Aude and Ariège Newsletter

Autumn has arrived and with it the latest edition of our Newsletter. The long, hot and dry summer has been challenging for many of us. The regular opportunities to meet over coffee and cakes and exchange books continued during the summer, ensuring that we didn't all hide away from the heat. Nature and our gardens have suffered and although the recent rain has been very welcome, much more is needed in this part of France. Charles Dones has written about the implications for our gardens and how to help us cope with changing conditions.

A first Grief Café was held in August at Les Marguerites, open to anyone who was grieving, in order to provide an opportunity to meet with others in a similar situation. The ever popular Aude Est Autumn Fair took place in September – you can read the full report with photos below.

Events coming up include a Nature Discovery Walk led by botanist Laurie Beaufils in November and the grand Christmas Quiz Night at Argens-Minervois in December. Following the success of Aude Ouest's first ever Quiz in January this year, planning is underway for a Quiz with Afternoon Tea in February 2027. More details about all of these are below and remember that a trained Cancer Support France volunteer is available at all events if you wish to talk.

If you have any suggestions for future articles or activities please get in touch here or via your Departmental Representative. Enjoy your read.

Janice Pickering sud-janice@cancersupportfrance.org

Dates for Your Diary

Aude Ouest Coffee Breaks at Les Marguerites, 11580, Alet-les-Bains. Coffee, cake and conversation. Exchange of paperbacks in good condition. 10h00-12h00, first Wednesday of the month: 4 November, 2 December, 6 January. **Free massages offered:** alternating between Hand and Arm Massage with Margaret and Back & Neck massage with Joan. Put your name on the booking sheet on arrival.

Book Exchange at La Salle de Fête, 11240, Cailhau, 10h00-12h00. Bi-monthly, on the 4th Wednesday, 25 November.

SAVE THE DATE Friday 19 February 2027 **Quiz and Afternoon Tea** at Cournanel Salle de Fête, 11300.

Nature Discovery Walk at Serres 11190 guided by Laurie Beaufils will concentrate on trees, and edible and medicinal plants along a relatively short (500m) and flat track which follows the Rialsesse stream, accessible to everyone.
Tuesday 17 November 10.00-12.00.
Meeting point at the car park at Serres near the bridge. Suitable shoes, clothing and water required, and a notebook will be useful. Bring a picnic to eat afterwards.
Sorry no dogs. €10 pp, places are limited and should be reserved by contacting Carolyn sud-carolyn@cancersupportfrance.org.



Ariège Get-Togethers at the Green Bazar Café, 34 Place Maréchal Leclerc, 09500, Mirepoix. 2.00-4.00pm the last Thursday of the month, 29 October, 26 November.

Ariège Book Events at the Covered Market, 09600, Bastide-sur-l'Hers, 11h-13h, 1st Saturday in the month: 7 November, 5 December.

Aude Est Christmas Quiz Night at the Salle des Trois Copains, 11200, Argens-Minervois,
Friday 11 December, 18h00 for 19h00 start.

Booking in advance essential.



News from Ariège

The Get-Togethers in Mirepoix at the Green Bazar café have continued during July and August. Despite relatively warm conditions there was a good turnout (double figures for both months). The June one had been cancelled due to the intense heat. Some members were disappointed; however they understood the reasoning for the cancellation. Unfortunately the September date was cancelled too at the last minute, due to urgent business in Toulouse for the cafe owner.



Mirepoix

It is anticipated that the Get-Togethers will continue to be held at the Green Bazar on the last Thursday of the month throughout October and November. It is doubtful that there will be one in December as the last Thursday is 31st December.

The Book Events at Bastide-sur-l'Hers have also continued throughout July and August. As Mac is currently in hospital in Lavelanet but is on the mend, long standing volunteers Martin and Liz assisted by Nikki and a couple of new recruits were on hand to ensure the September event took place.



