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'Local business owner and social entrepreneur join forces to combat social exclusion.'

Local business owner, Lotte Mikkelsen of UnitedMind Ltd., and social entrepreneur, Patricia O'Malley of The Regency Training Foundation, both residents from St. Albans, join forces to combat social exclusion in the surrounding districts.

St. Albans is privileged with respect to being a wealthy area and having lived in the city we recognise that there is a huge gap between the wealthy part of the city and the deprived areas.

Regardless of background, loneliness and exclusion is experienced by all.

This raises questions with regard to the level of social and emotional support being offered by the local community.

Patricia and Lotte met in 2009 when The Regency Training Foundation were expanding and recruiting training consultants for their seven week training programme, 'Inclusion Plus', which runs regularly in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

Patricia says 'Social exclusion impacts so many people's lives in a detrimental way and can have such adverse effects on health and mental health challenges.'

The Regency Training Foundation delivers personal self-development training to socially excluded people. The programme involves confidence, communication, stress and anxiety

management, horticultural activities, therapeutic arts, holistic therapy treatments, information advice and guidance on employment and future aspirations, and laughter therapy.

Lotte says 'Over the past many years people have become focused on their problems instead of solving them. The recent financial downfall has added to the sense of insecurity and lack of hope. When you are in a frame of mind where you see no solutions, you are stuck.'

UnitedMind offers a way of reviewing life from a positive angle through Laughter Therapy, and combined with The Regency Training Foundations full package of social tools, have found an effective way of reducing social exclusion, improving health and well-being, and increasing future aspirations.

Patricia and Lotte share a mirthful giggle as they remember how they met. Patricia, after searching for laughter therapists for several months, found Lotte who incidentally, among the few dozens laughter therapists listed in the UK, happened to live on the same street in St. Albans.

Further details on the courses from The Regency Training Foundation and UnitedMind can be found on www.rtfoundation.org.uk and www.unitedmind.co.uk.

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