

Autumn 2015

ISSUE 129



THE
Simon
STAR



www.simoncommunity.org.uk

Exciting New
Building
Project!

pages 6 & 7





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THANK YOU

Pret a Manger
Euphorium Bakery
Gail's Bakery
St Giles In The Fields
St Martins Gospel Oak
Robert McAlpine
The Swiss Church
Dylan's Bakery
Scott Whitby Studio

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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.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE PAVEMENT!!

The Pavement, a magazine for street homeless people, is a valued source of information to our guests on the street. We congratulate our friends at the Pavement on 10 years of great magazines for our friends on the street.

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WELCOME TO THE SIMON STAR

Plenty has happened since our last edition. The weather has got warmer, the general election has taken place and our own AGM has been and gone.

In this autumn Simon Star we will meet our new Trustees (page 4) and hear from our volunteers about the March for the Homeless that they took part in earlier this year (page 5).

Full time volunteers Chris and Bridget (who have both left this summer) have interesting news

about what they are doing now. You can read more about this on pages 8 & 9.

Our big news is our cover story about a new building project. Our Director Jamie will tell you this exclusive news on pages 6 & 7.

Thank you for taking the time to read all the news from the Community. We hope that you enjoy our newsletter and we thank you for your interest and support!



Volunteers making sandwiches for the soup run

Simon Community

AGM

On Saturday the 18th May we all got together for our AGM at St Martin's Church in Gospel Oak. It was a good turnout with residents, volunteers, trustees, staff and members all attending.

It was great to see some new faces as well as some old friends. We had a visit that day from 'Dave the Ladle' who used to volunteer in the 90's. Dave was known for taking his own ladle on soup runs just to make sure there would be one on the van. He told us he still has that ladle!

As well as our trustees from last year who all stood again and were re-elected, we also have three new trustees.

Dunk Gray came to the Community as a full time volunteer in 2005 and has been involved in some capacity ever since. Tom McNally has joined the Board as our new Treasurer. Tom is an accountant and has previously volunteered at Crisis.

Since the AGM we have also been recently joined by Mark Brennan, a Project Coordinator for homeless charities who has a lot of experience in the sector to share with to The Simon Community.

Welcome to Tom, Dunk and Mark we are delighted to have you on our Board!



New Trustees Dunk and Tom at the Board Meeting

No More Deaths On Our Streets

Our full time volunteers went along to the March for the Homeless earlier this year. Full time volunteer Lainie shares her experience.

“Housing is a human right! Human right! Human right! Housing is a human right, not a privilege!” the people sang as we strode in solidarity from Downing Street into the heart of the West end earlier this year.

A whole host of housing associations and homeless organisations came together to shed a dark light on the deaths of our friends on the streets.

The average life expectancy of a rough sleeper is about 30 years shorter than the United Kingdom average. (Rough sleeper: male 47, female 43). For some marchers the protest was in memory of the 149 people who died on the streets last year.

It was also to raise awareness of the demolition of council housing to make way for developers, empty houses littered all over London, lack of housing, the rising numbers of homeless and the harsh criminalisation of people sleeping rough. We stood together to say ‘enough is enough’.

The hundreds of marchers were a wonderful eyeful as they meandered around Piccadilly Circus demanding

humane treatment and some simple respect for our homeless friends who often go hours, sometimes days or even longer, invisible amongst the hordes passing by. Fellow campaigners had also arranged for homeless voters to register at the demonstration. Essential items were distributed and hot food was available for all.

The powers are hearing but not listening. Cries and chants are falling upon deaf ears. Insufficient political will and funding are further criminalising rough sleeping.

Lainie Hussain



Lainie and Julie at the March For The Homeless

Exciting New Building Project

We are delighted to share our exciting news about plans to renovate our house at 129 Malden Road!

We are delighted to announce a prospective renovation project that will change the way we live as a community.

We have the opportunity to reconfigure and renovate 129 Malden Road which is not only the residential accommodation for our volunteers and residents but is also where all of outreach services run from. As you can image it gets very busy and congested at times.

This opportunity has come about through the community's relationship with Bloomberg, Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd and Stanhope PLC who put on a successful charity ball in June, 2015, which raised over £75,000.

This has given us the resources to engage architects to draw up and develop a brief and advise on the formulation of a design team to carry out work up to the submission of a full detailed planning application.



129 Malden Road



Alan, Julie & Jamie at the ball!

The project will commence in late September, 2015, and conclude with a detailed planning application to Camden Council in late February/ early March, 2016.

When all the planning is done there will be another fundraising ball held with the aim to raise further funds so the building works can begin.

The project offers a significant opportunity to upgrade, renovate and enhance the current accommodation and outreach work of our community; while also providing us with a class leading building which will be fit for the community's much needed future growth.

I am pleased to say that all members of the community have and will be consulted on the project and we will of course keep all of you updated.

If you would like further details and/ or would like to give input to the work please do get in touch.

Jamie Nalton

If you have any questions for Jamie you can reach him by email at jamie@simoncommunity.org.uk or at the office on 0207 485 6639

Life after Simon

Full time volunteer Chris leaves for a new job with Emmaus

When Chris joined the Community as a full time volunteer in 2014 he didn't have any plans about what he was going to do after. Often when people join us they are taking a break from study or have plans to work towards getting a job. Chris's previous work experience in a corporate environment taught him about what he didn't want to do with his life.