Bastide-sur-l'Hers

Corinne Bryan, Departmental Representative for Ariège
sud-corinne@cancersupportfrance.org

News from Aude Est

All was set for our Autumn Fair on Saturday 26th September. The excitement was palpable on this sunny morning, after our team of 15 dedicated volunteers had worked hard since Thursday right through to really early Saturday morning, to get everything ready with donated gifts aplenty. The Salle des Trois Copains in Argens-Minervois opened its doors at 9am, the buvette laden with an inviting array of colourful, tempting home-made cakes, and the hot water urn bubbling away ready to make teas and coffees. The kitchen fridges were stacked full of wine, prosecco, beers and soft drinks. A variety of freshly made cheese or egg rolls with salads or pickles also greeted our guests, along with beaming smiles from our 3 volunteers ready to serve our ever-growing number of customers.

Step inside the hall to find a dozen talented stallholders with their prized products, many handmade, eagerly awaiting to make some sales. Choose from cosmetics, a self-published illustrated travel guide of the Cesse valley, adults' clothes, babywear, candles, artwork, up-cycled goods, forest products, jigsaws and gift ideas galore. Our CSF stall of chinaware was accompanied by the Association leaflets, alongside the Tombola stall, which was well-stocked with beautiful, donated goods to win. Further down the hall, a decadent fruit cake was awaiting people to Guess its Weight, with the nearest guess winning this delicious treat.



Then came the cuddly giant teddy bear at 4 feet tall, needing 3 chairs to prop him up! At 25 years old, this donated toy was looking for a new home, to be won by the person who correctly guessed its name from a choice of 50.

Just outside, the many dining tables welcomed our guests to take a pause with their refreshments, purchases and tombola prizes, where they could then browse the many delights on the extensive brocante stalls.

What's that trundling noise? The Fish and Chip van arriving, to prepare the serving area for its many visitors for lunch.

By 11am the whole place was buzzing, when musician Tim struck up on his guitar to entertain us all. Tables and chairs were adjusted to get the best shade, with the midday early-birds starting to enjoy their freshly cooked chicken dinner or fish ‘n chips, served by the good-humoured chef Paul and his ever-patient wife Val. We were delighted to welcome many French villagers among those who joined us to eat.

After serving 200 tasty meals, and 300 guests having passed through our doors, it was time to announce the competition winners. The cake actually weighed 2682 grammes, won with a very close guess of 2600g, whilst the village Maire pulled the name ANNA out of the hat as the winning teddy bear name, with the respective winners being contacted.



Later as the clear up began, everyone seemed well content with the day. Our tired volunteers gathered for a much appreciated verre d'amitié and congrats were passed all round. All the efforts seemed worthwhile when we later heard that 2,000 euros had been taken. Many thanks to everyone who helped to make the day such a memorable and successful event. Well done.

Aude Est Volunteer

News from Aude Ouest

Cailhau Book Exchange

The Book Exchange on Wednesday 30th September started with gusto, as we received nearly 200 new (to us) books before the 10am start, and, amazingly, very few were Kate Mosse or Dan Brown! Nevertheless, incorporating additional books into our existing stocks takes time, so I welcome a contact from you in advance if you have lots of books to donate, so we can prepare our volunteers. After that speedy start, the Book Exchange itself went without a hitch. Many books went out of the door, and lots of coffee, tea and cake was consumed. Overall, we raised over 500 euros for CSF, and my thanks go to both the volunteers and the generous donors.

Finally, I know this is a long shot, but does anyone have some easily accessible, dry space to store some of our bags of pre-loved books in between the bi-monthly events? Logistically, the closer to Cailhau, the better. Please contact Phil Mercer, at sud-phil@cancersupportfrance.org if you feel you could help.

Over to you!



Coffee Breaks

The regular Coffee Breaks continued throughout the summer months at Les Marguerites, with good attendance, including some new faces. The fresh fruit proved very popular alongside Antoinette's delicious cakes.

Margaret and Joan offer free massages on an alternating monthly basis and the booking sheet fills up very quickly as people arrive. The relaxed faces afterwards are testament to the benefits of massage.

It can be challenging for new visitors to easily identify the Active Listener on duty at each event. So we now have a poster on display with the name of the AL that day and their photo. No need to be nervous about approaching them.

Just a note to add: Antoinette has a business to run and often has guests in the house or garden.



