**The ‘magic’ soup stone returns to Penrith!**

There are over 30 community volunteers preparing 160 portions of homemade soup, bread and cakes ready to give away for free at Penrith’s fourth annual Stone Soup Day on Saturday 6th February.

Storyteller Peter Dicken will be making his own version of stone soup and telling the tale of the simple pedlar who carried a stone around with him on his travels and persuaded village communities to join him in making soup to share. Anyone with spare veg is invited to bring it along. Potatoes, cabbage, carrots and leeks will all be gratefully received at the event, in the Salvation Army Hall in Hunter Lane.. ‘It is a simple act of coming together and sharing food, but it’s always enjoyable and great fun both for the helpers and those attending,’ said Joan Robinson, one of the community volunteers.

‘Everyone is invited, we’re particularly encouraging anyone living on their own or suffering from the ‘winter blues’ to come along. I hope people will ask around and bring along with them anyone who might like to join in. Often people find it difficult to go to functions on their own.’

Sylvia Kidd and Malcolm Carruthers will be acting as ‘soup day hosts’ and will be at the door to give a warm welcome, from 10.45am to 1.30pm.

**Tuesday Soup**

Free homemade soup will once again be on the menu at the Salvation Army every Tuesday from 9 February to 22 March. Soup, bread and a hot drink will be made and served by community volunteers, helped by the Soroptimists and Eden Mencap from 12.15 to 1.30pm in the small room at the Hunter Lane hall.

‘This is a wonderfully friendly meal,’ said Joan, who co-ordinates the meals. ‘We all sit around a big table chattering away as one happy family, helping to get us through the winter.’

By the end of March, the team expect to have served over 500 portions of soup and any that’s left over will be delivered to people known to live on their own and who may not be able to get out easily.

‘With this much soup to make, we’d really welcome any donations of surplus veg,’ Joan added. She can be reached on 07754 773701, or veg can be left at Eden Mencap or the Salvation Army.

Soup sessions are supported by Penrith Action for Community Transition (PACT), the Soroptimists, the Salvation Army, Eden Mencap, Starfruits Angel Square, Morrisons, Booths, the Soup Shop and Bells of Lazonby.

**Bring a bowl and spoon!**

Anyone who’s not able to make it to the sessions can still get in on the act.

‘Why not organise a soup event in your neighbourhood?’ Joan said. ‘Making and sharing soup is a useful opportunity for getting to know neighbours by inviting them to bring a bowl and spoon to a home, by serving soup outside as a street event or simply as a random act of kindness by leaving some on a doorstep.’