

Spring 2015

ISSUE 128



THE  
*Simon*  
STAR



[www.simoncommunity.org.uk](http://www.simoncommunity.org.uk)

Winter Night  
Shelters

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  
 Amber Shafi  
 Michelle and Roisin from FCJ  
 The London Tea Company  
 Time Out  
 Dr Martens  
 All our individual donors and supporters



Thank you for reading this spring 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.

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# WELCOME TO THE SIMON STAR

Welcome to the spring edition of the Simon Star. We hope that this newsletter finds you well.

Since the last issue we have been busy with the services that are much needed through the coldest months of the year. The winter shelter has been open since 1st January (more on page 10).

On a very sad note, we will be remembering our much loved and respected volunteer, Ellen, who passed away at the end of last year.

There is a memorial service for Ellen and you can find the detail on page 8.

With Easter round the corner, this issue will feature a lent appeal by our Chair, MT Gibson Watt (page 5).

Also we will be introducing you to our new Director Jamie Nalton (page 4).

Our cover story in this issue is about winter night shelters, how they are run and why we still need them.

**Simon Community AGM**  
**11am - 1.30pm**  
**Saturday 18th April 2015**  
**St Martin's Church, Vicars Rd, London NW5 4NL**

**New Boots!**

Thank you to Dr Marten's who have donated lots of new boots and shoes for us to give out to our guests again this year.

Often people on the street have to take what they can get, so brand new shoes that fit properly are a very welcome gift.

## Welcoming Jamie

We are pleased to tell you that we have a new Director. Jamie Nalton joined us as an interim Community Manager last Christmas and has been with us since then. In February he was appointed as the new Community Director and is now officially in post.

Jamie has a lot of experience in the homelessness sector that he gained through working for C4WS, the Camden Winter Shelter providers who organise the church winter shelters in the borough.

Jamie first came to us when he was working as a consultant who travelled the country advising night shelter providers on best practice.

Jamie told us: "I am honoured to work for the Simon Community, a charity that not only helps those without support but also campaigns on their behalf".

Jamie lives in South West London with wife Jhoanna and three year old daughter Jessica.



Jamie in the Simon Community office

## Lent Appeal

We have been fortunate these last few years to have benefited from help from St Mungo's, with the day centre and our local church, with the vicarage.

The day centre was a great success, providing an oasis for people still outside and a place where they could take stock, have a shower, do their washing and find a friendly ear and willing help. The vicarage has given people the chance to come in from the street and begin to find their way to the future.

Sadly both of these premises have been needed by their owners for other, equally valuable work and we now need to find and finance new alternatives.

Our new, full-time Director, Jamie Nalton, who has been interim Manager for the last year, is working to find new premises. He has great experience, having developed and run the Camden Churches Winter Shelter programme for six years. So he has direct knowledge and understanding of the problems faced by the growing number of people who find themselves homeless.

As we take no money from government this leaves us free to continue to try to fill the gaps in what is available through the now contract bound and controlled voluntary and statutory agencies.

This does mean that we are completely dependent on the generosity of our supporters to continue the work we do.

For this coming year we would like to develop our work with homeless women, find another house to take people in, have a day centre, for respite from the loneliness and misery of the street, or a shop that would give those who live with us the chance to reconnect to the wider world. All the while continuing the day-to-day work of living as a community of volunteers and homeless people, using our tea and soup runs and street cafes as a way to support and bring hope to those still outside.

Any donation you can make will make a difference. Thank you.

MT Gibson Watt  
Lent 2015

# Night Shelters

**Director Jamie talks about why we still need winter night shelters and his experience of how they operate in London today**

As our regular readers and supporters will be aware, The Simon Community runs a winter shelter in a hired church hall every year, from the beginning of January to the end of March (the presumed coldest months).

