

Spring 2016

ISSUE 131



THE
Simon
STAR



www.simoncommunity.org.uk

**NEW EVENING
CENTRE
OPENS!!**

pages 6 & 7





www.simoncommunity.org.uk
info@simoncommunity.org.uk
020 7485 6639



Contributors

Rachel Cullen
Jamie Nalton
Yusuke Tanaka
Gabriela Velazquez

Photographers

Rachel Cullen

THANK YOU

The Pavement
Bloomsbury Baptist Church
Dylan's Bakery
St Martin's Gospel Oak
St Giles in the Fields
The London Tea Company
Pret a Manger
Fareshare

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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If you have some news to share, or any questions you would like to ask, please get in touch with us at 129 Malden Rd, London NW5 4HS

WELCOME TO THE SIMON STAR

We welcome you to this spring edition of the Simon Star with gratitude for your support through another winter.

Our main story in this issue will be our exciting new Evening Centre service in partnership with Bloomsbury Baptist Church that you can read about on pages 6 & 7.

This is not the only new service! Due to demand we have introduced an extra tea run and have also restarted the Women's Group. You can read about these on page 10.

Things have changed not only on the services but also in the house with two of our volunteers leaving (read their experiences in their own words on pages 8 & 9). We have lots of new volunteers from a variety of countries joining us (or waiting to), so it's all change with the seasons.

We thank you for taking the time to read our news and for your interest in our work. We see hundreds of people each week and are only able to provide support because of the generosity and good will of our supporters.



Alan , Julie and Rev Dawn at the evening centre

LENT APPEAL

Message from the Director

As our supporters know, we receive no government funding. This is a founding principle of the Community, it gives us the autonomy and freedom to provide help and support to whoever needs it and to campaign on behalf of our homeless guests.

Everyone in the Community works together to make sure that the money goes as far as it possibly can to reach the people in the greatest need. Most of us who are used to doing weekly shopping would be astounded at how little our volunteers spend on running the house.

Though this is an appeal for support, we also want to use it as an opportunity to reassure our donors and supporters that your money makes a direct and immediate impact in providing support to our guests. This support may range from a cup of coffee and a smile to a life saving sleeping bag or an offer of accommodation that will change someone's life.

We thank all those who support our work and make it possible for us to carry on. We could not do it without you.

Jamie Nalton



For £28 per week we can provide winter shelter space for a person for one week. This includes a comfortable bed, a safe warm place to sleep, a hot meal in the evening and breakfast in the morning. We can't thank our supporters enough for making this possible.

AGM

Saturday 2nd April

11am

St Martin's Church

Vicars Rd,

Gospel Oak

NW5 4HS

We will be meeting at the church from 10.30 and lunch will be provided. If you would like any further information please contact the office on 0207 485 6639.

EVENING CENTRE

Our new evening Service at Bloomsbury Baptist Church

We are very pleased to tell you about a new project that we have in partnership with the Bloomsbury Baptist Church. Our new evening centre opened its doors for the first time last month to provide dinner and a warm welcome to our guests.

This project has been planned for some time and we have been really looking forward to it. We have had no inside space since we lost our day centre premises in March last year. The Bloomsbury Baptist Church is a great space, it is large enough to invite a good number of guests, yet still manages to feel quite cosy and welcoming.

At the moment we have access to the space for three Tuesday evenings per month and we are handing invites to people we see on street work and tea runs to come to the centre for dinner.

While some of our guests will use day centres or find places to stay warm during the day (such as libraries or museums) there is nowhere to go for them in the evening.

We have been talking to our guests about what kind of activities we could provide through the evening centre, we have had a range of responses and look forward to trying them out. But first and foremost we want to provide a safe, welcoming space where our



Andy on the door!



Chelsea, Reverend Dawn Savidge & Metal in the kitchen

guests can have a few hours respite from the cold and loneliness of the street.

Often the people we see on our streetwork access our outreach services because they all take place outside. Some are wary of going inside or are concerned that they will be required to provide a lot of information when they don't want to. There is a kind of safety on the street services for our friends with these concerns, there is no door, they can simply walk away.

We hope to provide a service that is accessible and inviting to people who are reluctant to go inside for whatever reason. We want to make contact with

people who are hard to reach, we want to build trust in those relationships that will hopefully open more doors to our guests to access much needed services.

We would like to thank everyone at Bloomsbury Baptist Church, especially Revd Dawn Savidge, for welcoming us and our guests. We look forward to working with you!

