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SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

We can all play our part in addressing loneliness epidemic

Loneliness does not need a multi-million pound action plan to tackle it.

We can all play our part in making sure elderly relatives and neighbours do not consider their television to be their main form of company.

There are many voluntary organisations and charities across East Anglia that are doing some fantastic work to support vulnerable older people.

However, we can all do a little to make a big difference to people who are feeling lonely.

One of the benefits of advances in technology and medicine means that we are all living longer and able to live independently even at a ripe old age. However, increasing life expectancy means that many older people feel isolated and cut off from society.

It is shocking that an estimated five million older people consider television to be their main form of company.

The government's care minister says that more can be done to address loneliness. But could the government do more to invest in local charities? Tackling loneliness would surely help reduce the financial burden on mental health and other NHS services.

Companionship does not cost anything.

Giving up time to have a chat and a cup of tea with a neighbour or helping them with a food shop or assist with some housework can make a big difference.

If we all make small steps to reach out to someone in our community, we can make great strides in tackling the loneliness epidemic and improve people's wellbeing. We owe it to our society.

Inspiring Oscar

Oscar Kashemwa has experienced horrors that no one should see.

The refugee who fled his homeland three years ago has been given a second chance to rebuild his life in Norfolk and is grasping the opportunity with both hands. The inspiring teenager, who hopes to become a vet one day, has pledged to help young people like him by cycling 80 miles later this month to raise funds for War Child.

Tragically, more than two million children in the Democratic Republic of Congo have died during a civil war that has lasted 20 years. Next time you see the African conflict on the news, think of Oscar and remember that we live in a smaller world than we think. His story should make us all realise how precious life is and inspire us to do our best to help others less fortunate than ourselves.

Rest in peace Ernie

Veteran Ernie Mears died more than a year before the 70th anniversary of D-Day.

The former soldier was one of thousands of British men who fought to liberate the beaches of Normandy from Nazi occupation.

He may not have been able to join the D-Day commemorations in person. However, his ashes were scattered at a military cemetery in a moving service in Normandy this weekend. A fitting farewell for a modest war hero.

Rest in peace Ernie.

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Those who wait for the Lord's help
find renewed strength; they rise up
as if they had eagles' wings.
Isaiah 40:31

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READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Three butterflies group together for some afternoon sunshine in this photograph submitted by Sally Gulbrandsen. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Countries at odds with one another have similar languages

Peter
Trudgill



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The only time I ever went to Ukraine, most of the people I met there were speaking Hungarian. This was in the far south-west of Ukraine, which was part of Hungary until 1919, and then part of Czechoslovakia until 1945, when the Soviet Union took over. The town of Ungvar, on the border with Slovakia, is still Hungarian speaking.

Hungarian is by no means the only non-Slavic minority language in Ukraine. There are large numbers of Romanian speakers, as well as speakers of German, Yiddish and Romany. In Crimea, while it would not be true to say that the Tatars are the original inhabitants, they have certainly been there much longer than the Russians and Ukrainians, who didn't arrive until the 1700s.

The Tatars speak a Turkic language related to Kazakh. The Greeks were just one of many peoples who were in Crimea before the Tatars, and there are still Greek speakers in Ukraine.

As far as Slavic languages are concerned, there are about a million Polish speakers in western Ukraine. Polish is a West Slavic language while Ukrainian and Russian are East Slavic. About a quarter of Ukrainians –



■ Pro-Russian military in Ukraine where conflict is rife. But, says columnist Peter Trudgill, the languages of Ukrainian and Russian do have a lot in common. Picture: PA

figures are not totally reliable – are native speakers of Russian, but interestingly, only 17pc claim to be ethnic Russians. And, as we have been hearing in the news, most Russians are concentrated in the south and east of the country.

Early in 2014, the Ukrainian government foolishly repealed a law that allowed Russian, Hungarian, Rumanian and Tatar to be used in courts and for other official purposes, but fortunately it quickly repealed the repeal.

Ukrainian and Russian are closely related languages – probably about as close as Italian and Spanish – and some communication is possible between their speakers, since the two languages have more than 60pc of their vocabularies in

common. But when we see pictures on TV of Ukrainians and Russians speaking to each other, they are probably speaking Russian, as many Ukrainians have learned it as a second language. Ukrainian was banned under the Tsars and repressed by Stalin.

The close relationship between Russian and Ukrainian has led to there being a long history of linguistically-prejudiced Russians disrespectfully denying that Ukrainian is actually a language at all, claiming that it is really just a rather inferior peasant dialect of Russian. The last Russian Tsar, Nicholas II, also known as Nicholas the Bloody, once said exactly that.

He was, of course, executed in 1918.