# HOME COUNTIES AREA OF NAFAS

*4 The Hollies, Shefford, Bedfordshire. SG17 5BX*

*September 2024*

Dear Club Chairmen, Committee members and members,

**18th – 22nd September Home Counties Area Flower Festival 'Abundant Blessings' in St Mary's, Hitchin**. I would like to begin by thanking all of you who supported our Area Flower Festival, whether you came to arrange, steward or visit during the weekend. I was overwhelmed by the support and I really enjoyed meeting so many of you. I would also like to thank the Clubs and individuals who generously sponsored and gave their time. It was an amazing event for our Area and it achieved all our aims and exceeded our expectations. We wanted to showcase our skills, talents and love for flowers in a beautiful location. We wanted to promote NAFAS and our Clubs and to bring our members together. We wanted the public to see what we do and to know about flower arranging.

St Mary's Church, Hitchin is the largest church in Hertfordshire and we filled it with 44 large exhibits arranged by Clubs and members , both experienced arrangers and some who have never arranged on a large scale before. We know how much thought and planning, travelling and time our members willingly gave and there was a very happy atmosphere throughout the staging and weekend. The Church was filled with floral exhibits in different styles, designs and colours all based on Blessings eg, Family , Knowledge, the Holy Spirit , Joy, Happiness and many to bless the Natural World. We encouraged public participation by placing a flower in to a design to focus on peace throughout the world.

The Area had raised a fund to subsidise and cover all the claims and we worked within our budget and had some left for a future event.

There was a NAFAS Information Area with exhibits and programmes, posters and information about our Area Club. The Flower Arranger Officer was busy promoting the magazine and was giving free back copies that our members had donated. There were stewards there to tell the public about NAFAS and where their local Club meets. Already some Clubs have told me they have had enquiries from people who are interested. Hopefully, we have raised an awareness of NAFAS and we will gain new members.

We worked in partnership with St Mary's Church, Hitchin by using their church and they organised the publicity, refreshments, programmes, stewarding and the wonderful music that entertained the 1,600 visitors throughout the weekend. The church members worked extremely hard for four days to take full advantage of the fundraising opportunity that we gave them. The Church has now informed us that they made a profit of over **£16.000**, that will help to improve the facilities in their beautiful church. The agreement worked well as we wanted to design, stage and sponsor the cost of the flowers and the Church desperately needs funds.

I really appreciated Ellie Meaking , NAFAS Director joining us at the Preview Evening on the Thursday and felt very proud showing her around the Festival. Kim Wilde also attended to officially open it . We had visitors from a wide area of the country ,the photographer from The Flower Arranger, some National demonstrators and the local press, so hopefully the 'Abundant Blessings' will be

remembered as a very happy occasion celebrating the skills and talents of the members of Home Counties Area of NAFAS.

There are pictures of all the exhibits on our website www.flowershomecounties.org and on www.stmaryshitchin.com

**Area News** Please remember that Suzanne would like to hear all your news about your club activities and it is good to share ideas with others. Please write about your experience of the Flower Festival.

**Malvern RHS Show**. Sylvia Kittle represented us in the Elimination Competition and produced a fantastic design that was very vibrant and contemporary. She gained a highly commended award that was great as it was 'tough competition' from experienced arrangers for all around the country. She enjoyed the Show and I am sure she gained from the experience.



**Education Fun Day 23rd October Memorial Hall, Wheathampstead.** This will be an informative and practical day with Gill McGregor sharing ideas for foam free mechanics. Tickets are £20 and details are on the website and have been sent to all Clubs. Please come and join in the fun.

**Area AGM and Demonstration 13th November**. We are holding this event at the Memorial Hall, Marford Road. Wheathampstead. We hope that this venue may be easier for more members to reach and it helps to make the cost of the tickets lower at £25. There will be a short AGM in the morning followed by a delicious cold buffet lunch – supplied by the same caterer who has supplied Spotlight and then a demonstration by Margaret Rumens 'Betwixt and Between'. Tea/coffee will be included and there will be a seating plan and decorated tables as usual. There will be some stalls to browse as usual. Please apply to Celia Thompson for tickets. I hope to see you there when the Area welcomes a new Chairman Anne McPherson, Vice-Chairman Roberta Ward, Flower Arranger Officer Jayne Hale.

We still need an Area Secretary and an Area Demonstrators Representative. If you are interested please contact me or Anne McPherson – Vice-Chairman

With my very best wishes, *Carolyn Cranswick* Chairman of Home Counties Area of NAFAS