Connect

News for our Tenants and Service Users DECEMBER 2012

Features:

Recent success stories
Poetry, art and photography
Christmas activities and spring trips
Board member and staff corners

St Martins
SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT FUTURES

Welcome

Seasons greetings and welcome to the Christmas edition of Connect.

This edition features the timetable of events and activities over the Christmas period and I'm sure there is something for everyone to enjoy.

We also have interviews with Tony from Ferrini House, following on from his performance at the AGM, with Harpreet from our new service in Wembley and an update from Angela at Davenant Road. It was great to see so many of you at this year's AGM and I really enjoyed the amazing poems, paintings and photographs that were on display. Keep up the good work.

John Thompson Chief Executive
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The season of good cheer is upon us

There are loads of things going on this Christmas to help get you in a festive mood. Card making, decorating the Christmas tree and carol singing will all be taking place before Christmas.

You may also like to come to the Christmas pantomime at Sadler's Wells. Perhaps you fancy a trip to Oxford Circus, to see the spectacular Christmas lights … and then there's the food. A meal out at a restaurant and a traditional Christmas lunch are part and parcel of any Christmas at St Martins, and this year is no different. You also have the Christmas Party to look forward to.

Happy Christmas!

Staff Corner

Ann Adesoye looks forward to developing the service at Chalkhill Road.

“ Hello everyone. I am Ann Adesoye. I am the registered manager at Chalkhill Road, St Martins’ new care home in West London. I was appointed by St Martins in July 2012.

I came to St Martins with a background of working in mental healthcare. I started working with people with special needs in 1993. Since then, I have worked in various registered care homes and supported accommodation schemes with a range of client groups. I have worked for organisations similar to St Martins in East London, South London and now I am working in West London.

Since 2004, I have been managing care homes for men who have a variety of mental health needs. At Chalkhill Road I will do my best to support the staff to ensure we provide a good quality service to everyone who lives here. Our aim is to enable service users to live as independently as possible in the community.

I am a strong advocate of service user involvement and will support you to ensure that your voice is heard. Another key aspect of my job will be to develop and maintain good working relationships with service users, their carers, all relevant government departments, other statutory bodies and voluntary agencies.”

The art of studying

Harpreet Dosangh can't wait to settle into Chalkhill Road and develop his art through further study.

"I've always been interested in art. When I finished my A-Levels at college, where art was the only subject I was interested in, I went off the rails a bit. I went to a lot of parties, took drugs and stopped making art. I had a ten year gap. I ended up in prison. I became unwell. But I started to draw and make things again. After I was released, I spent some time in hospital and was delighted to get on a part time Foundation Art course at Kensington and Chelsea College. This suited me really well. I spent one full day every week at the college, but could come and go the rest of the time. My doctor was very supportive of my interest in art and my success in getting on the course, saying, "Just give it a go!"

I like making things. In my sculpture *Whiteways*, I made a wheelchair out of discarded car parts I found in a scrap heap. In another piece called *Meals for the Homeless*, I designed a box with compartments to put food into that could be given to people living on the streets. I don't want to brag, but the college recognised me by awarding me Student of the Year. I won some money and tickets to see the women's basketball at the Olympics.

I'm about to move in to Chalkhill Road, St Martins' new home in West London. I'm looking forward to moving in and I have more good news. I'll be starting an art course at university next September. I'm also doing a design course in a few months to prepare for university. I've even been asked if I would like to teach some art classes for other service users at St Martins."

Whiteways

Meals for the Homeless

Songs of desolation and renewal

Tony Aldridge shares his extraordinary life story and his love of music, poetry and photography.

An image from Songs of Desolation and Renewal

Tony playing at St Martins' AGM 2012

"I left home at 16 and went to Germany with my German girlfriend. I got into the Conservatoire at Cologne to study avant garde composition. While I was there I saw some guys busking on the high street who weren't brilliant musicians, unlike those at the Conservatoire, but they could gather a crowd of 200 people around them and communicate their music. I didn't believe the people in the Conservatoire could do the same, so I decided to join the *Kölner Strassen Musiker*.

When I was 19, I was picked up by Barbara Thompson and Jon Hiseman and played in Barbara Thompson's Paraphernalia which was the biggest jazz band in Europe at the time. We toured together for a few years and I moved to London with my girlfriend, and we got married. A mate of mine was a tour manager and helped me get gigs when bands were looking for a fiddle player. I was on the first ever Virgin flight to New York, because they wanted a street musician on the plane. I was also picked up by the National Theatre. I worked for a number of EMI bands. I even went to Japan to play music.

My life took many turns after that, including a stint as a music lecturer at Goldsmiths, a foray into IT and working as a consultant to JP Morgan for a while. But my personal life imploded. Without going into the whole story, I became homeless following a messy divorce. Then after ten years with a new partner I returned from a period in hospital to find her in bed with another man. The only way I could cope with feelings of so much loss was to immerse myself in creating a series of poems and photographs called Songs of Desolation and Renewal.

It was at this time I moved to Ferrini House. After two years at Ferrini, I have a strong desire to start a website so I can show, communicate and distribute my poems, photographs and music to the world."

Look out for some of Tony's work at
www.stmartinoftours.org.uk/create

Board Member Corner

Introducing Doctor Phyllis Starkey.

