

SeeSaw – a new support service for bereaved children in Oxfordshire by Rev Mike Williams, the vicar who lives in Shipton under Wychwood – Founding Chairman of SeeSaw

The death of someone we love is probably the most distressing event that we will ever experience. When children lose someone they love it is painful and traumatic and often they have nowhere to turn for help. The people best placed to support them, their family, are themselves grieving and their young friends cannot fully understand their pain.

Grief has a negative effect on so many aspects of children's lives. They often feel angry and confused; they may feel guilty or unable to concentrate at school. Often they suffer sleep disturbances, they may gain weight, they may lose weight and anyone of these responses can cause problems at home or at school. Bereaved children who are not supported through this huge upheaval can develop problems later in life – educational, psychological or social.

Every year, in Oxfordshire alone, 1,500 children suffer the distress and disruption that death brings. SeeSaw is a new charity set up to support Oxfordshire's bereaved children through their grief and help them adapt to a world where someone they love is missing.

SeeSaw offers rapid and flexible support to children and families as well as a programme of education, training and resources for professionals such as teachers and doctors.

SeeSaw is totally dependent upon donations to do their work and need approximately £28,000 between now and April 2002 in order to pay for volunteers' expenses, to buy books and resources for children and to develop support services for professionals. Can you help by fund-raising over Christmas? Here are a few ideas:

Hold a Christmas Sherry party and ask guests to make a donation to SeeSaw.

Hold a Sponsored under-indulge: ask friends and family to sponsor you NOT to eat all the Mince Pies!

At Church or School put up a Tree of Memories: ask for a donation in exchange for putting a decoration on a Christmas Tree in remembrance of someone they miss.

Hold a Christmas Decoration Party: Invite friends round for a morning, afternoon or evening of updating Christmas baubles. They pay a set amount of money. You provide glitter, glue and sequins – anything that can be stuck to plain baubles.

If these great ideas don't inspire you perhaps this will – these are the words of Sally a 12 year old girl whose mother died earlier this year:

Dear SeeSaw,

Thank you for helping me talk about my Mum. I found it hard to talk about Mum before you came. It also helped to make me cry which I found hard. I liked making my memory box. I showed you all of my special things I put inside. If you would of not been there I would have had nowhere to put my memory things in a safe place. Thank you for all your help.

Love Sally. (Name changed to preserve confidentiality).

If you would like to make a donation to SeeSaw please make cheques payable to SeeSaw and send them to:
Bush House, 2 Merewood Avenue, Headington, Oxford, OX3 8EF.

SeeSaw is a registered charity: 1076321.

Gardening

We have got to the end of the year when there is little or nothing to plant or grow, but a word here about bulbs. Those bulbs that have not been planted will have commenced growing thus showing that they ought to be in the ground.

The growth you see has been made at the expense of the bulb itself, for there are no fibrous roots from which to draw support. If you plant these bulbs right away at the proper depth, the resulting blooms will only be slightly inferior to those from bulbs planted at the proper time.

From now until March is the right time to plant roses and an application to a local grower will produce a catalogue in full colour which also gives full details of planting, caring and pruning of these lovely flowers. A warning - do not plant roses in ground that has been used for roses in recent years; more about this in the rose catalogue.

In recent issues of this magazine I have dealt with the pruning of soft fruit bushes at some length. A reminder that much of this work can be done now.

Christmas will soon be with us so if you enjoy making decorations for the house, there are plenty of cuttings of ivy, holly and various conifers available and let us hope there will be a wreath on every front door.

Every Christmas I recommend the simple table decoration made from a ball of clay on a dish stuck with holly and other greenery with, of course, a red candle in the middle.

Most of us live in warm houses so please pay attention to the watering of indoor plants. Soon there will be azaleas and poinsettias in plenty. Azaleas need rain water and poinsettias should be kept moist. Don't let any of them flag.

Cut flowers, especially chrysanthemums, need fresh clear water.

I hope you have a most enjoyable Christmas with family and friends and that the year 2002 will bring you good health, happiness and peace of mind.

A.V. Mitchell.