

u3a friends



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Dear <<First Name>>,

What a July it has been. It was brilliant to meet so many of you at *u3a Festival 26*. Just like members, I got a chance to try new skills - playing Petanque, trying Short Lawn Bowls and listening to fascinating talks. A huge thank you to the incredible volunteer effort that made the Festival possible. The event showcased the member-led ethos that underpins everything we do at u3a.

The in-person Festival was accompanied by *u3a Festival Fringe*, an online programme of events enabling every member to sample the learning and fun of the Festival. We are delighted we had over 4,000 bookings. Thank you to everyone who joined us in person and online.

Ever since I've joined, members have been referring to u3a as the UK's best-kept secret. The last month has been momentous in getting that secret more out there, with multiple national press features. It's wonderful that in the same month that the u3a community has met together, we've also seen it represented in national media.

With very best wishes

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friends events



Watch some of the highlights from our Festival, sponsored by [Ambassador Cruise Line](#).

u3a week

Our next big event is around the corner with *u3a week* taking place from 19-27 September. This year, our theme is expanding horizons.

We're planning a brilliant line-up of online talks and events, including one with Monty Hall from [HX Expeditions](#). We'll also be sharing posts on our social media to inspire you to challenge yourself and do something new for fun.

See ideas on how you and your u3a can take part on [the u3a week page](#).

Upcoming online learning events include *Staying Safe Online*, *The climate crisis and the National Emergency Briefing*, and *Building the world's most advanced airliners*.

[See all online events](#)

[Join u3a](#) to be able to come to these events, and more.



Headline news for u3a

In a letter featured in [The Times](#) last week, our CEO Iain Cassidy responded to a study showing that a rich cultural life supports healthy ageing. In one part of the letter, he says, "With another rise in the pension age looming, retirement in 2026 looks hugely different from how it did 50 years ago. Rather than fading into the background, our members are front and centre of their communities, learning, laughing and living well."



u3a was also featured in *The Express*, *The Mirror* and *The National* in articles exploring the correlation between friendships and brain health as we age. For Stone u3a member Neil, who is quoted in the article, u3a has enabled him to socialise more than ever. This is thanks to the confidence he developed through leading his u3a Hawaiian canoe group, pictured.

friends news

... from Council Chair, Sue Russell

I was lucky recently to attend the u3a Festival in York. What a brilliant event that was!

While there, I met many u3a members from all over the country and attended a Meet the Board and Council session. At that event, the main topic was recruitment.

This is an issue that has concerned the Council over the past year. We are all trying to find the best way to solve it. The Council has a recruitment Task and Finish Group looking at recruitment to u3as, and to committees. Lots of good ideas have been suggested and [the Recruitment Toolkit on the u3a website](#) is packed with recommendations but many u3as are still struggling.

Some u3as are bucking the trend and are doing well. We'd love to know their secret so that we can share it with other u3as in the movement. Let us know

friends news

...from the members



u3a members give gliding a go

Ashbourne u3a has launched a new group for adventurers called Give It A Go, where members try one-off experiences together. The group got off to a flying start with a gliding trip over the Staffordshire and Derbyshire countryside. Members enjoyed beautiful views and some even had the chance to take the controls for a few moments.

Another unusual group is Stubbington u3a's Criminology group. They discuss topics ranging from the psychology of criminals to the origin of policing, and have heard from fascinating guests including a prison librarian. The group evidence that whatever sparks your interest, you can find other people to explore it with at u3a.

Are you part of a unique group at your u3a? Let us know by emailing communications@u3a.org.uk.

For more u3a news, read our blog

friends impact



u3a Maths expert talks at the House of Lords

Our relationship with the House of Lords developed further this month. Our u3a Subject Adviser for Maths and Stats, David, gave evidence to the House of Lords Numeracy for Life Committee. Using u3a as an example, he highlighted the role that lifelong learning plays in later life and emphasised the importance of consulting older people in the search for solutions to numeracy issues.

Pictured: A mathematical puzzling workshop at u3a Festival 26.

friends news

...from the Trust

Join us this October for the Third Age Trust AGM

Taking place in Manchester and online, the Third Age Trust AGM is an opportunity to hear about the latest work and strategy of the Third Age Trust. The AGM will take place on Wednesday 14 October. [Find out more about the AGM.](#)

Inside u3a - understanding our members

Thank you to the members and u3as who helped us with our recent demographic survey, *Inside u3a*. The response was fantastic. We're in the process of analysing the data and will share highlights later this year.

friends learning



Last chance to enter our u3a Essay Competition

for the chance to win prize books, kindly donated by *HX Expeditions*.

Your essay should be a real and non-autobiographical journey - perhaps an amazing expedition, a scientific discovery, or something that changed the world. Read the full details on [our Essay Competition page](#).

See more learning opportunities on our website

friends offers



Take a break with the Bard

Learn about the life and legacy of the world's most famous playwright in our *Appreciating Shakespeare* trip, part of our new travel initiative, *u3a Getaways*. Taking place from Monday 12 until Thursday 15 October, this holiday includes a crash course in William Shakespeare, along with visits to Shakespeare's birthplace and Anne Hathaway's cottage in Stratford-upon-Avon.

A collaboration between u3a and the *UK Holiday Group*, each trip takes the learning and fun of u3a on tour. On a u3a getaway you can scrub up your knowledge on a wide range of topics while exploring the UK and forming new connections. Find out more on the [u3a Getaways website](#).

friends features



Sharing creativity with u3a

Creativity is core to member Nicola's involvement with Wetherby u3a and led her to share her skills at u3a Festival 26. She is pictured, above right, with a new friend she made at the Festival.

I am a great believer in 'creative ageing' because it keeps the mind active, engaged and curious. Creativity, in all its multifaceted forms, sharpens cognitive skills and furthers the ageing brain's ability to change and form new connections.

Everything I'm involved with at u3a taps into creativity in one form or another. When I retired, I joined the play reading group, which I now run, the sewing group, the craft group, the Historic Houses group and the days of interest group. I have made so many friends along the way, indeed, my very best friends were met through u3a.

I have just returned from *u3a Festival 26*, where I ran five sessions, several of which tapped into my past experience as a television production manager. I also led a craft workshop where we made macrame dragonfly key rings. There's something very rewarding about members sharing so many different experiences and interests. The fact that people choose to come along to a specific talk or activity is really gratifying.

Tell us what u3a means to you by emailing communications@u3a.org.uk

To participate in online learning
activities and events, join your local u3a

u3a.org.uk



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