



On cue to the community

By Dawn Powell



COPs members enjoy a pool tournament at The Bald Faced Stag.

Photo by Kevin Finn

On Tuesday 5 October, Barnet Mencap held a pool tournament at East Finchley's Bald Faced Stag. The tournament was part of the charity's COPs scheme. COPs stands for 'Community Opportunities Project'. Its goal is to allow people with learning difficulties greater access to the local (and wider) community.

The project organises a variety of events throughout the year. While this can be anything from going down to the local pub to taking a trip on Eurostar, the events share a common link – being ordinary. Although Shelley Gibbons, the manager of COPs, says it's about doing "ordinary things in ordinary places" they do organise one event that is out of the ordinary. Once a month, COPs takes a group of people to train at Arsenal's football ground in Highbury. They have yet to meet Thierry Henry!

The pool tournament

occurred because the Bald Faced Stag's licensees Rob and Jacqui Dobor wanted to do something for the charity, which regularly meets at the pub. As well as sponsoring the event, the pub paid for several of the tournament's games so that the competitors could play for longer. In fact, the pool playing went on for two and a half hours. Twenty people took part and the eventual winner was Mark Brown, who was presented with a special pool cue.

For more information on Barnet Mencap, call 020 8203 6688

Pre-Xmas shopping

Would you like to shop at Brent Cross or a similar venue, but need help in getting there?

East Finchley Neighbourhood Contact hope to organise small shopping groups in private cars during late November and early December. Wheelchairs, scooters and escorts can be arranged for the mobility or sensory impaired. Call Contact on 020 8444 1162.

Mia's Wish

By the Law Family

Mia's Wish was started on 4 March 2004 in memory of a very special little baby girl. The charity is for mothers and fathers bereaved of babies. We are working with The Whittington Hospital maternity unit where we have helped set up a room, for mothers and fathers to stay after their sad loss, to spend some very special time with their babies and where they can grieve in peace.

We have made the room more homely than clinical; we have helped to buy a crib (with mattress and linen) for the babies, a stained glass window with a peace lily, a tea and coffee machine, microwave, clock, pictures, TV stand, cushions, bed protectors, training books for future mid-wives and a digital camera with printer to enable mothers and fathers to have photos of their babies.

A big thank you

Our first fundraiser to help us buy these things was a race night at Maddens pub, on the High Road in April this year. We had a great turn out so a big thank you to everyone who helped and donated prizes, including Healthy Glow and Spa Supermarkets.

Our second fundraiser was a five mile sponsored walk over Hampstead Heath on Saturday 11 September, sponsored by Slimming World in East Finchley, so another big thank

you to all the girls there.

Great atmosphere

On Saturday 25 September we held our third fund raising event, which was an Autumn Fair at All Saints Church, Durham Road. It was to start at 11am but by 10.30am people were waiting to come in so we opened the doors early, and the church hall was packed until 2pm. There was a great atmosphere and we raised over £1,000. So we would like to thank everyone for their help and support, to everyone who donated goods and all the people that came along to buy.

Local support

A big thank you also to all our local shops who have donated prizes for our events.

Please keep a lookout for more of our events – we are still making improvements – and find out more about Mia's Wish and up and coming events on our web site, www.miaswish.co.uk.

New fitness centre at Lido

By John Dearing

The Finchley Lido, which many people from East Finchley use regularly, has recently undergone a £1million refurbishment as part of a joint initiative between London Borough of Barnet and Greenwich Leisure Limited, who run the Lido on behalf of the Council. The new Wellness Fitness Centre opened on 6 September.

The new fitness room on the first floor is greatly expanded and 80 exercise machines are now available, including static bikes, treadmill running machines, stepping machines, resistance machines for numerous different muscle groups and floor exercise mats. Some of the machines even feature a screen for enjoying music videos (although this is not compulsory – you can take your own personal stereo, if you wish!).

Also on the refurbished first floor is a new exercise and dance studio, and new changing rooms dedicated to the Wellness Fitness Centre. Organised group activities include circuit training, group exercising and aerobics, a total of 35 classes per week currently. Personalised fitness programmes are also available.

Bright and friendly

Use of the Centre is either by membership (there are already over 1000 members) or 'pay and play', in either case preceded by a mandatory induction session.

First impressions are that the new fitness room is a considerable improvement over the previous facility, the machines are superlative, the area is bright and fresh, and the staff are friendly and helpful. In particular, the induction course is

most useful and enjoyable, even for those who are familiar with the use of such equipment.

Similarly, the new dance studio is a pleasant and well-ventilated area for group exercise, and the new changing rooms are clean and well appointed.

The downside is that the new fitness centre is built over the existing swimming pool changing area. Swimmers in the main pool may now find it somewhat hemmed in, and the noise levels at peak times are appreciably greater.

Going where she wants

By Daphne Chamberlain

When Sippy Azizollah was stopped by police, they told her, "It's not a good idea to ride in the road". She knew that already. "I was petrified, but I couldn't get back on the pavement."

That episode triggered her campaign to make wheelchair journeys easier, quicker and safer. Following her latest request, she heard last month that Barnet is planning to install 10 new pavement drop crossings in East Finchley by Christmas. These will be at junctions on Deansway, and will follow installations she asked for successfully in the last year or so along East End Road.

Barnet say that, as part of their commitment to the safety of disabled travellers, they lower kerb heights and also put in textured paving to direct people with impaired sight. A spokesperson told *THE ARCHER*

that the Council are spending £15,000 this year to improve the streets for the disabled. If a disabled resident asks for more help in getting about, highway engineers will "assess the site and discuss their concerns".

Sippy is delighted with the help she and fellow wheelchair users (not to mention buggy pushers) have received. She made her first contact with Council engineers when she saw them assessing a site near her home, but recommends just picking up the phone.

Disabled residents should contact the Highways Department on 020 8359 7200 with their suggestions and requests.

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