This is where up to 8 of our guests, who would normally live on the streets, are offered a safe, warm, comfortable place to stay every evening with the offer a home cooked meal, spend time with our volunteers and a good nights sleep on a memory foam mattress with a pillow and their own new sleeping bag. As I type these words I realise what a basic right this should be for everyone but our guests see it as a luxury!

Winter shelters in churches have been around for many years going right back to the 1800's and were mainly run by the Salvation Army. 160 years on and the need for night shelters continues to increase.

Most of this need is met through rolling church winter shelters where 7 churches in a local area will take it in turns one night a week to host 10-20 street homeless guests, providing a meal, support around issues, a bed and then breakfast.

Why just in the winter? Well of course homelessness is an all year issue, but when the temperature drops it becomes a life or death situation. What do local councils do about people sleeping on the streets in the winter?

The help on offer for those with no statutory right to assistance is that if the temperature is anticipated to drop below zero for 3 consecutive nights then the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is put into action.

In theory this means all local authorities will open extra places in hostels or night shelters to stop people dying of cold related issues. I say theory because SWEP is a humanitarian obligation for the councils but not legally binding or an absolute right of a rough sleeper.

Once the temperatures rises above freezing the SWEP and the extra bed places are closed. So it is clear that unless churches and other charitable night shelters offer this winter emergency accommodation we would likely see more people die on the streets due to lack of provision. Especially when you take the number of people using the shelters. 2013/14 winter season saw 1,577 guests

(1,303 in London) offered overnight shelter for varying periods of time. I have no doubt that number will have increased this year.

With part of the message here being that we salute the work of all the night shelters across the country I feel it also shows the massive need for charities like the Simon Community to not only respond to the needs of the homeless all year round but to also keep shouting from the roof tops that provision for the soon to be and already homeless is not good enough and that we must look at different ways to support and house the vast numbers who find themselves without adequate provision or support.

There is no easy answer because we are dealing with thousands of free thinking individuals for many of whom the statutory/government routes out of homelessness are just not effective or diverse enough.

Thank you for your continued support and belief in our work.

Jamie Nalton

If you would like to find out more about our night shelter or are interested in helping out or fundraising you are welcome to get in touch with us at the office.



**Volunteer Michelle serving dinner at the Winter Night Shelter**

# REST IN PEACE ELLEN MULLIN

## Ellen's friends in the Community share their memories

My time spent with Ellen mostly consisted of early morning tea runs and I can honestly say that Ellen never once let us down, always on time and totally reliable. The only problem with her was that our time was limited, and Ellen loved to talk with people. At times it was hell to get her away.

she would go out of her way to help anyone.

I am glad I had the chance of meeting her and I am going to miss her. God help St Peter and his lot when she gets up there!

David B

We also spent quite a few times at Kew Gardens just walking and being shown some of the most strange and weirdest plants I have ever seen. Her energy was quite unbelievable.

Ellen will be sorely missed by everyone in the Community, but especially by the guests she helped on the tea runs and streetwork.

There is a memorial service being held for Ellen in Kew Gardens in May, if you knew Ellen and would like to come with us, please get in touch.

She will be missed.

Bill W

What can I say about Ellen? She was a right pain in the neck! I used to do street work with her every Friday because no one else would do it and she used to drag me around London all night until about 2 in the morning.



I used to wind her up all the time about someone her age drinking Complan but she was just as bad, she used to wind me up also. And she used to call me a gobshite all the time.

But apart from that she was one of the most friendliest, helpful, kind (and annoying) people I know and

# FUNDRAISING STORIES

## Running Man Dan

One of our part time volunteers is running 3 marathons in 8 weeks to raise money for the Simon Community. Dan will run 78.6 miles when he races in Brighton, Edinburgh and Liverpool this year!

Dan says on his page "I am proud to be part of an organisation that doesn't judge, doesn't preach and doesn't place conditions upon charity." We are lucky to have him on our side.

