

Mental health problems can affect anyone; rich or poor, young or old, shattering the lives of those affected and the lives of the people close to them. One in four of us will experience a mental health problem at some point in our lives ranging from depression, anxiety and stress, to sleeplessness, insecurity, and isolation. **Mind in Mid Herts** works for a better life for people with experience of mental distress by providing help and information and campaigning for change. However, without volunteers Mind in Mid Herts cannot continue its work and is urgently looking for volunteers for its **Branch Out** Befriending Scheme, **Way2Work** employment service and the **Stepping Stones** outreach project.

Branch Out is a befriending service for adults aged 18 to 65 suffering from enduring mental health problems. Befriending provides confidential, dependable, one-to-one support by matching individuals with a volunteer befriender who will visit them on a regular basis and accompany them in a variety of social and leisure activities. Through the development of this relationship individuals are helped to rebuild their social skills, confidence and self esteem which in turn helps to reduce feelings of isolation, anxiety, depression and loneliness. Volunteers receive an initial intensive training course followed by regular on-going training, support groups and supervision. There is also continued monitoring and reviews of the befriender/befriended relationship including a trial period so that both parties have the option of ending the relationship if they find befriending is not for them. Mind in Mid Herts is looking for volunteers to assist with the Branch Out service in St Albans, Hatfield and Stevenage.

Way2Work - Having a job provides so much more than just an income. Employment can serve as a source of achievement, satisfaction and provide an on-going boost to one's self esteem. But despite this many people with mental health problems find it difficult to obtain and sustain employment. The **Way2Work** project helps with these factors by providing advice on getting a job as well as support to help in sustaining it. Mind in Mid Herts is looking for mentors to help people prepare for work and then support them in the employment situation.

Stepping Stones - After a period of time in hospital, being discharged and rebuilding a life can be challenging. Stepping Stones is a community based outreach project which assists those who have been in hospital with the day to day activities which can seem so daunting upon arriving home. The project is geared towards outreach support and involves meeting clients in the community and supporting them in rebuilding their confidence and self esteem.

For more information: www.mindinmidherts.org.uk

For more details about Mind in Mid Herts or for any other information about volunteering locally, please contact the St Albans District Volunteer Centre on 01727 852657. The Volunteer Centre is at St Albans District Centre for Voluntary Service, 31 Catherine Street, St Albans. It is open Monday to Thursday 10am to 4pm, Friday 10am to 1pm, and from 4pm to 7pm on the second Wednesday of each month. You can also e-mail michelle@cvsstalbans.org.uk, visit www.cvsstalbans.org.uk, or pick up a list of current requests for help from St Albans Library or Harpenden Town Council Information Point.