Chris decided to make radical changes to his life and applied for a job at Emmaus, another Homeless Charity. Chris's application was unsuccessful and Emmaus suggested that he get some voluntary experience in the sector. That was when Chris applied to come and live and work with us as a full time volunteer.

Chris wrote about his time here after he left:

"By the end of my year living at 129, I couldn't really believe I had been there that long. It felt as though I was just starting to really understand what community living was about. I made some great friends in the time I was with The Simon Community; people I know I will remain close with and I have some of the most wonderful memories.

I already desperately miss Music Tuesday - never again will I be able to call that 'work'! And this sums up many of my feelings; living at St Joes is not work, it's a way of living. The ideals that have served the charity so well for so long are still extremely strong, and although it is rarely ever smooth, maintaining the key beliefs in understanding and non-judgment is important.

I really look forward to staying in touch with many of the people I met, and hope to stay close to Community wherever I end up."

After a year with the Simon Community, Chris applied to Emmaus again and got the job! Chris is now working at Emmaus Rochester as a Trainee Community Manager. We think that they are lucky to have him and we wish him all the best.



Chris in the garden at 129

Bridget's Very Long Walk

Full time volunteer Bridget leaves the Community - on foot!

St Joseph's House changes all the time. Our full time volunteers seem to be strangers for about half a day, within a fortnight they are part of the furniture and after a few months life seems unimaginable without them.

Pretty quickly they mention that they have already been here for six months and are starting to think about what to do next. Sometimes they tell you that they are going to University, sometimes they tell you that they would like to work in homelessness and take their Simon experiences out into the world.

What you don't expect them to say is that they are planning to walk 900 miles on their own camping all the way from Land's End to John O'Groats!

This is what volunteer Bridget decided to do when she left the Community. She talks about why she has chosen this mammoth trip in her blog:

"For me the walk is about freedom. Freedom from the stress and consumerist clutter of modern life to return to a more basic kind of existence – carrying only the things I need to survive with me. Freedom to go where I choose- I will be

surrounded by natural beauty and I will be able to explore it at my leisure; I am not interested in taking the most direct route, but the most scenic. Freedom from responsibility – recently I have been working under quite a lot of pressure so it will give me time to reflect on my own for a while. I realise that it will be a physical and a mental challenge but I think the rewards will be worth it. In a nutshell – I am hoping it will turn me into a healthier and happier individual."

Bridget walked to raise money for Women's Aid in her home town of Leicester. You can read updates from Bridget's journey from her blog at <https://bridgetwalks.wordpress.com/>

We are pleased to report that Bridget reached John O'Groats safely!



WHAT'S GOING ON...

It has been an eventful summer in the Community, with lots of change in the house and people leaving and arriving.

We have been working with a psychotherapist member of the Institute of Group Analysis who specialises in therapeutic communities. This has been an interesting though challenging experience so far and we are really starting to feel the benefits of focusing on how we work as a group and how we can support each other. Everyone is working hard to create the best environment possible for guests, residents and volunteers that will join us in the future.

Our Music Tuesday group is currently taking a break as we were not seeing many guests. We are hoping to start this up again at some point, maybe somewhere more central so that it is easier for people to get to.

We have exciting news about a new service that will be starting in January. We are starting an indoor evening drop in service at Bloomsbury Baptist Church. This is a great space where we will be able to welcome guests to join us for food, hospitality and some time to relax. Everyone is really looking forward to getting involved with this.

There has been lots of change in the house recently with almost a whole new set of full time volunteers starting at the same time.

Our residents have done a fantastic job welcoming everyone and getting stuck in to the work to get the outreach services out. We have still managed to find time to have fun in the house with birthday parties and leaving lunches. In September we even celebrated Mexican Independence Day!

That's what life is like in the Simon Community, it may be busy and sometimes difficult... but it's never dull!!

COMMUNITY DAY

This year Community Day will be at St Martin's Church Gospel Oak on Saturday 14th November at 11am.

For more information call the office on 0207 485 6639

Coomeran's Pilgrimage

One of our residents, Coomeran, recently went a very long walk! Coomeran joined the pilgrimage from St Martin-in-the-Fields which follows the famous Pilgrim's Way to Canterbury to raise money for The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields.

Coomeran joined with over 100 walkers and volunteers to complete the 74 mile pilgrimage over 4 days. We were pleased to see him return safely and even though his feet were sore, he got straight back to helping out in the house!

Coomeran was a regular on our outreach services when he lived on the streets. He joined our winter shelter at the start of this year and joined us as a resident at the house soon after.

Now that the weather is getting colder we are starting to think about the next winter shelter. We are delighted that Coomeran is going to be working with us and will be leading on this project as he knows exactly what the guests need.

If you have some news to share, good or sad, or have someone you would like to remember please get in touch with us at 129 Malden Rd, London NW5 4HS



Coomeran on the way to Canterbury

HELLO & GOODBYE

Since our last issue we have said goodbye to residents Gabriel, Anwar, Nigel and Bill. Residents Rob and Coomeran who came to us through the night shelter have now moved into the house. More recently resident Chris has joined us. Several guests have made good use of our emergency accommodation.

Full time volunteers Chris, Bridget, Oscar, Thomas and Lainie have left and we have been joined by Julie, Yusuke from Japan, Gaby from Mexico and Giustino from Italy.

