



Honouring those who make a difference to life in Barnet

By John Dearing

Barnet Council urges residents to nominate for a Civic Award those who make an outstanding contribution to borough life. These unsung heroes, who often do not expect to receive praise or recognition for the tireless work they do, will be honoured at Barnet Council's Annual Civic Awards at Hendon Town Hall in February 2007. This is the seventh year of the awards. The Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Eva Greenspan, who will present the awards, said: "This prestigious annual ceremony enables the borough and its residents to say 'thank you' to the dedicated people who make such an impact on so many lives in this community."

Recent winners have included: care worker Yvonne Johnson of East Finchley for her work with the elderly and in the mental health field; former Holy Trinity head Sonia Singham for her work with East Finchley Neighbourhood CONTACT; Margaret Burrows from Chipping Barnet, who has worked for more than 20 years with the Good Neighbour Scheme; David Howard from New Barnet, for his involvement in numerous community initiatives, including Homeless Action in Barnet; Seymour Jones, from Barnet, for his contribution to developing the Barnet African Caribbean Association and his valuable community service; Taraben Bharadia from North

Finchley for her commitment and dedication to the Barnet Asian Women's Association; James Williams MBE for more than 23 years of work with Barnet Music Education Service.

Barnet Council's Civic Awards programme is open to all men and women who live or work in the London Borough of Barnet. Previous award winners or serving councillors are not eligible for nomination. The closing date for nominations is 30 November 2006. A nomination form is available from Jane Bamber, Events Officer, on 020 8359 2493 or email jane.bamber@barnet.gov.uk or it may be downloaded from the council's website at www.barnet.gov.uk/civic-awards.

Lunch club volunteer shortages

By Rob Briggs

A local lunch club that provides a freshly-cooked meal and company for the elderly for just £3.50 is desperately short of volunteers to help it continue.

With all the controversy about the quality of school dinners, an equally important issue remains to be discussed. Many elderly people find it difficult to afford or prepare regular nutritious meals, with obvious implications for health.

The most recent statistics from Age Concern indicate that around 14 per cent of over-65s are malnourished. Poor diet leads to poor health, with further consequences such as fatigue and depression.

Lunch clubs are one solution: simple but good quality food at a relatively low price. However, threats to council funding and volunteer shortages have led to scores of closures across the UK in recent years.

Recipe for success

Since it was set up 16 years ago, the lunch club hosted by East Finchley Neighbourhood Contact, a local charity working with elderly people, has steadily built up attendance, and now caters for up to 30 people per week. At the club the elderly can feel part of the community and find out about other services enabling them to live independently with a good quality of life.

Mrs Howkins, a regular attendee at the lunch club at the Green Man Community Centre, said, "It's lovely to get out of the house once a week and meet people. I wouldn't bother to shop and cook a meal like this just for myself."

I spent a month volunteer-



Lunch clubs are a valued place to meet friends and have fun for elderly people who may live alone.

ing at Neighbourhood Contact before returning to university, and saw for myself the reasons for its popularity. Cooking for so many people is different from what I'm used to, but the clients' enjoyment made it a truly satisfying experience.

Sian Jones, who runs the lunch club and is the co-ordinator of East Finchley Neighbourhood Contact, said: "We desperately need volunteers who can help set up and wash up. We also need to recruit a

paid cook for 6-7 hours. I know there are people out there with spare time, who enjoy cooking and who would find the work very rewarding, but we haven't found them yet."

It would be sad to see the lunch club disappear at a time when society seems so concerned with what's on our plates. Volunteers would need to work on Tuesdays at least once a month from 10.30 am to 2.30 pm. Sian can be contacted on 020 8444 1162.

A really inconvenient truth

By Andrew Shirlaw

The documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by Emmy Award winner Davis Guggenheim and presented by Al Gore, former Vice President of the US, is possibly one of the most important films to be shown at the Phoenix Cinema.

The Sundance Film Festival hit film persuasively puts the moral case for cutting CO2 emissions radically in a bid to reduce the catastrophic damage witnessed in the Caribbean, the Antarctic, Greenland and the Arctic.