CSF is extremely lucky to be able to use these premises, but we have had recent instances where someone has 'just called' to drop something off. It is not fair to impinge on Antoinette's family or guests privacy at other times than those publicised for our events.

Coping with Heat and Drought in your Garden

These last two summers have been tough on our gardens. Heat, lack of rain and water restrictions have taken their toll. It might be useful for members to think of the following when buying new plants to cope with these increasingly difficult conditions. You may also be wanting to fill a space where a plant has died this year.

Plants in our area need to be able to cope with temperatures that can range from minus 10C to 40C and this information can often be found on the plant label. Drought resistance information can be found on pepinière websites. The catalogue on Oliver Filippi's website www.jardin-sec.com is very useful for researching plants. Buy plants that are suitable for where you want to plant them in your garden i.e. full sun, semi-shade or full shade.

Drought and heat resistant (Mediterranean) plants do best in poor but well drained and alkaline soil. Autumn is the best time for planting once the rain has softened the ground and the soil is still warm. This allows plants time to become established before the heat of next summer, and although they will have to be watered during their first summer the need is less frequent.

When buying beware of plants in small pots with lots of foliage. It is better to buy plants in those long pots that may not have a lot of growth above the compost but allow plenty of space for the roots to develop. (See attached photograph.) And planting holes around 40cm deep, with if possible some sharp gravel or river sand mixed in with the soil, help plants get off to a good start. Creating a watering basin around plants enables you to give them a good dosage when watering.



Charles Dones

A Place to Share: The Grief Café

On 19 August, I had the honour of hosting the very first Grief Café at Les Marguerites.
Jane Beck, President of CSF Sud, invited Marianne, an experienced and qualified grief counsellor, to guide us through our first gathering. Over coffee and cake, we had the opportunity to come together, share our experiences and, perhaps most importantly, simply be with others who understand something of what it means to live with grief.
One of the things that became very clear during our morning together was that grief is different for everyone. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and certainly no set timeline for when grief is supposed to be “over”. It can change from day to day, and sometimes from moment to moment.
There was a real sense that having somewhere safe and welcoming to talk, listen and share could be incredibly valuable. We therefore agreed that a rotating, pop-up Grief Café, held in different areas across the Sud, would be a wonderful initiative.
The Grief Café will be slightly different from our regular coffee mornings, which take place at Les Marguerites on the first Wednesday of every month, from 10am to 12 noon. While those mornings are an opportunity to meet, chat and make connections, plus have access to a trained Active Listener, the Grief Café will have a little more space and time dedicated to sharing and supporting one another through the experience of grief.
The café will run from 10am until 12 noon, but the real hope is that people will come along, stay for the morning and spend time together. Whether you are experiencing a recent loss or have been carrying grief for many years, you will be very welcome. There is no expectation to talk, and no pressure to share. Sometimes simply sitting with others who understand can be enough.
Because when we share the good times as well as the difficult ones, when we listen and support one another, we create a community where people can feel seen, heard and less alone.
We look forward to taking the Grief Café out into the wider Sud community and creating more opportunities for people to come together, one cup of coffee (or tea) at a time.

Antoinette Fairhurst, Les Marguerites



There will always be
Another opportunity
Another friendship
Another love
A new strength
For every ending
There is a new opportunity

Antoine de Saint Exupéry

Search for a new President

Members will have already received the email regarding the search for a new President of CSF Sud de France to take over when Jane Beck stands down at the next Annual General Meeting in 2027.

This is a challenging and rewarding post, and one which is necessary for the life of our association both in terms of our work and our legal standing. Under the law of 1901, an association ceases to exist without a named president being declared at the prefecture.

Nominations for a successor are currently invited. Candidates should:

- have a good understanding of the work and aims of Cancer Support France;
- have experience working as an Active Listener;
- be a French speaker, able to liaise with local organisations and present CSF to the wider community.

Now that this long, hot summer is over, it is time to discuss options, think creatively and to seek out and identify people who are both willing and able to fulfil the role. Please don’t delay; feel free to discuss it at drop-ins, training meetings, or wherever you gather together. Thank you.

The full role description is available from the Membership Secretary at

sud-membership@cancersupportfrance.org.

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