

March 2012

ISSUE 118



THE
Simon
STAR



www.simoncommunity.org.uk

The background image shows a close-up of a Gothic-style building facade. A large, multi-paned window with intricate tracery is visible. In the foreground, there are green bushes with small white flowers, partially obscuring the lower part of the building.

SIMON OPENS NEW DAY CENTRE

see page 3 for details...



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Thank You's

Jo at Tikun
Yateley School
Bloomberg
Trui at Camberwell College of Arts

Sam McCormack and all of her friends for their generous donations and sleep out fund raiser

Pret A Manger for their continual supply of sandwiches

WELCOME

Winter has almost gone and the promise of spring and renewal are within sight. For homeless people especially, it is an enormous relief to have survived another winter and hope that this year, sometime, somehow they may find a place to rest and recover from the misery they endure.

We too hope that we will be able to offer that chance to more people. Full time volunteers have written about the new day centre on page 3. This opens up new opportunities for us to contact and support those who are still outside. Even more, it will allow us to bring more people in from the streets and give them the chance to recover, develop and grow. One of the outstanding consequences we see in some of those who have found a new way of living through their time in Community is their commitment to help others who are still homeless. Without their hard work and dedication it would be much harder to keep our outreach services running.

Lent is a time when we think of people less fortunate than ourselves. It is good to be reminded that all the work of the Simon Community is aimed at supporting and helping the very poorest people in society and so we once again thank you for your kind donations and ongoing support.

Happy Easter

MT Gibson-Watt, Chair

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SIMON OPENS NEW DAY CENTRE



Part time volunteer Stuart prepares lunch for our guests in the day centre

Our full time volunteers tell us about our exciting new day centre!

We have had the new day centre open for our guests since the 18th of January. A dedicated group of volunteers provide a relaxed and welcoming environment currently running three days a week in North London. We are getting between 20 and 45 people a day and guests are enjoying having a more spacious place to relax.

At the day centre we are providing washing and drying services and sandwiches or hot food at lunch. We also have a TV, DVD and video player and we have three computers running so that our guests can access the internet. This is a very valuable resource in our day centre as guests can work on things such as their CVs and receive support with this. We have had a lot of new faces coming through the door as well as many of our old regulars from hospitality at 129.

We have also been using the space for training on a Thursday for both full time and part time volunteers and it has been very beneficial to have the space to do this.

The residents of 129 have appreciated having the hospitality taken out from their living space and there is now a more homely atmosphere.

We are excited about the future plans for the day centre including having film nights, English and IT classes, arts and crafts, yoga and installing

showers. Our guests have also said that they would like us to bring in a hairdresser and medical professionals. We are waiting to find out if we get an extension on the lease past April 2012 which will mean that we can start putting our plans into action and ensure that we provide what our guests really need and want.

If any Simon supporters have any art work, house plants or DVDs that they would like to donate this would be gratefully received.

We have had a promising beginning to this exciting new project and we are looking forward to watching it grow and continue to develop.

SIMON AGM INVITE

The Management Committee of The Simon Community gives notice that under article 10 of the Constitution, the Annual General Meeting will be held on 21st April 2012 at 11.00 am. 1 Hilldrop Road, London N7 0JE for the purpose of receiving the Annual Report, Accounts and electing the Management Committee for the next year.

If you are interested in attending, please contact the office.

XMAS UPDATE

Resident and volunteer [Andy](#) tells us about the Christmas highlights in the Community.

Christmas is one of our busiest times of the year. However, without the kind donations from our supporters, it would not have been such a success.

The Night Shelter is going from strength to strength. It began in the beginning of December and is running until the end of March. With the recent cold snap, it is a welcome respite for our guests who would otherwise be sleeping in the cold.

Adam, one of the guests at the Night shelter said "What makes the night shelter special is you feel safe and have warmth and there is a great camaraderie. Also there is no form filling and the Simon Community accept you for what you are."