"I joined St Martins' Board in 2011 as part of an initiative to widen its representation and bring in new areas of expertise and knowledge. For me, recently "retired" from politics, it was an opportunity to use the experience I had built up over a rather unusual career.

My original career was as a research scientist. I qualified as a Biochemist and ran my own research group at Oxford University working on reproductive immunology and focussing on factors affecting the success of human pregnancy. Alongside my science career I married and brought up two daughters and became involved in Labour Party politics.

I spent 14 years as a Councillor on Oxford City Council. Oxford has a serious housing problem with many local people living in poor, overcrowded and over-priced rented properties. There is a concentration of hostels and supported housing serving disadvantaged and vulnerable groups from the whole of Oxfordshire.

In 1997 I was elected as Member of Parliament for Milton Keynes. It was an exciting time developing and implementing new policies to try to address the problems people faced. As Chair of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee I initiated enquiries on various aspects of housing, particularly the shortage of affordable housing to buy or rent, and the Supporting People programme which has been a subsequent casualty of local funding cuts.

In 2010, along with many other Labour MPs, the electorate put me out of a job. I moved back to Oxford, retired and joined the board of St Martins. I hope that my political experience in Parliament and local government will help St Martins to navigate the difficult and rapidly changing environment in which it now has to operate. The need for our services across London is bound to increase, and St Martins can offer uniquely successful and caring services to support our service users to independence and safety in the community. I am proud to be a part of St Martins' work."

When good work pays off

Angela Rickwood is awarded a NVQ in retail skills by City & Guilds.

“There was an article in the previous issue of Connect saying that I was working towards a Level 1 NVQ in retail skills. I’m really happy to say that I’ve now been awarded the qualification. The certificate came in the post, and you can see the picture of Derek, the manager at Davenant Road (where I live), presenting it to me.

I enjoyed every moment of working towards the qualification. I liked getting up to go to the Peter Bedford shop on Holloway Road, where I worked for six weeks in order to fulfil the requirements of the NVQ. I enjoyed being on the shop floor, making sure everything looked presentable. And I was most pleased whenever a customer went away satisfied. Most of the shoppers were so polite. Chatting to them and ensuring customer satisfaction was important, so that they visit the shop again.

I’ve done other work. A few years ago I worked in a hotel, and I’ve also helped out at Sue Ryder and Oxfam charity shops. It’s great to have a formal qualification now though. I’m going to do the NVQ Level 2 next, which will involve more shop work. I hope I’ll enjoy it as much as I’ve enjoyed the first one!

I’d like to work in charity shops again. I don’t have much money, so although I can’t give money to charities, I can help by working in the shops. It’s the only way I can give something. I also hope that getting some NVQs will help me earn money and allow me to pay for somewhere to live.”

Get involved!

Along with all the Christmas plans, there are loads of activities for you to get involved in this winter and spring. Taking part in activities is sociable, teaches you valuable new skills and even helps to keep you warm when the weather turns cold. So don't be shy, or cold for that matter. Come and join in!

Below are some of the activities available. More information is available from the Activities Coordinator Simon Julien, your keyworker, managers or St Martins' head office. Several additional activities will be announced in January 2013, including a professional skills course, move on, social inclusion and art groups.

Music Beats

Come and get involved in all things musical at Davenant Road, **every Monday from 2pm.**

Active Time

Warm up with activities designed to stimulate body and mind at Davenant Road, **every Wednesday from 2pm.**

Breakfast Club

A delicious early morning breakfast is provided by and for service users at Davenant Road, **every Thursday at 9.30am.**

Healthy Eating with Simon Julien

Learn how to make yourselves delicious food that keeps you fit and healthy. Come and join Simon at New North Road, **every Thursday, 2-4pm.**

Badminton

Have you got the smash, drop shot and pickup to make you a badminton star? Assemble at New North Common Room, **10am every Friday.**

Swimming

Swimming is great exercise. Come for a dip at the Britannia Leisure Centre, near Wilton Villas and New North Road, **every Friday 11am-12pm.**

Current Affairs Group

Newspapers are provided for a lively discussion of the issues of the day, at Davenant Road, **every Friday from 11am.**

Drama Group

Come have some fun developing scenes and characters in weekly sessions with a trained actor at New North Road, **every Friday 1-2pm.**

Football Training

You will miss drama group, but if your skills are better used on the football pitch there is a wonderful opportunity to join Arsenal FC's Red Zone training program at Elthorne Park, **every Friday 1.30-3.30pm.**

Cooking Class

Learning to cook is a key step in gaining greater independence. The better you are at cooking the more you can enjoy meals. Classes are at New North Road, **every Friday 4-7pm.**

Film Night

This is your weekly chance to select a film for everyone at Davenant Road to see. **Films are shown every Saturday evening.**

If you have any ideas or suggestions for trips or activities you'd like to do, please contact Simon Julien on 07764 422033 or 0207 704 3820. Here are some suggestions he will be discussing with you:

- **Visiting the seaside**
- **Boat trips**
- **River trips to Greenwich**
- **Kew Gardens**
- **Geffrye Museum**
- **Hyde Park**
- **Hampton Court**
- **The Great British Experience at the O2**
- **British Museum**
- **Africa Oye concert in Liverpool**
- **Open air concerts**
- **Market and fairground trips**
- **Quiz nights**

But what would you like to do?

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