

Frances and Sarah Crook outside Buckingham Palace.

Leadership runs in the family

By Briony Cartmell

A mother and daughter from East Finchley have two achievements to celebrate. Frances Crook received an OBE for services to youth justice and her daughter Sarah successfully completed a leadership course at the University of Sussex.

Sarah undertook an intensive Learning to Lead course, balancing higher education with meetings and presentations for four months. Learning to Lead is a training and consultancy organisation which aims to open opportunities for student involvement in the life of school communities.

Sarah's achievement is impressive; over the holidays she was researching and writing four separate 3,500-word essays and revising for two

history exams. A variety of skills were needed for the programme, including role-playing, debating and team building.

Frances ran the Howard League for Penal Reform for 25 years, creating a multi-million pound turnover including a law firm which represents youth in custody. The aim of the organisation is to reduce crime and create safer communities with fewer people being imprisoned.

Spotlight on heritage

New artwork created by a local design agency has gone on display at three of north London's landmarks to promote the Finchley Society and the iconic Phoenix Cinema.

Hughes Design, led by Mike and Julia Hughes, has created exterior artworks highlighting local attractions, community

initiatives and points of interest, including Avenue House and the Spike Milligan Statue Fund.

They have been placed outside East Finchley and Finchley Central tube stations and mark the first time that the Finchley Society's posters and information panels have had the same unified look.

Mike and Julia also helped to design four light-boxes for the side of the Phoenix Cinema, celebrating its 100-year history.

Julia said: "These were really exciting projects for us to become involved in as we're passionate about our local area and protecting and promoting its heritage."

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Stag Court opens for business

By Janet Maitland

After standing empty and boarded up for over eight years, and seeing three failed attempts to open a supermarket, the ground floor of Stag Court opposite the library is now home to a thriving local business, Hallett Retail - The Concessions People.

Wendy Hallett set up the company in 1999 with a £1,000 bank loan, operating her business single-handedly from a desk on her landing in Bedford Road, N2. The company now employs over 1,000 people across the UK, running 800 concessions in 20 host stores including Debenhams and Pearsons. Last year Wendy won the Innovator of the Year category in the Everywoman in Retail Awards.



As the business took off, Wendy moved up into her loft, then into offices in Bedford Mews and then to Church Lane. The latest move to Stag Court means that 30 people now work for the company in East Finchley, of whom about a third are local.

Helping the little guys

Wendy puts the success of the company down to its unique concept. "It's a platform for small businesses to get into the big guys," she said. "Big stores don't want to have to deal with lots of small brands. We find companies with small fashion brands, bring them all together and then do all the contracts and subcontracts." The concession stalls sell boutique brands and accessories for 16 to 35-yearold

women who are looking for something different as well as the latest fashion trends.

"I love this area," said Wendy, who's lived in East Finchley for 20 years. "We have a strong ethos to use local businesses for services like printing, catering, and flowers."

Wendy also believes in putting something back. She's an avid supporter of Retail Trust, the main charity of the retail sector, and was voted Retail Trust Supporter of the Year in 2008. Her company recently opened two concessions within Beales stores, where all the proceeds go to Save the Children. The takings on the first day alone were £760, all of which will go to the charity.

Choose a painting, find a friend

On Saturday 20 November, East Finchley's renowned art gallery The Noble Sage in Fortis Green will host a new and hopefully regular singles event with a difference. Art Love Music promises to be different from your average singles event, using artwork to match like minds and sensibilities, bring people together, and maybe create new romances.

Guests will be asked to look at four paintings from the gallery's collection and rate them in order of preference before the event. This information will be used to match people up so that, on the night, guests can quickly identify who shared their artistic preferences and make contact. Each guest will also have a simple challenge to complete, all designed to make it easier to strike up conversation with others at the event.

Art Love Music will feature live acoustic music by Madelaine Hart, who writes and performs her own songs in an original, folk-blues crossover style.

The event is aimed at young professionals over 24 years and the dress code is strictly black tie in keeping with the stylish surroundings. However, it will be in all other ways informal and fun for all singles attending.

Tickets are £18 each and include wine and light canapes. Spaces are limited so advanced booking is recommended by contacting the organiser Mareeni Manuelpillai on Mareeni_R@yahoo.com. Tickets can be bought directly at www.wegotickets.com/event/97476.



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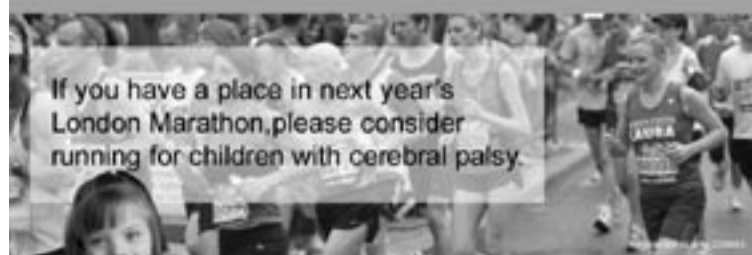
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