“ What makes the night shelter special is, you feel safe ”

The Christmas Carolling in Trafalgar Square was a wonderful evening enjoyed by residents, guests, staff and past volunteers. With over 200 people in the audience, we got the festive season started with all the classic carols, finishing on 'We wish you a Merry Christmas'. It was a great opportunity to get the Simon Community name out there by passing out the latest Simon Star and the event gave us an opportunity to collect lots of necessary donations.

Over Christmas our tea run service went out every day and we saw an increase in guests at our Street Cafe (see the picture). Our Christmas meal was enjoyed by over 85 guests and we handed out winter warmer packs kindly donated by Bloomberg



Street Cafe at Christmas 2011



Simon Community Street Cafe from 1970

and Christmas boxes full of festive treats donated by Yateley School. Many thanks to everyone who volunteered on the day. We would also like to thank all at St. Marks for the kind use of their church for the second year in a row – long may this continue!

On Christmas day itself, all in the Community enjoyed a lovely lunch together and played games. The food was kindly donated by Marks & Spencer's in Camden. The community would like to say a special thank you to Chelsea, Tom and Ian for cooking a delicious Christmas lunch for the 17 people we had in the house on Christmas day.

- [Andy O'Brien](#)

MEET OUR NEW TRUSTEE



New part-time volunteer trustee Mike tells us why he is hopeful for the Community.

I first became involved with the Simon Community last year, because I wanted to use my spare time and the skills I have to a more positive end than the day job allows. I saw an advertisement for Simon Community trustees, went out on street work on a chilly Tuesday night and have never regretted that decision once.

Although I haven't been around in the Community for as long as many others, it's been time enough to witness what Simon achieves in the community including its outreach services, campaigning, and helping the long term homeless as much on their terms as practically possible. It was great to know that I found an organisation that wasn't prepared to compromise its fundamental beliefs to fit in with the politics of the day, or be a slave to other's targets and Five Year Plans.

The Simon Community is justly proud of its independence from accepting Government funding, but what does this mean for Simon? Unfortunately, we already have to strive harder to raise the funding we need to carry on our work. But at least we have the freedom to control our own destiny, having

never taken government cash. So, in spite of government cuts and talk of a 'double dip' recession, I have a real feeling of optimism about the role the Simon Community can play in the coming years, and the positive difference it can make based on the energy and commitment I have already witnessed by those who live within, work for and engage with the Community.

The future may be challenging, but from what I already know about Simon, it relishes a challenge or two. I predict we will still be making our contribution to society long after the present crop of politicians have retired to imagine the achievements they can scribble about in their memoirs. And I think I know which set of people will have made the most positive difference!

- Mike Coleman

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Phil and all the Simon Community team!

Firstly, I just wanted to say how much I admire the work that you are doing over there and know that it is making an incredible difference and both personally and on behalf of Tikun, we are privileged to be able to work with you and make a small contribution to what you are doing!

I think that the day centre and your long term plans are amazing and have amazing potential and therefore would be proud for Tikun to be able to help in any way possible, from fundraising to get equipment donated/brought to any other bits and bobs that you need help with. All the best,

Jo from Tikun

For more information about Tikun, visit their website at www.tikun.co.uk or follow them on Twitter @TikunLondon

CAMPAIGNING

STILL SUPPORTING SQUATTING

Director, Bob Baker tells us why campaigning is such an important part of the Simon Community.

In recent editions of the Simon Star I have written about the Simon Community's support for the campaign against the coalition government's bill to make squatting empty residential houses and flats a criminal offence rather than, as at present, a civil offence.

A couple of Simon Community supporters have contacted me because they are concerned about the Community's stance on this issue so I thought it would be a good idea to explain the situation in a bit more detail.

If squatting has a bad image it is largely due to the sensationalist coverage of atypical cases where people's houses are squatted "while they have nipped out to buy a pint of milk". This does not reflect the reality of the vast majority of squats which are occupied by people who are homeless, desperate and poverty stricken who take to squatting as a last resort, and for obvious reasons only occupy empty buildings. According to the campaign group Homes From Empty Homes, there are over 930,000 empty residential properties in the country and over 350,000 of these have been empty for longer than six months. At a time of a serious and worsening housing crisis this is a scandal.

