

Autumn 2020

ISSUE 137



THE
Simon
STAR



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THANK YOU

Bloomsbury Baptist Church
CFBL School
Chalk Farm Salvation Army
Museum of Homelessness
Pret a Manger
Streets Kitchen
St Giles in the Fields
The Outside Project
The Leather Sellers
The Cruise Portfolio

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Thank you
Hello & Goodbye

Volunteers needed

We are looking for volunteers to help us take food to the guests on the outreach runs.

We go out in central London on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays from 9pm for about 2 hours. We give out hot drinks and food and have chats with guests.

If you are able to commit to a one off shift or a regular shift, or if you have any questions please email us at: rota@simoncommunity.org.uk

Thank you for reading this autumn edition of Simon Star and for supporting the Community. We use this newsletter to let you know what is going on and invite you to share your stories.

If you would like to update, edit or remove your contact details then please get in touch.

You can email us on admin@simoncommunity.org.uk or call the office on 0207 485 6639

WELCOME TO THE SIMON STAR

Welcome to our autumn Simon Star. We hope that this newsletter finds you well in these strange times. Lockdown has meant big changes for the Simon Community. Almost overnight four of the six live in volunteers left the community early to go back to their countries.

All of the outreach services (usually nine per week) stopped abruptly with the lock down preventing gatherings of more than 2 people. We faced further challenges when the house had to isolate to protect vulnerable members with underlying health conditions.

We are very relieved that none of our residents have been ill so far and that we have still been able to provide support for our community on the streets though street work.

We do not know exactly what the future holds for the Community as there is so much uncertainty, but we hope to be able to respond to the changing needs of people on the streets effectively and with agility.

We are thankful to all our supporters whose generosity allows us to carry on with our work.



CORONAVIRUS COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The community carried on providing outreach services until we were told by the government that, due to the pandemic, gathering people together was no longer allowed - we had a tea run that morning in fact!

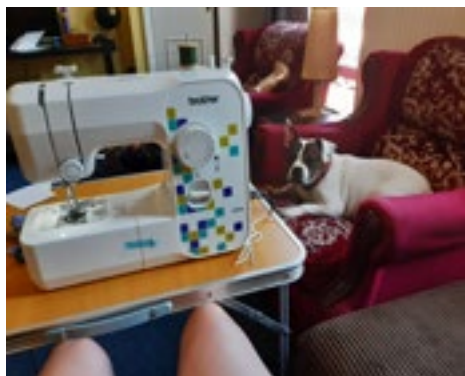
With members of staff having to self-isolate and concern for our residents' health we decided that we should have an "outside" and an "inside" team. "Inside" were live-in volunteers and the residents, "outside" were part-time volunteers and staff members.

Through a local mutual aid group we heard that Chalk Farm Salvation Army had stepped up and five days a week were providing hot meals and showers to people sleeping rough. They were struggling with providing enough food and so the "inside" team started

making up and delivering 30 lunch bags Monday - Friday.

The "outside" team started doing street work. We heard that guests were really missing hot drinks so we decided to make that our priority, we also take out sandwiches made by the residents, and some snacks. We go out for about 2 hours on a set route and usually see around 60 people although this number fluctuates.

When we heard that masks were to be mandatory on public transport and in shops we worried that this might cause problems for guests. We decided to gather up some shirts, get the sewing machine out and start making masks for guests. They've been very popular and we've even been able to respond to some colour requests!



Fred's face cake and Zola helping with mask making

THE BIG GIVE CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE

One donation, twice the impact.

The Big Give runs the UK's biggest match funding campaign, The Christmas Challenge, and The Simon Community are taking part!

For seven days, it offers supporters the opportunity to have their donation doubled.

How does the Christmas Challenge work?

The Christmas Challenge is a match funding campaign where donations to participating charities are doubled. The match funds come from two sources - charities themselves secure some. These funds are then boosted by funds from a 'Big Give Champion' - a trust or foundation - who contributes to the match fund. This collective pot is used to double donations from online supporters when the campaign goes live in December.

We have a target of £31,000 to raise by 5pm on 8 December. We have already secured £7,500 of this Pledge target, meaning that we need to raise a further £23,500. If we are successful in raising the full £31,000, it will be doubled to £62,000. This will be utterly crucial to sustaining our work supporting London's Rough sleepers.

How to donate

Donations must be made between 1 and 8 December to be doubled.

Please get in touch with Jim on fundraiser@simoncommunity.org.uk or 07894 085505 to let him know if you want to take part or ask any questions.



WHAT'S GOING ON...

Back in March when we started to respond to the impending pandemic we got together with some other small homelessness organisations to create a taskforce; The Museum of Homelessness, The Outside Project and Streets Kitchen. We came together to coordinate a response to the pandemic that meant guests on the streets and in "Covid hotels" were still getting food and company. We supported the taskforce by taking them to the wholesalers each week and delivering the shopping to the hub where volunteers were making up lunch packs for guests.

Forty year seven pupils from College Francais Bilingue De Londres (CFBL) School took part in a 'sleep out' on 19 June to raise money for The Simon Community. They wanted to raise money for a healthy eating programme providing guests with fresh fruits and juices to combat malnutrition. They were sponsored to 'bed down' in their gardens, kitchens and even on trampolines! They had a zoom call with Rachel where they asked lots of questions about life on the streets and raised a fantastic £1,152.

The Annual General Meeting of The Simon Community 2020 has been postponed. The Board have

discussed virtual AGM, but to enable inclusive access for all our members the preference would be for a face-to-face meeting. We have confirmed this with the Charity Commission and their guidance has been followed. We will confirm the new date when we are safely able to meet.

At the house there has been a LOT of anti-bacteria spraying! We do this every day on all light switches, bannisters and door handles as part of our Covid-19 precautions.

We have noticed a lot of guests struggling to get clothes and shoes with the day centre closed, if you have donations that you can pass on, please get in touch.



Ryan loading the van with lunch bags to take to Chalk Farm

THANK YOU

Thank you so much to all the people that wrote and sent messages and donations when we told you that we needed a new van.

We bought a black 9 seater Ford minivan Torneo; its fantastic and we are very pleased with it.

Thanks again to our friends at The Cruise Portfolio who sponsored our guests Christmas Dinner. We had an excellent meal cooked by Chelsea and were surprised by a visit from Father Christmas!

HELLO & GOODBYE

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic we said a speedy farewell to live-in volunteers Ashleigh, Amy, Lena and Charlotte. Carla left us at the end of April after a very different final 6 weeks.

Resident Fred has moved into private rented accommodation in South London and has been enjoying the fishing opportunities down there!

Resident Rob has moved into private rented accommodation not too far from 129 so we will be popping round for coffee soon!



We said goodbye to Anna at the end of March who had been our Assistant Community Support Worker. Huge thanks to her for all of her hard work.

Katie joined us in mid March to take over from Anna. She joins us from Quaker Homeless Action, who have been our winter shelter partners for the last two years. She also drives the mobile library that joins us at Street Cafe on Sundays, so we know her quite well already!