The production team filmed melting glaciers and huge dried-up lakes. Most glaciers, according to climatologists, will disappear in the next ten years, leaving millions of people a bleak future of severe water shortages and unproductive agricultural lands. Vast expanses of the earth are turning to desert, including parts of Spain and China. Developers are felling huge areas of rainforest in the Amazon, depriving the earth of its own living lungs.

Ice meltdown

Ice sheets miles deep are shown in the documentary breaking away from the Antarctic and Greenland and disappearing into the surrounding seas. Islands in the Pacific are being submerged by rising sea levels, forcing the inhabitants to emigrate to New Zealand.

Al Gore uses computer simulations to demonstrate how, on current CO2 emission trends, cities such as New York, San Francisco, Shanghai

and Beijing will be overcome by floodwaters within two generations, as will Bangladesh and Holland.

Another threat is from continued melting of Greenland's ice sheets. This may halt or divert the Gulf Stream, which prevents Britain from freezing over.

Ice evidence

Analysing ice cores from the Arctic, scientists inform us that the Earth has witnessed seven ice ages during 650,000 years, yet CO2 levels have never reached those seen today. CO2 emissions are accelerating faster due to economic expansion in China, India, Russia and Brazil and the increasing world population which has trebled to 6.5 billion in 50 years.

There is a risk that small, incremental changes may be too little, too late, as politicians in Europe and the US dither over what policies to adopt to tackle global warming and global melting.

This is a challenging yet entertaining film for anyone concerned about the future of the planet. It is still screening in the West End and available on DVD from 21 November. Further details at www.climatecrisis.net.

KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Et tu Brutus?

In this mean and vicious world where life is a constant struggle against the slings and arrows of adversity and London Underground it's great to get away from it all and enter the fantasy world of comedy politics. Toni Won Konobi's long goodbye has all the makings of a farce as Big Gordie struggles to prise Toni's hands from the reins of power.

It's not the first time. Only three of the 20th century's 20 Prime Ministers weren't dragged screaming from the job. Back in 1902, Robert Cecil got it so right that he was able to hand the job on to his nephew and get himself into the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, literally, in the phrase "Bob's your uncle".

Steady Stanley Baldwin sorted out the abdication and quit in 1937, feeling that Neville Chamberlain could handle the rest. Obviously he forgot about Hitler. Harold Wilson decided that 60 was a good time to retire and did, leaving a nasty smell thanks to the crooks and cowboys he handed out gongs to as he went. The rest got pitch-forked out of No 10, usually by a delighted electorate but some by their own party, and that kind of backstabbing is always fun.

The Liberals started it in 1915 and did it with unbeatable style. In replacing Asquith with Lloyd George, they split the party and, within 10 years, had turned a once great party of government into a music hall joke.

But when it comes to inserting the stiletto no one does it like the Tories. They started with Chamberlain in 1940 when 33 MPs put their country before good manners and got shot of him. This gave them the taste for it and almost every Tory PM since then either got knifed or left when he spotted the assassins gathering.

Eden got it for the farce that was Suez, Macmillan was discredited, old and leading a scandal-ridden rump and not even Churchill was exempt. By the time he finally doddered off in 1955 the vultures were circling. With a track record like that it's not surprising that the knifemen formed a disorderly line to stab Thatcher the moment she'd outlived her usefulness. She didn't go quietly, she hung around like a jilted lover jinxing all those who followed.

Now it's Labour's turn to discover the mad art of treachery, time for Big Gordie to see if he can wreck all Toni Won's dreams. As they say, "May the Farce be with you", so come on in, the blood's lovely.

RSVP Contact

Sian Jones, from East Finchley Contact, was the speaker at a recent meeting of Barnet's Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme. Sian outlined the history of Contact, and its aim of improving the quality of life for isolated and vulnerable people in the N2 and N3 areas.

Volunteers are always needed for home visiting, reading, translating, helping to fill out forms, tidying houses and gardens, and taking clients on shopping trips.

Anyone interested will need two referees. Those volunteers who would have one-to-one contact with clients must be willing to undergo a CRB check, and drivers must have a full driving licence, and clearance from an insurance company. Contact's phone number is 020 8444 1162.

The next meeting of Retired and Senior Volunteers is at 2.30pm on Tuesday 7 November, in Barnet Library (behind Barnet Church). New members are welcome.