The bill (the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill) is before the House of Lords at the moment. If passed, it will make squatting an unoccupied residential property a

criminal offence with penalties of a fine of up to £5,000 or a prison sentence of up to a year. Essentially this will result in criminalising many homeless people.

The Simon Community has always taken its responsibilities to represent the views and the interests of homeless people very seriously. In this case it is important to recognise that squatters are homeless people. This legislation is an attack on people which will result in criminal prosecution for being poor and homeless.

The Simon Community is proud to be part of the campaign and we hope that as a result of the concerns expressed by those opposed to this measure that the House of Lords will be able to make significant amendments to the bill to protect some of the most vulnerable people in society.

Introducing laws to make homelessness a crime will do nothing to address the fundamental causes of poverty and exclusion in society.

If you have any views on this issue do please contact us and perhaps write an article for the Simon Star.

- Bob Baker



MP Caroline Lucas speaking at the Bank of Ideas in London, a squat that was transformed into a community centre in November 2011. Ref: <http://www.heardinlondon.com/>

CAMPAIGNING

COUNCIL HOUSING CAMPAIGN

Simon supports a new campaign to defend council housing.

Representatives of the Simon Community attended a Housing Emergency meeting in Parliament recently. Housing Emergency is a coalition of organisations, tenants, local and national housing groups, and others concerned about the housing crisis.

It is led by Defend Council Housing (DCH) which is a campaigning organisation opposed to the coalition government's new housing strategy.

DCH sees the strategy as an assault on the very idea of council housing and a big step towards privatisation through underfunding and a range of other strategies.

The government is proposing to remove security of tenancies by introducing fixed-term tenancies; substantial rent rises; subsidies for more transfers from council ownership to Housing Associations and increasing the sale of council homes through the Right to Buy scheme.

This is happening at a time when no new homes with affordable rents are being built; when Housing Benefit caps are beginning to bite; and when we are facing a serious and growing housing and homelessness crisis.

One solution to address both the housing crisis and the current economic downturn would be substantial investments to improve and build new council housing. DCH says that "DCH and

Housing Emergency campaigners will work together with others including opponents of new anti-squatting laws, to oppose attacks on tenancies, rents and benefits and demand more council and other homes for rent."

The Simon Community is concerned that these measures in the new housing strategy will increase the housing crisis both by rendering more people homeless and by preventing access to council accommodation for those seeking a way out of homelessness. We will be watching this campaign with interest and will be looking at ways we can support greater access to good quality council accommodation at fair rents.

