some pretty naff music around as well."

She continues: "Shortly after the fashion show, keen sportsman Ian Waterman ran the London Marathon for us, wearing a pink t-shirt and a pink sweatband with five wire butterflies (part of the group's logo) bashing against his brow for the entire 26 miles."

At the beginning of September this year, the group also held a charity ball. This event was particularly poignant for the group as it saw them reunited with one of their members.

Suzi explains: "One of our



Collecting and converting foreign coins is one way Speen Supporters' Group raises money for cancer hospices in Bucks

committee members had recurrence of her cancer this year and suffered severe effects from aggressive chemotherapy. She relied upon the practical and emotional support of the Iain Rennie nurses and the staff at the Florence Nightingale House in Stoke Mandeville (another one of the group's charities). After many difficult months, we were delighted to welcome her back to our meeting in August

– with the report that she is currently cancer-free. We are humbled by her determination, courage and faith and are proud to be raising funds for charities that prove to be so worthwhile."

The group also supports St Francis Hospice in Berkhamsted and Helen and Douglas Houses, Oxford.

●More information on the group from Suzi on 0787 9685136