

Spring 2022

ISSUE 142



THE
Simon
STAR

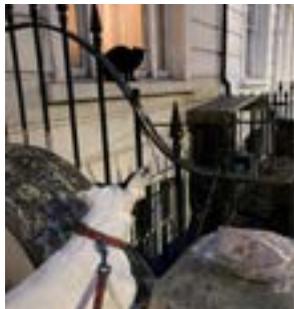


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THANK YOU

Wenzel's Bakery
The Speedomick Foundation
Vegware Community Fund
Zero Degrees
Kate Blackbeard



Thank you for reading this spring edition of the 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 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

Spring is springing and the sunshine is a very welcome change! We hope that you have had a chance to enjoy the daffodils near you.

We made some good memories to perk us up at the beginning of this year when we went to see some auditions of Britain's Got Talent.

We had a visit from our previous live-in volunteer Jeremias, and we've had some particularly rousing Friday Games (as demonstrated below by Alan, during a football round!).

So far this year we have had well over 1000 interactions with guests and have spent over 80 hours on visits. Numbers on street work are gradually rising as we approach Spring/ Summer which is something that we would expect.

We are, of course, concerned about the cost of living increases and the repercussions on the stability of people's living situations. There is an expectation that this will lead to more homelessness and, as such, a rise in the number of people that we see.



No More Walls

James Nelson is the author of No More Walls, a book about his extraordinary life. He was in psychiatric care from childhood and was given a frontal lobotomy to 'cure' his behaviour. James has been recovering from his early experiences and homeless experiences for many years and we visit him at home. He kindly sent us his story to share with you...

Let me introduce myself, my name is James Nelson which is my pen name. The first 36 years of my life was a merry go round,

I was evacuated to Devises and Manchester in the war then I returned to London living with my mother, my father was in the army. When I was 8 years old, I started to see psychiatrists.

I was also living in a hostel in Camberwell when I was 12 years old or 13 years old because of lack of communication between me and my parents. I went to sleep on Clapham Common when I was 15 and then I was sent to approved school until I was 19 then I went to prison three times because I did not conform, and I was violent.



I finished up in Southampton in a hostel run by the Church Army, I left there and spent three years on the streets and finished up in a mortuary in Southampton General Hospital after living on the street for three years.

I got into a rehabilitation unit for alcoholics called the Nelson unit at St James Hospital, it's now an outpatient's unit as the hospital which was in Portsmouth.

In December 1972 I came back to London I got sober and clean, but I was a broken man who did not know what day of the week it was.

When I was about seven weeks sober I walked into St Albans Hall an old people's lunch club in Kennington and asked the organisers if I could volunteer to help.

Before I started writing I was full of anger, resentment and bitterness and I had to change not to be the same as my first thirty six years of my life.

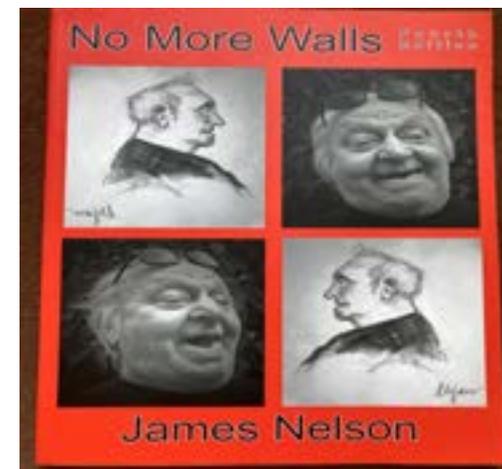
I have been working as an advisor to four homeless drink and drug rehab facilities, three in London and one in St Albans. At the night shelter in St Albans new volunteers are given my book to read to help them understand homelessness.

When I was in approved school, I learned to sing the Benedictus in Latin by lip reading, now I write and sing songs and I am building a studio in my flat.

OFFICE MOVE

For 6 weeks over February and March the Community trialled having the office in the bedroom next to middle room at 129, on the first floor. After discussions with everyone we have agreed that the office can move back into the house on a permanent basis.

For the past 10 years the office has been at St Martin's Church (just around the corner). The pandemic, and the way in which we had to adapt to a more flexible and at times remote way of working, has given us the chance to step back and think about what would best suit the Community today.



Jame's book is available from Amazon with all proceeds going to Open Door in St Albans: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/No-More-Walls-2020-Book-ebook/dp/B08CRW1YJY>

This represents a cost saving but more importantly, brings the Community closer together - literally and metaphorically.

We have had a great run at the church; hosting AGMs and Community Days and running shelters. We have got to know the congregation who have been supportive of our work. We hope that this bond continues even if we are no longer in the building.

Office at the church



WHAT'S GOING ON...

We had another 'touch of the covids' as Alan would say over Christmas and in the New Year, but everyone was ok and it didn't disrupt the services or the house.

We are still out three times a week on street work. After Christmas the numbers dropped a little in January but picked up again in February. In pre-pandemic times we would be seeing far fewer people at this time of year. As well as hot drinks, sandwiches and other food, we have been taking out clothes, sleeping bags and toiletries. Recently we bought tracksuit bottoms (which rarely get donated) and waterproof trousers to give out this winter.

Last month we saw the end of all covid restrictions, social distancing and isolation. At the house we decided our own rules around this in order to take care of each other and make sure that we don't pass it on to our friends on the street. At the Community meeting we agreed that if someone tests positive or is living in a covid positive household, that they should stay away from the services that week. We also agreed that we would continue to wear masks and do whatever we can to protect the guests and keep the street work safe.

We had a face to face Community meeting this February for the first time since the start of the pandemic. It was great to see everyone and catch up. There was someone from every group within the community present and it was great to have a wider collective voice to discuss the current situation of where we are and how we are going to proceed. The next meeting is on 25th April. Email the office for details.

Finally, if you ever wondered how we make this newsletter, here is a picture of our Simon Star factory! We write, it print it, fold and staple it and stuff and label the envelopes to send to you. Everyone gets involved and each one is properly hand made!



Preparing the newsletter at the house

NATIONAL VIGIL

The Dying Homeless Project from The Museum of Homelessness have organised a national vigil to remember people who died while experiencing homelessness in 2021.

Please join us at Downing Street on 31.3.22 between 6pm and 8pm to remember everyone lost in the past year.

If you aren't able to come in person, you can post a picture of a candle on social media with the hashtag #MakeThemCount

<https://museumofhomelessness.org/dying-homeless-project>

THANK YOU!

Wenzels Bakers, West Hampstead for the weekly donation of pastries, sandwiches, bread and cakes. April will mark a year of their donations!

The Speedomick Foundation for a grant of £3,000 to support our guests with winter essentials. We have spent the money on good quality razors, jogging bottoms, sleeping bags and much more.



Zero Degrees for the donation of arctic sleeping bags **Vegware Community Fund** for the monthly donation of cups and sandwich bags.

Kate Blackbeard for the excellent donations of clothes and other goodies

And all of our amazing and committed volunteers who come out in all weathers to support our guests on the streets.



giftaid it

PLEASE GIFT AID YOUR DONATION

If you pay tax you can increase your donation at no extra cost to you.

Title: First Name: Surname:

Address:

Post code:

'I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 28p of tax on every £1 that I gave up to 5 April 2008 and will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2008'

Signature:

Date:

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.

Please complete this form and return it with your donation to:

The Simon Community, 129 Malden Road, London, NW5 4HS.

Please tick here if you do not require a receipt/ acknowledgement

All personal details are kept securely in line with GDPR regulations.

Alternatively you can make a secure donation online via our website:

www.simoncommunity.org.uk