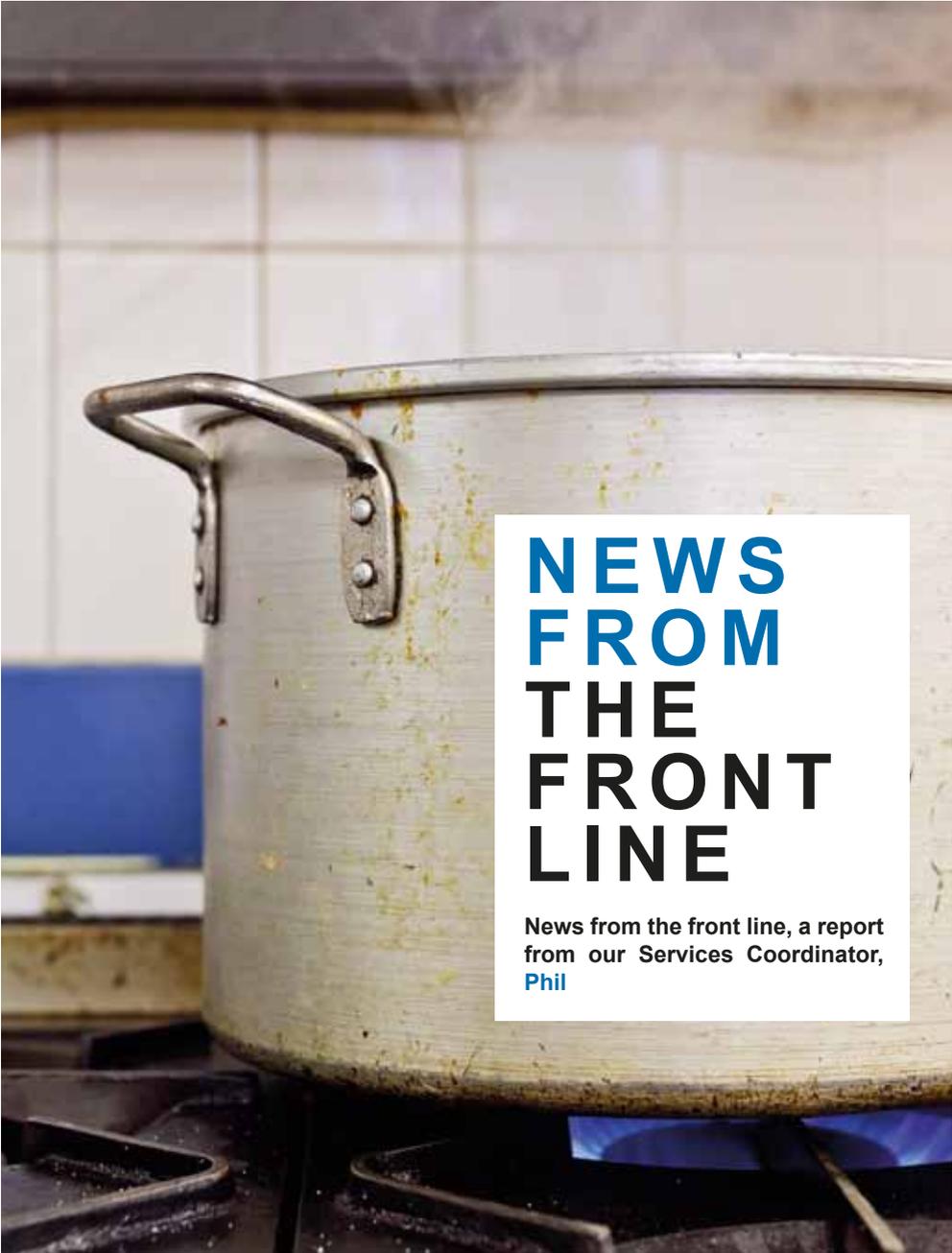
- Bob Baker

For more information on the campaign, visit:

www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk/dch



Ken Loach speaking at the Housing Emergency meeting in the Houses of Commons February 2012.



NEWS FROM THE FRONT LINE

News from the front line, a report
from our Services Coordinator,
Phil

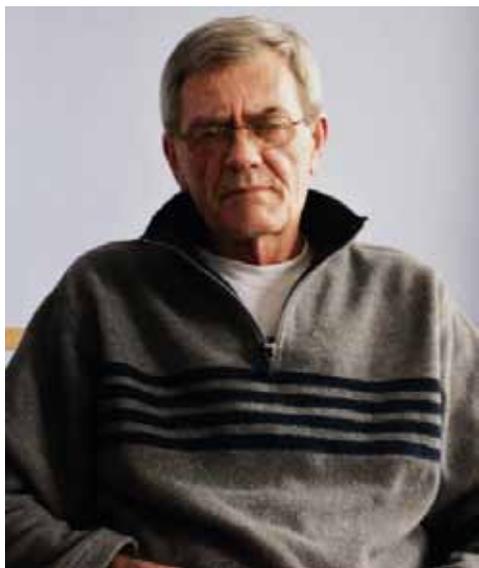
It's been all systems go in the Community since the last Simon Star and we have had some exciting developments.

One of our long standing residents Robert, completed a successfully planned move-on in February. Robert has been with us for about 6 years and has been integral to the Community.

