Connect

News for our Tenants and Service Users

NOVEMBER 2011

Features:

St Martins acquires new care home

Showtime at the AGM!

St Martins signs up for "Time for Change"

St Martins
SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT FUTURES

Autumn is closing in so why not get involved with the many activities scheduled for the darker months ahead.

This edition of Connect features a very diverse spread of news, reviews and reports of your trips and activities. The art and drumming performance at the recent AGM really brought home to me how much talent and enthusiasm you have and I hope that more of you take part in the regular art, drama, yoga and healthy eating clubs, as well as the planned special events and trips listed on the back page of this edition.

John Thompson Chief Executive
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St Martins acquires a new care home

St Martins have recently bought a new building in Wembley. This building, which will be known as "Chalkhill Road", is now being converted to become a Care Home for 18 service users with mental health problems, who live in West London.

The home will be managed very much like Wilton Villas and New North Road and should be open for business by the summer.

This is an exciting development for St Martins and enables us to provide our recovery-based care services to a larger number of people across a greater part of London.

Front Cover: Kofi Gyebi providing the rhythm at the AGM

THE TRIP FROM HELL!!!

We always look forward to our annual break away from London and this year some of us from Davenant Road went to Eastbourne for a few days. Simon and Sam from the staff team met Paul Daly, Angela Rickwood and me at lunchtime on the big day and we set off for Victoria Station to catch the train south.

At this point things started to go very very wrong! It was a lovely hot late summer day and so the last thing we were expecting was to hear of flooding and mudslides occurring in Croydon! This meant that all trains to the south coast were cancelled. Being a flexible bunch, we decided to wander down the road to Victoria Coach station; an easy solution, right? Wrong!!! All the coaches were full until the six o'clock departure. As it was such a nice day we decided to wait and take advantage of the lovely parks in Belgravia. Unfortunately, the one we chose to relax in turned out to be a private residents' garden and we were very politely "chased off". You learn something new in London every day!

Having found a park that would let us in, and spent the remaining hours chatting and sunbathing, we climbed onto our coach and eventually left London at half past six. You might think this marked the end of our problems? No such luck. The chaos of the day had disrupted all the drivers' schedules and we ended up having to change coaches at Gatwick and Brighton. Eventually getting to Eastbourne at quarter to midnight – eleven hours after we had set out – we checked into our hotel and were helped to get some pizzas before everything shut down for the night. Life was beginning to look up at last!

Once there, we had a great time in Eastbourne; we spent a lot of time on the beach in the sun, visited Beachy Head, and listened to the 1812 Overture on the seafront. The journey back took exactly two hours!!! Was it all worth it? Yes, but less of the travel nightmare next time please!

Andrew Cullen
Davenant Road

Its showtime for art, design and photography at the AGM!

St Martins Annual General Meeting for 2011 took place at the Crescent Suite in Highbury at the end of September. As usual, the event was built around a celebration of the skills and talents of service users and residents in the areas of photography, art, design and performance. Lots of you turned out for what was generally agreed to be the best event yet!

A central feature of the event is the exhibition space and more artists than ever displayed their work this year. Ray Gorthy returned with a second set of his photographs, this year concentrating on Thames landscapes. Susie Horsford's colourful abstract portraits were very popular and formed an interesting counterpoint to the large scale piece produced by the Wilton Villas and New North Road Art Club and brilliant individual work from Paul Fargher and Nick Carroll.

The AGM also featured, for the first time, some light relief in the form of a set from acclaimed comedienne Kat Francois. Kat introduced one of her characters - Grenadian Granny – and had all of us laughing in the aisles with her observational humour.

Not to be outdone, you got together for a great drumming performance, having been practicing for some months at Wilton Villas.

Many of you have arts-based interests and produce fantastic work which you often post on the Create pages of St Martins' website. The AGM is the one time in the year when you can really bask in the limelight and show other people what you can do. Why not get involved next year?

Comedienne, Kat Francois

Drumming performance

Nick Carroll with work by the Art Club

Susie Horford's paintings

Cooking doesn't get easier than this!

With refurbishment complete and a lovely new kitchen in place, Ferrini House residents have been running sessions together on healthy eating, cookery skills, menu planning and budgeting skills.

Luke lives at Ferrini House and got involved with this latest activity programme…

"Hi, I'm Luke and I've lived at Ferrini House since June of this year. I enjoy my life here; it's a peaceful place which gives me a sense of security and the staff are helpful and friendly. As part of our independent living skills support, the staff encouraged us to set up a "healthy breakfast" session a few weeks ago. I learned a lot about food and nutrition in general and was amazed at the different things people eat for breakfast around the world. All of us who attended got stuck into the cooking and, of course, the eating! My taste buds really got aroused when I tried the porridge with raisins and cinnamon for the first time – delicious!

I was surprised by how colourful and appetising the many different types of fruit can look and it was very interesting to taste some of the less typical and well known fruit. I guess, apart from the enjoyment of eating, I realised what a positive effect having a proper breakfast had on my mental state during the rest of the day. I have now waved goodbye to cereal bars and ready-meals and I hope I can keep up my motivation to eat healthily and take better care of my body.

St Martins signs up for "Time to Change"

Time to Change is the national campaign, led by MIND and Rethink, to tackle the stigma and discrimination associated with mental ill health. Over the past year a number of celebrities have revealed their own stories of mental health problems and have championed the *Time to Change* campaign. These have included Frank Bruno, Gail Porter and Ruby Wax.

Providing care and support to people with mental ill health problems is central to St Martins' work and we are proud to be involved in helping the wider public better understand the issues.

Chief Executive John Thompson and Chairman Nick Purchase signed a "pledge board" on behalf of St Martins at its recent AGM. The pledge was accepted by Islington North MP, and supporter of *Time to Change*, Jeremy Corbyn.

If you want to know more about this campaign, you can look up their website at: http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/ or check them out on Facebook.

St Martins
SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT FUTURES

Get involved this Autumn!

Now that the days are cooling off we've come up with a programme of events and activities designed to help keep everyone active and interested – but not necessarily outdoors!

Some regular clubs are now running and proving popular. If you're not already involved, why not give one or two a try? In addition, there are plans for a whole range of interesting visits for the weeks leading up to Christmas and beyond.

Drama class

Have fun and let loose your inner thespian at weekly classes run by a trained actor: Wilton Villas, **every Friday 1-2pm.**

Yoga class

Exercise for the body and mind! This established class runs **every Tuesday from 5.30-6.30pm** at New North Road.

Art class

The legendary Art Class at Wilton Villas runs on **Wednesdays from 3.30pm.**

Newspaper

Davenant Road host this weekly chance to assess and discuss the news; it's like a book club, with added Jeremy Paxman! **Fridays, 10am-12pm.**

Multimedia Class

After Christmas, Davenant Road will be running this class, offering tuition in computer-based art, photo editing, music and more.

Swimming

Brittania Leisure Centre, **Thursdays 3-4pm.**

Look out for these forthcoming trips:

- **Tower of London!** • **Kew Gardens!** • **Horniman Museum!**
- **Gillespie Park nature reserve** • **Geffrye museum!** • **Bowling!**
- **Duck tours! (we don't know what these are either! – Ed)**

For more information, get in touch with Simon Julien on 077644 22033, or ask your keyworker.

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