If you would like to volunteer at our evening centre, or any of our other services, please get in touch with the office on 0207 485 6639

PART OF A FAMILY

Full time volunteer Gaby from Mexico tells us about her experience

About a year ago I left my life in Mexico and backpack throughout Europe, walking long distances with my life on my back.

Along my journey I decided to include some volunteering and found The Simon Community.

Homelessness was a new world for me; but I learnt that Simon is much more than just people with no fixed abode. As I explained my friends back home, it's like being part of a family.

There's a weekly budget for shopping and cooking, everyone helps around with chores in the house and we discuss issues during breakfast time.

As a Backpacker, I've wandered around cities looking for a dry place to spend a few hours and therefore I can see how a hot drink to warm you up or even some socks to keep your feet comfortable can be very much appreciated.

Being part of Simon involves sharing with people living rough; creating connections, through a cup of tea or coffee and a sandwich; and supporting them as fit. And that's what makes it so relevant.

The Simon Community is created by everyone, joining forces to help each other out; to change people's lives. I'm going home in a few days, happy to have been part of this story.

Gabriela Velasquez



Gaby

MY SIMON EXPERIENCE

Yusuke came from Japan to join us as a full time volunteer

I joined the Simon Community 6 months ago.

It went by so quickly and I met a lot of nice people and was able to learn not only daily services but lot of things, like a global phenomenon like international migration, which is sometimes making the matter more complex and I wouldn't have known in Japan.

Although I had worked in the social care sector for the elder people in Japan, it was the first time for me to work in the homeless sector.

It was sometimes funny (like when I was talking with people and listening to their stories or snoring) and other times challenging and difficult (like when I had to get up very early or make lots of sandwiches).

Overall my experiences at the Simon Community were rewarding and worthwhile.

Unlike when I was working in Japan, I feel like I was able to unwind and enjoy working more easily in the Simon and find a right path in my work.

I'd like to say thank you all the people I met here for giving me positive energies and showing your kindness.

Yusuke Tanaka



Yusuke

WHAT'S GOING ON...

With so much going on in the Community it is hard to know where to start!

Our residents, because of their own experiences, take great pride in their efforts with the early morning tea run. Through bitter experience they are all too aware of the importance of a hot drink and a friendly face when they wake up after a night on the streets.

We have doubled the number of tea runs in the last three years but our residents were concerned about the guests. It was raised as a concern at a house meeting that some guests were unable to get any food from anywhere on a Friday until late in the evening.

Thanks to their awareness and concern we now have a new Friday tea run that is very well received by our guests.

After a lot of discussion we decided to stop one of our soup runs. It is one of our founding principles that we do not replicate services that are already out there, it was felt that there was plenty of other provision to meet the needs of our soup run guests on that particular evening and that we could use the time and resources to provide some other support.

The soup run is a real Simon tradition so this decision was not taken lightly, but we agreed we could always restart it again if needed.

Some readers will remember that our Women's Group had to relocate some time ago due to refurbishment and then eventually took a break as numbers dwindled.

We are pleased to tell you that we are now back in our original location welcoming both old and new members to the group. Thank you to Queen Mary hostel for providing a safe and friendly space for our group to meet.

If you are interested in volunteering and have a few hours to spare we would be happy to hear from you...

Please get in touch with us at the office on 0207 485 6639

Apprentice Event

Thank you to Liam Darcy from New Chapter Consulting Ltd in Leeds who has organised an 'Apprentice' type challenge.

Liam's colleagues will be spending a day in London sourcing much needed gifts in kind such as sleeping bags and socks to give to our guests.

Our residents helped us to put together a 'shopping list' for this event of items that would make an immediate difference to our rough sleeping guests.

Thank you to Liam and his colleagues for organising this, we look forward to sharing your gifts with our guests.

Since the last issue we have said goodbye to volunteer Gaby from Mexico. Gaby has been fantastic and brought a great energy to the house. Good luck Gaby, we will miss you!

We have welcomed full time volunteer Annie from the UK and Alex from the USA. We are currently waiting for Krisztina who will be joining us from Hungary, Lena from Serbia and Joe from the UK.



HELLO & GOODBYE

We have a new resident at 129. Andy has been a familiar face at our services for many years and has now come to join us in the Community. You can see a photo of Andy in the evening centre article on page pages 6 & 7 where he is our welcoming committee on the door.

We welcome Andy and thank all our residents for their hard work in helping us take support out to our guests who are still living on the streets.

