

# closer to the community

Story continued over the page...

Providing a crucial service or raising cash for charity is a pub's best route to becoming the focal point of its community, as these Enterprise retailers show.

The village of Down Thomas in Plymouth lost its post office two years ago, but thanks to Victor and Lynn Walsh at the Mussel Inn, residents can now pick up their pension or post an important letter while enjoying a pint.

With £30,000 of funding from Pub Is The Hub and government-run Devon Rural Renaissance, the Walshes have been able to convert their disused garage into a **sub-post office** and **community room**.

Victor explained: "It's important that we have a dual-purpose scheme because if the post office ever had to close, we would still have the community room which secures the funding.

"The room's ideal for parish council meetings and also for visiting chiropodists or even mobile hairdressers."

### Diverse offering

The post office and community room complement the Mussel Inn's already diverse offering of coffee shop, restaurant, bed and breakfast – which is being extended from four to 10 rooms – as well as traditional pub, of course.

While the post office won't make the Walshes rich, it enables them to build trade by tapping into the large catchment area the post office will serve – especially with Lynn at the helm as sub postmistress.

"It will certainly introduce new people to the pub. We're open early for coffee and provide food at reasonable rates throughout the day, so obviously we'll advertise these services in the post office," said Victor.

**Pub Is The Hub helps retailers seek funding for projects which will introduce a new service to the community and bring a valuable additional revenue into their pub. For more information, visit [www.pubisthehub.org.uk](http://www.pubisthehub.org.uk) or call 01423 568987.**

## make your pub the hub

Could your pub provide a crucial community service?

- Hire out your function room to community groups
- Put up a notice board for community news
- Set up a free wireless internet service
- No village shop? Sell simple provisions such as milk and bread
- Offer a takeaway food service

## playing it safe

A pioneering initiative at the Albany Hotel in Bexley, Kent, is attracting more families to the pub while providing a much-needed focal point for local youngsters.

Last year, retailers Jackie and Kevin Bell joined forces with local police and council youth workers to set up a club for 11-19-year-olds, the first of its kind in London.

The success of the 'Pub Youth Zone' means that it is now a permanent fixture at the Albany.

Every Wednesday night the pub opens its function room doors free-of-charge to anything up to 40 youths. The club, which is kept strictly separate from the bar, offers table football, pool, table tennis, music decks, TV, karaoke and an

### club together

Teenagers are not the only age group in need of a meeting place – why not consider setting up a single mums or dads night, a parent and toddler morning or a lunch club for pensioners?

X-Box games console – most of which is funded by a government grant. The kids can also use the pub's wifi connection to surf the net.

**This is a community pub and we wanted to put something back**



Getting involved was a natural choice for the Bells. "This is a community pub and we wanted to put something back," they said.

Bexley police are looking to roll out a similar club in other areas.

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first class service