



Happy members of the East End Road Youth Group. Photo courtesy of Robina Spinks

East End Road Youth Group

By Robina Spinks

A couple of months ago, two residents of the Thomas More Estate, East End Road, started a youth group, open to all young people aged 11 to 19 in the East End Road area. They thought they might get about 10 members, but with 25 to 30 attending each week it is already so successful that it now has four youth workers. Three of these are local residents, while the fourth, Gary Bouho, is a basketball coach recruited from Barnet Bulldogs.

Servite Housing Association, the landlord of Thomas More estate, has given help and a great deal of encouragement, as have the East Finchley Community Police, whose support is enthusiastic and inspiring.

The teens now have two evenings a week to meet together, play table tennis, pool, basketball, football, and a number of board games.

The venue is Bishop Douglass School, Hamilton Road, where the head teacher kindly allows the club to use the school's facilities.

The club meets every Tuesday evening, 6-9pm, with basketball on Wednesday evenings from 6-8pm. It will close during the school holidays (last meeting 25 July, re-opening 5 September) but there are plans for outings in August. Anyone interested in going on an outing should enrol at the club before the end of term.

The East Finchley Community Development Trust handles funds and administration at the club's request, but financial sponsorship would

be very welcome, particularly as membership is growing. For more information, please contact 020 8346 9811 or anobas@bopenworld.com.

After school activities

Basketball with Barnet Bulldogs is available at Bishop Douglass School, Hamilton Road, with priority given to local children, no matter which school they attend.

This free training is held on Wednesdays, with a session for girls only from 4pm followed by one for boys from 6-8pm. For further details phone Barnet Bulldogs on 020 8449 4883.

Irish dancing classes for children aged five years and above are held at the school on Mondays from 4.30-5.30 pm. Contact Sinead Brooks at Bishop Douglass on 020 8444 5211 extension 210 for more information.

A welcoming cuppa

The new Contact the Elderly Finchley group got off to a flying start in late May with a tea at the home of the group's co-ordinator.

The new group was set up to help some of the most isolated local elderly people enjoy a

better social life. One Sunday afternoon a month volunteers will drive them to a tea party at the home of a volunteer host. They will enjoy something that most of us take for granted: a cup of tea, a slice of cake and a chat in a friend's house.

The group still needs to find five more welcoming hosts willing to provide a simple tea once a year. Hosts need to be within a 20-minute drive from Finchley and the only requirements are a downstairs toilet, not too many steps and a warm welcome.

Houses don't have to be large and the main focus of the teas is informality and the chance for a good chat. If you would like to help make a difference to some of the most vulnerable, elderly people in Barnet please call Free-phone 0800 716 543 or see www.contact-the-elderly.org or email helen.lord@contact-the-elderly.org

How to be a smart shopper

Barnet Council is one of the leading councils in the country for recycling waste. Now it is turning its attention to our shopping habits to try to stop us buying so much unnecessary packaging in the first place.

The council has drawn up 10 steps to become a smart shopper and reduce the amount of waste you create.

It claims that by recycling and trying to reduce waste as much as possible we are all helping to reduce pressure on the council tax from the rising costs of disposing of waste in landfill sites.

Here, we print the 10 steps in full. Which ones apply to your lifestyle?

- Step 1: Take your own reusable shopping bag to the shops. Barnet Council is giving away a limited number of reusable cloth bags. They are available at libraries. Just give your name and contact details. One per household, please.
- Step 2: Buy products with little or no packaging, or products made of recycled or sustainable material, for example biodegradable plastic bag bin liners. Plastic should be a last resort.
- Step 3: Choose refills, products that can be reused, concentrates and bulk buying. This gives you more product per packaging.
- Step 4: Choose loose fruit and vegetables or have them delivered package-free by a box service. Visit www.barnet.gov.uk/smartshopping for a list of

suppliers.

- Step 5: Buy energy efficient light bulbs and rechargeable batteries.
- Step 6: If possible, have milk delivered, so greatly reducing the amount of plastic involved. Visit www.findmeamilkman.net or email your name, address and postcode to info@dairy.uk.org
- Step 7: Avoid individually wrapped or boxed products. Think economy size or try stand-alones.
- Step 8: Avoid buying disposable items such as paper napkins and plastic cups. Buy reusable ones. Buy a reusable lunch box or, better still, reuse a plastic box container.
- Step 9: Choose real nappies. They are practical, easy-to-use, cheaper than disposables, and will decrease the amounts of plastic in the waste streams. A £54.15 subsidy is available to get you started.
- Step 10: Ask store managers to stock more products with minimal packaging and fruit and veg with no plastic packaging at all, and tell them if you feel that a product has been over-packaged.

For further information on recycling and waste prevention in Barnet please call 83597400 or visit www.barnet.gov.uk/recycling

Saying no to knives

By Lucy Chamberlin

It is a message we have heard many times before: young people with knives are a danger to society. But when born-again Christian Des Brown visited the new youth club which meets every Monday evening at the Methodist Church in the High Road, he had the experience to back it up.

Having been on both the giving and receiving end of a knife and subsequently turned to Christianity, his story was one of change but also of integrity.

The event began with a talented and vivacious sister act from Des's local Youth Club in Walthamstow, who illustrated the importance of 'values and morals' with dance, rap with 'positive lyrics', and anecdotal stories which ingeniously involved the children.

Jude, another of Des's aides, told his own life of crime and redemption through faith in a slow rap before Des himself took the stage.

Aged just 13-14 Des became involved in drugs and alcohol before moving on to burglary, street robbery and finally a stabbing. At the time of his trial he was discovering a firm belief in Christianity and he cited his religion as the only explanation for his sentence of two years' probation.

A short video clip called 'Keep It Real' then highlighted the necessity for showing the same face on the street as at home.

Exuding energy and

warmth, Des had a very special presence; he emphasised the value of body, spirit and soul and his obvious conviction and love inspired the children's full attention to his story and then participation in a final prayer.

This youth club was started in October 2005 through the vision of Maureen Clemenson, who saw the need of local children with nowhere to go and nothing to do. She hopes to buck the trend of closing youth groups, and her hard work seems to be paying off. With over 40 on the register, mostly aged 9-15 though older and younger ones also attend, the children apparently queue in all weathers to come in.

Assisted by other volunteers like Maureen Antoinette, the regular programme of football and street dancing has been interspersed with talks from policemen, artists and professionals. They also have a small selection of games available but are always looking for more activities. If you have anything suitable to donate, such as an old table-tennis set, please contact

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