

PRESS RELEASE: ENORMOUS ELEPHANT EXHIBITION

Across the New Forest, rare and endangered animals are appearing.

Generations young and old, from pre-school children to 90-year-olds, are fashioning a large herd of elephants from a range of donated and recycled materials. Thirty per cent of African elephants have disappeared over the last seven years alone.

The woman responsible for this phenomenon, Lyndhurst artist Susie Laan, says "I am stunned and delighted by the way people have responded to the plight of these wonderful animals. Perhaps indeed more than our government, who should have made an outright ban on ivory here. Instead they have allowed the trade to continue and be stimulated under the cover of 'antique' ivory."

Activity organiser, Sara Gould from Woodpeckers Care Home in Brockenhurst said "Our residents with dementia really got involved and felt a true sense of purpose".

"Our residents found the craft work to create the elephants so therapeutic and were thrilled to help in raising awareness for this important issue, said Debbie Holmes from Abbotswood Care Home in Romsey.

Gracewells Residential and Dementia Care, and Hartwood Care Home in Lyndhurst have joined in too. "Our residents, who participated in this particular craft activity over 4 sessions, understood the purpose of the exhibition and enjoyed making our elephant "Cinnamon". One of our residents saw it in Church on Sunday and spoke her recognition of it, aloud, as well as offering an explanation to a member of the Congregation! Activities Co-Ordinator Nancy and 'Creative Minds' Art and Crafts Group Leader, Karen tasked each stage of the process to our seven residents who took part, according to their ability, so as to engage as many of them as possible to completion".

The Totton Library knitting group have created several wonderful elephants, currently displayed in Totton library.

Lyndhurst Small School's bottle elephants brighten each shop window along Lyndhurst High Street. More schools around the New Forest area will soon be joining in, creating a herd of similar elephants in other Forest towns.

All of this kaleidoscopic herd (plus many more elephants created by professional artists) will be on display at the Enormous Elephants Art Exhibition, which will be held at Lyndhurst Community Centre on 29th and 30th October 10am to 4pm to raise funds for the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust in Kenya.

"Every 15 minutes, an elephant is killed for its tusks. We have gathered together work from elephant artists around the world as well as local Hampshire artists," says event organiser Susie Laan. "We have had an amazing response from artists wanting to help save elephants through art."

Elephant posters, paintings and sculptures will be available to buy, with proceeds going to the charity. Tickets will be at the door for a donation of £2.50 and £5 per family. There will be children's workshops from 10 - 12pm and 2 - 4pm on Saturday and 10 - 12pm on Sunday. Judging and prizes will be on Sunday at 3pm.

On Saturday, there will be limited tickets for a gala evening event from 7.00pm, with wine, hot food and a silent auction of many of the art works on show.

"I am passionate about helping to save elephants from extinction" says Susie Laan. "Please come along and help them too!" Further details are available at www.enormouselephantart.com. More information about the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust can be found at www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org.