We are sad to say good bye to Robert but we will be paying him regular visits. It is very encouraging that we have been able to support Robert to move on into supported accommodation.

When I first arrived, the Community was experiencing difficulties in moving residents on but with improved knowledge and a greater understanding of the benefits system and local services like social housing and older people's services, we have been able to make some headway in this area.

A special dinner was organised for Robert and we all wish him the best. Three other residents are currently actively seeking move-on accommodation and we are extremely pleased that one of our



Good bye and good luck to Robert

star fundraisers and residents Andy has secured a voluntary placement with Asthma UK as an intern which is very encouraging.

The day centre is going very well and we are seeing an increase in guests with over 40 guests attending. We are pleased that Shelli, our new full time volunteer has joined the community and she is a welcome addition.

The community is in a very good position at present offering a range of services. These services are carried out with professionalism, care and attention. I am very proud of what we are achieving.

- Phil Hole

NEW COMMITEE

A new Development Committee has been created to bring together supporters of the Community who are interested in establishing long term fundraising and development strategies.

If you would like to get involved or know someone with expertise in fundraising and development, please do get in touch.

A REMINDER

To save on postage and paper, we are encouraging supporters to sign up to receive the Simon Star via email.

If you are interested, please email info@simoncommuntiy.org.uk or phone us on 0207 485 6639.

NEW VOLUNTEER

New full time volunteer Shelli from Medway in Kent tells us about her experiences in the Community.

I came to the Community because I am very passionate about fighting social injustice. I have a history of working as a charity fundraiser and as a carer. I have been involved in a lot of political movements and was drawn to the Simon Community because I wanted to help people but since being here I have found that the Community is very in line with my principles.

I like the fact that we have a great variety of services and that we don't take money from the Government so we can do great campaigns against them. I like it that we help people on a lot of different levels and I really like going out on the soup run because it's important to bring our services to people on the street which makes it more accessible.

The vast majority of the guests I have met have been friendly and polite and I wish more people could see the kind and appreciative side to homelessness.

- Shelli Clarke



Shelli in the women's group kitchen about to enjoy some pizza

TRUSTEE RECRUITMENT

We are on the lookout for new trustees to help with the strategic development of the Community. We are particularly looking for people with experience in human resource management, fundraising, politics, advertising and media.

If you are interested or know anyone that might be, please email info@simoncommunity.org.uk or phone the office.

WEBSITE REVAMP



The current Simon Community website

We are currently in the process of redesigning our website to make it easier for visitors to find out the information they need. We want the website to showcase all the brilliant work that the Community does, signpost people to our services and other organisations, bring in volunteers and much needed donations.

If you have any feedback on our current website www.simoncommunity.org.uk then please do send us your thoughts on paper, via email, Twitter or Facebook.

WOMENS GROUP UPDATE

Full time volunteer Lydia, updates us on the wonderful women's group.

The women's group has been running successfully for 6 months now and we are really pleased with the way it is progressing. We now have regular guests that we have built good relationships with and a great group of regular volunteers.

We have been enjoying cooking together, socialising and card making is also popular. The guests all get involved with the running of the group and interact well with each other.

I have noticed over the weeks that our guests are becoming more open with us and are getting more involved with the preparation of the food and the clearing up afterwards which is very encouraging. We also make time to chat to people on a one to one basis about how they have been since the last group as well as having some really nice group chats.

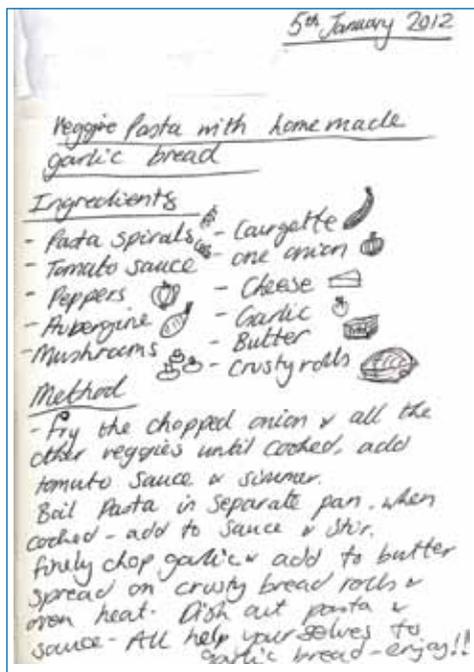
"I find coming to the group therapeutic and a chance to socialise and meet different people"

We are also doing some outreach work with various organisations including the Marylebone Womens Project and St. Mungo's to identify homeless women who might want to come to our group.

