



Style counsel

By Viviana Lotti

Calling all women with recalcitrant wardrobes full of 'nothing to wear': Finchley now has Fashionfix, a personal styling service for women.

Fashionfix was formed a year ago by North Finchley resident and mother-of-two Denise Pia. She was inspired to start the business by meeting fellow mothers and noticing how little time they had to shop for themselves. Denise has a solid fashion background of over 20 years, the last 10 spent as a buyer, and has run a children's clothing company.

Denise provides a complete fashion styling service, using the shops at Brent Cross Shopping Centre. "It covers all ages and is close by," she explains. She is in discussion with Brent Cross about becoming their resident women's personal shopping service provider.

The personal touch

Denise starts with a friendly phone call to her customer to create a profile comprising size, lifestyle, preferences, needs and budget, which "can range from £100 to unlimited". Customers' requirements vary, from an entire season's wardrobe including accessories, to a complete

outfit for a special occasion like a wedding. Currently, Denise's customers tend to be women in their 30s and 40s, "either career women with not much time, or older mothers who don't have the confidence to know what's in fashion".

Denise then visits Brent Cross to research shops, sourcing the most suitable clothes. Finally, she meets the customer there for four hours of shopping, at the end of which the customer will have a completely co-ordinated, fashionable wardrobe, a heroic feat given the bewildering number of choices available.

Can Denise share any summer fashion tips with our readers? "Dresses," she says immediately. "The dress is the garment of the season."

Denise normally charges £150 for four hours. She is happy to offer a 10% discount to Archer readers. Please contact her direct on 020 8346 1486. Website: www.thefashionfix.co.uk, email: denisepia@fsmail.net.



Patsy Joseph and Paul Harrington welcomed visitors into their rich and varied gardens

Patsy and Paul's enchanting garden

East Finchley's only National Gardens Scheme garden almost didn't open for the first time on 6 August. Water restrictions, health problems and building works dampened the spirits of Daily Mail 'Plantsman of the Year' Award winners Patsy Joseph and Paul Harrington.

But then a visit from assistant county organiser Susan Bennett reassured them that all gardeners were struggling with

the drought and that visitors would sympathise and enjoy their artistry and horticultural skills even if the lack of lushness was disappointing.

Galvanised into action, the couple, bird-keepers at London Zoo, wrought miracles. On the day, the sun shone and 172 visitors were enchanted. The event raised over £600 for NGS charities, including Macmillan Cancer Relief, Marie Curie Cancer Care and Help the Hospices.

The plant stall almost sold out of plants donated by fellow enthusiasts, while visitors, especially those with some knowledge of exotics, were thrilled by the tropical pink flowers of the Mandevilla over-hanging the refreshing ferny passage, the gigantic leaves of the Tetrapanax Melianthus Major and the blue-flowered Pontederia in the wildlife pond.

This was a small garden jam-packed with interest, where minute observation is amply rewarded. Teething troubles over, next year Paul and Patsy promise further developments to look forward to. They are to be congratulated wholeheartedly.

Susan Bennett and Earl Hyde are assistant county organisers for the National Gardens Scheme and would be happy to hear about new gardens in East Finchley to open for charity. Contact them on 020 8883 8540. For more information, visit www.ngs.org.uk

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Language school expands southwards

By Ann Bronkhorst

Light, bright rooms and spanking fresh paint: the building recently taken over by the East Finchley School of English is at the final stage of its conversion, all set to welcome the new intake of students on 18 September.

Christina Lockie, who established the school, retired earlier this year and new owners Fandy and Jason Pratt realised that the premises at the Methodist Church in the High Road would soon need a second 'wing'. They found the right space just a step away, at Southern House, Bedford Road, and even an architect next door to make the dream a reality.

Their dream does not stop at the new premises, however. The school's reputation for focusing primarily on the students' needs rather than on financial gain is important to Jason and Fandy. Any development, they say, must not compromise the school's record of excellent teaching, personal attention, friendly atmosphere and affordable prices.

They believe that the East Finchley School of English, like many other businesses, could become more involved with the local community. So a quarterly newsletter starts this month and sponsorship of local events is a possibility. Another is finding host families locally, especially in the summer months. Having a foreign student to stay can be a valuable experience for the hosts as well as the student.

A wide range of students attends already though the core, perhaps, is of locally based 'au-pair' girls. Because of Jason's previous work in financial services the school also aims to attract students of Business English and to provide corpo-

rate training. Here in London the appetite for learning English or for improving a specialised use of English seems insatiable.

Fandy, who is originally from Shanghai, China, met her English husband when both were studying for their MBAs. She says that their marriage is

an example of how a shared language can bring together people from different cultures. Maybe Southern House will see some other interesting partnerships between fellow students in the years to come.

For more information, contact www.efse.co.uk

Brookland Infant School rises to the challenge

By Diana Cormack

With the new academic year underway, motorists will have seen an inevitable increase in traffic as parents ferry their children to and fro on the "school run". Road users may find the effect of these extra vehicles a problem, but they are not the only ones to suffer. At the schools difficulties can arise, particularly when large numbers of parents are attempting to park and manoeuvre in the vicinity.

Brookland Infant School has what headteacher Sheila Abbott describes as a "challenging entrance". As well as being very concerned about the safety of the hundreds of children who use the narrow roads and small junctions, Sheila wants the school to live in harmony within itself and with its neighbours. To this end Brookland Infants has, with the help of Community Liaison Officers, produced an information pack for parents. This contains maps and guidelines for dealing with the situation and lists the school's expectations for both parents and children.

Changing habits

Whilst realising that some people do need to use a car, the pack suggests that chil-

dren should walk to school whenever possible. "This is an on-going project, not just a walk-to-school week," Mrs Abbott told *THE ARCHER*. "In some ways, we are trying to change the habits of a lifetime." By promoting this healthy lifestyle she hopes to bring about a beneficial change for everyone involved, one that will also reduce pollution levels, so helping the environment.

In thanking all those who have supported her scheme Sheila made special mention of the Home Beat Officers and the local residents' association. This year she hopes to maintain and build upon the definite improvement that she saw happening around Brookland last term.

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