To support Dan please look at his page at <https://www.justgiving.com/Daniel-Louw>

## Tea for everyone!

The London Tea Company heard about our tea run and wanted to get involved.

After coming out on tea run with us and handing out hot drinks to people who have just woke up on the street, they offered to provide us with enough tea to keep us going for a whole year!!

Thanks London Tea Co. your donation is gratefully received!

## Sponsored Bounce!

Thank you to Finchampstead Girl Guides who had a sponsored trampolining night to raise money for the Simon Community. The £100 will certainly help our guests, we hope that you had a fun evening! Thank you for your support.

## Time Out Tuck Shop

Staff at Time Out magazine wanted started a tuck shop for their staff to raise money to help our guests. Their donation has gone towards new canopies for our Street Cafe to keep guests dry while they eat and drink with us at the weekend. Thanks Time Out!



London Tea Co. staff enjoying the tea run!

## WHAT'S GOING ON...

It seems like Christmas was such a long time ago now, there has been so much going on in the Community.

One big change in the house happened when we said goodbye to our resident Phillip. Regular readers will have read Phillip's story of how he came into the Community through the night shelter and ended up in charge of coordinating that shelter several years later.

Phillip transformed the house with his amazing housekeeping and attention to detail. It became much more homely through his efforts.

We were sad to see Phillip go but happy that we were able to support him in returning to South Africa. We wish you all the very best Phillip.

Despite Phillip leaving, the winter shelter has been running smoothly under the steady eye of full time volunteer, Oscar. We are full with 8 regular guests who we are working with to provide whatever support we can.

We have made a slight change to our early morning tea run. We found that there were other organisations going out early on a Sunday morning and providing hot drinks and food, so we

have stopped going out on a Sunday for now and added Thursday morning instead. This means we now go out on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The times and locations are the same and can be found on our website at <http://www.simoncommunity.org.uk/services.html>

We will be keeping an eye on what is needed with regard to the tea run and do our best to provide the most effective help.

One great piece of news that we have to share is that the Women's Group is restarting! Sofie and Bridget's efforts were rewarded when they found us a great venue at The Swiss Church.

Our female volunteers are going to meet with new guests to decide what they would like to do at the group in terms of activities.

Some other good news is that since the last issue we have two new residents in the house who are working with us to support our friends who are still out on the street.

Thank you to all our supporters and donors who make all this work possible. We could do none of this without your help.

## LETTERS

### RIP Ellen

I would like to say goodbye to such a wonderful person, who had such a big heart and would make time for anyone.

We both started volunteering for Simon on the same day and we became great friends. Ellen would have fundraising dinner parties with family and friends to raise money for the homeless out there for flasks, blankets and clothes etc.

She was the angel of all angels and she will be sadly missed by many people.

We had some great times together when we was on soup runs. Sometimes Ellen would stay out late and we would get back at about 1 or 2 in the morning. If she could she would have stayed out all night.

She had the biggest heart ever, she had time for everyone. I would just like to say goodbye my angel, rest in peace. You will always be in our thoughts and never be forgotten for all you brought to the Simon friends.

Love always,

Dawn Moir

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

### Friends Reunited!

There must be something in the air. A lot of old friends of the Community have been in touch lately, people who have known the Community for years.

A lady called Anne-Marie brought a video and scrap book to show us the other week and it was great to hear about her time here in the 80's.

If you have a Simon history and would like to get in touch we would love to hear from you!

## HELLO & GOODBYE

Since our last issue we have said goodbye to our brilliant resident Phillip (see more on page 10). We have welcomed new residents Gabriel and Nigal who have been helping out.

We were all sad to say goodbye to our volunteer Sofie who left us in February to return to Switzerland. Sofie is going to University in Copenhagen and we are sure she has great things ahead of her!

We have welcomed new full time volunteers Lainie from Manchester, Thomas from Germany and Julie from Sunderland. We can only just about fit everyone in at the moment but it's great to have them all with us!