I spoke to the group one evening and asked the guests what the group meant to them. These are some of the quotes:

"Good group, good food"

"A lovely atmosphere"



Latest recipe from the women's group recipe book

"I find coming to the group therapeutic and a chance to socialise and meet different people"

"I look forward to coming to the group and it cheers me up" - Aine (part time volunteer)

We are confident that the women's group will continue to grow and look forward to seeing it flourish.

- Lydia Armitage

TEA RUN WITH JENNY

The Green Party Mayor electoral candidate for London, **Jenny Jones** tells us about how and why she supports the Simon Community.

Jenny first started volunteering with the Community because “their ethos was so inclusive, often using ex rough sleepers as volunteers to help others out of the snare that homelessness creates”.

This is an excerpt from her recent blog about volunteering with the Community.

Today I went out with them again. I was up at 05:30am for tea and porridge at home, arriving at the Simon house for 06:50. The van was loaded and three of us set out for the four stops to give food and hot tea or coffee to those waiting for us.

The procedure is: the van pulls up next to the waiting group that varies between 8-24 people. The back of the van goes up to give access to huge urns of tea and coffee. The side of the van opens on two enormous boxes of sandwiches and baguettes.

“I recognised one man from twelve years before – a long time to be sleeping rough.”

The people form a patient and very polite queue either at the tea urn or the sandwiches and we three volunteers serve them their choices.

People at the first stop, were mainly old timers and I recognised one man from twelve years before – a long time to be sleeping rough.

The second stop is near Charing Cross and it's a larger group waiting for us, generally younger and of more nationalities.

At the third stop, near Covent Garden, it was old timers again, mainly British and Eastern European.

At the fourth stop, at Marble Arch, the people waiting were a mix of old timers and relative novices. Some of them always tried for hostel places, while others preferred to be independent.



Director Bob Baker with Jenny Jones outside the day centre

One man, very well spoken, had spent last night under bushes in Hyde Park. He told me he had been in London for ten days, mostly sleeping out without a sleeping bag because he didn't like to take a bed that someone else could have.

And I remember why I liked going on the tea run. It's not about being kind to the poor, or making ourselves feel better by seeing others in a worse position. But like most of us, as someone with a social conscience, I worry about the big problems of homelessness and poverty in an appallingly separated and increasingly unequal society, but

On one level, the tea and sandwich run is refreshing in being a very limited solution to a very limited problem, that is, there are cold, hungry people and we can give them a hot drink and food to make them warmer and less hungry, there and then.

We aren't solving their problem of being hungry and cold later, or not finding a bed for the night, or being beaten up by thugs who think it's fun to be violent to a vulnerable person, but for the time it takes to pour their cup of tea, find the sandwich they want, and listen to some of their stories, we can see they feel a bit better and are a bit better prepared for another day of hardship.

- Taken from Jenny Jones' blog 'Feeding London's homeless with the Simon Community' on her website
<http://www.jennyforlondon.org/>

OBITUARIES

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN



Denise (1956-2011) with Tommy and Alan in Anton Street

Dear Editor,

Denise Martin loved the Simon Community. She was a resident, a co-worker and a friend, whose love of the Simon Community family over many years remained an important part of her life. Denise made friends easily and liked to spend time with and helping people.

Denise was from Norfolk, but lived in London and in Kent and over the past ten or so years settled in her own flat in Oxford; living near several good friends and having a job taking children to and from school.

