Firstly, we would like to wish you a belated Happy New Year and thank you so much for the support you have given us since our inception in June 2016.

We are a new branch of Cancer Support France and have big plans for the future. We would like to share these with you in this, our first newsletter, to help you to understand more about what we have done in the past six months and what our intentions are for the future. Most importantly we desperately need your on-going support to realise our dreams and aspirations.

Cancer Support France was created in 2002 by a lady called Linda Shepherd who realised, after her own experiences, that there was a need to provide practical and emotional support to English speaking people affected by cancer in France.

 Since that time CSF has set up 16 branches throughout France and continues to expand. Ably supported by National Office, they are able to offer clients a wealth of both practical and emotional

support with a range of services including advice on organisations that can assist in providing domestic support, translation services for medical situations as well as trained Active Listeners. Our Association for the Lot et Garonne was set up in June 2016 by Cindy Sheppard – President, and we now have 7 trained Active Listeners who offer a confidential service to their clients (individuals either directly or indirectly affected by cancer), by allowing them to share their concerns, frustrations or just off-load to an independent, objective listener.

 **So how does your membership donation assist us in the service we provide?**

 All of our Active Listeners (AL’s) and committee members are volunteers but we encourage all of them to claim for travel expenses incurred whilst visiting their clients either at home or in hospital. In addition, we need to ensure all our Active Listeners are insured whilst carrying out their duties and we also incur administrative costs.  Your membership helps to ensure that we can continue to provide this service.

Our aim is to promote the services of Cancer Support France within our community as widely as possible. We need the help of our Members to act as Ambassadors to spread the word of what we do and how we can offer assistance to people in our community.

**Plans for 2017**

Our big project and dream for our particular branch is to open a dedicated “drop-in - ACORN” centre for clients and friends located in the old cinema in Montastruc. Cindy hopes that this will provide a haven for future clients to enjoy a comfortable meeting place for a cup of coffee and chat with an AL and benefit from the library of books donated by a previous grateful client. We also hope to offer the occasional treat to our clients with a range of “well-being” treatments including massage, manicures, makeovers etc. provided by qualified practitioners.

 The ambitious plan is scheduled to be ready for visitors in September 2017 but there is a great deal to achieve. The building is sound but needs considerable renovation work to ensure it is safe and fit for purpose. It will need a kitchen, disabled toilet facilities, ramp access together with a comfortable meeting- place environment.

 We began the fundraising last year and the Christmas Fayre held in November in Monteton Mairie boosted our funds considerably (see photo insert). Not only were we able to provide a festive and convivial environment for over 400 visitors but it was a great opportunity to promote the Association and raise the profile within our community. Friends of the Association have worked hard to raise both funds and awareness through coffee mornings, cream tea events and cheese and wine gatherings. We will be carrying out a “Spring Clean” Sale in March by selling objets d’art comprised of many donations offered to Cindy throughout the year. Some items will be put to immediate use in the “ACORN centre” but others will be more usefully sold to raise more funds. We are also holding a celebration “tea dance” in April to commemorate the 100 years of Vera Lynn and hope you will join us in suitable wartime attire for a memorable afternoon!

Our pledge to you, our Members and friends, is to keep you informed of the work we do and progress we are making to our clients and the wider community. We would like to notify you of any planned fundraising events in the hope that we can be assured of your attendance or indeed enlist your further help in some capacity. Membership fees are payable on an annual basis and we will notify you of meetings to keep you abreast of developments and plans. We will also encourage you to attend Annual General Meetings to vote for future decisions.

 Should you have any questions or queries relating to any aspect of CSF (National or Lot et Garonne) please don’t hesitate to contact us on the following number (0670 64 68 82) and find out more about CSF activity on the website [www.lot-garonne.cancersupportfrance.org](http://www.lot-garonne.cancersupportfrance.org/) Our website is new and we are keen to make it as useful as possible, so please pass on any suggestions you may have for improvement.

 In the meantime, please look at our Events Calendar and book time in your diaries for the following fun fundraising events.

Thank you once again for your support and we look forward to seeing you throughout the year.

**Dates for your diary:**

March 26th. March Spring Clean Sale and Auction – Montastruc Mairie.

Sunday 23 April – “Mirabelles” concert and 1940’s themed Tea Dance –venue TBC.