Denise loved children and was a proud aunt of her nieces and nephew.

She was a great friend with a kind heart, a wicked sense of humour and laugh, who we were privileged to have had as our friend.

Denise passed away at the end of October 2011, after a serious illness. She is already missed by many.

Yours sincerely,
Sarah House and Martin Newell

Dear Editor,

May I, with great sadness, inform you and the readers of the Simon Star of the recent death of my mother, Jane Jones.

Jane supported Simon over many years. She met Anton, the founder of the Community, and attended his memorial service in Westminster Cathedral in 1978.

She was a long term financial supporter of the Community and also supported individuals.

An ex-resident told me what a very good friend my mother was to him and she had ex-residents to stay in order to give them some quiet recuperation from Community life.

At the funeral, friends and family were invited to donate to the Community in memory of my mother as she was always very pleased to be a part of the Simon Community.

Yours Sincerely,
Steve Jones

APPEAL

This month's appeal is for our new day centre that you have read about throughout the Simon Star. Although our day centre has been up and running since mid January, we still have a long way to go.

The day centre is equipped with the basics, but this month we are appealing to our supporters for financial help to make the day centre more 'homely' and to extend the services that we can offer guests.

As you read in the day centre article on page 3, we are keen to offer services such as yoga, art and cooking lessons which all costs money.

We have also asked our guests and volunteers what they think will make the day centre a better place.

Suggestions include spending money on a dining table, nice chairs, table tennis table, pool table and paintings.

Although we need funds to develop our day centre, we also need money to continue all of our other necessary services such as our street cafe and women's group which is expanding by the week.



Some guests enjoying a film in the day centre

Regular donations from supporters as well as legacies are the best way for us to ensure we can provide our services to those who are in the most need. Please do tell your friends and family members about us and our appeal if you have not done so already.

As always, thank you for your ongoing support.

PLEASE SPONSOR HENRY

Sponsor Henry who is running for the Simon Community.

I would just like to write a few words to thank all the people who have been so generous in sponsoring me in my bid to run the Paris Marathon this April as well as remind people who have it on their to-do list that time is running out!

Training has really picked up since the beginning of this year and I am now wholly focused on the challenge that lies ahead.

I am running over 50 miles a week and that is due to increase over the next couple of weeks. Please support me in this and give whatever you can, no amount is too small.

Thank you,

Henry

You can sponsor me via:

www.justgiving.com/henry-ellis-paul or by texting IPJG76 followed by the amount you would like to give (ie IPJG76 £10) to 70070.

Alternatively contact the Simon Community directly on 0207 485 6639.

Henry Ellis-Paul, part-time volunteer



GIFT AID

Please complete this form and return it with your donation to: [The Simon Community, P.O. Box 1187, London, NW5 4HW](#). Alternatively you can make a secure donation online via our website, why not visit us at: www.simoncommunity.org.uk

The Gift Aid scheme is for gifts of money by individuals who pay UK tax. Basic rate tax is 20 per cent, so this means that if you give £10 using Gift Aid, it's worth £12.50 to the charity. For donations between 6 April 2008 and 5 April 2011 the charity or CASC will also get a separate government supplement of three pence on every pound you give.

Title: _____ Initial: _____ Surname: _____
Address: _____
_____ Post code: _____

Please treat:

- The enclosed gift of £_____ as a Gift Aid donation; OR
- All gifts of money that I make today and in the future as Gift Aid donations until I notify you otherwise; OR
- All gifts of money that I have made in the past 6 years and all future gifts of money that I make from the date of this declaration as Gift Aid donations until I notify you otherwise.

Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/_____
Telephone: _____ Mobile: _____
Email: _____

Please notify us if you change your name or address OR if your circumstances change and you no longer pay sufficient income tax and/or capital gains tax.

Please tick the appropriate box(es).

I would like further information on including Simon in my will; I would like further information on volunteering as

a trustee, volunteer OR worker;

I would like to receive Simon Star by email OR post.

I enclose:

a cheque/postal order made payable to "The Simon Community".

