



YOUNG ARCHER



Tejas takes the spotlight

By Laura Wheadon

The weather's cold, Christmas is a dim and distant memory, and we're still in the grip of a recession. If, like me, you're in need of a bit of light relief to cheer the winter evenings, then look no further. Aspiring stand-up comedian and East Finchley resident Tejas Rawal has just the ticket.

The joke is certainly not on 16-year-old Tejas, as he has recently enjoyed a deserved taste of success; his stand-up routine came second in the Jack Petchey Speak Out Challenge.

Funded by the Jack Petchey Foundation, the "Speak Out" challenge is run by Speakers Trust and aims to provide training for schools and the voluntary sector, believing that good communication skills and personal confidence are key to active involvement in community life. Tejas was also the youngest after dinner speaker at the Toastmasters International Conference recently held in Windsor.

Tejas' family may not be too thrilled by the hilarious but rather unflattering caricatures of them that he creates, but he skilfully weaves family life into a side-splitting parody, and had his Speak Out audience in stitches.

You can watch Tejas in action on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMQXJcIcovM. To learn more about Speak Out, visit www.speakoutchallenge.com.

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Teaching and learning in China

By David Winton

At the end of August 2010 my wife Rachel and I set off from East Finchley to China. We are both retired Barnet secondary school teachers who felt we had more to offer and wanted a challenge.

So we went to teach English for a year at one of the many universities in Wuhan, a vast sprawling city of 15 million on the River Yangtse about 400 miles west of Shanghai. Wuhan is a very busy, noisy place, not a tourist city by any means, but it does have a huge lake surrounded by lovely walks and an archaeological museum with some wonderful exhibits.

Winter cold

We had a rent-free apartment at the edge of the university campus overlooking fields

them we were their first foreign teachers) and to gain confidence speaking English. The students were really a delight: respectful, friendly and hardworking, and very eager to learn about western culture.

We made use of our time in China to travel extensively. Besides the obvious places like Beijing, Shanghai and Xi'an, we visited more out of the way places, like 'Tiger Leaping Gorge' in south-west China, and Jiayuguan in the north-west, where there is the last fort on



A long way from N2: yurts near China's border with Kazakhstan.

Photo courtesy Rachel and David Winton

used for crop testing and, in the distance, a small (but unfortunately polluted) lake. Our flat had basic facilities but, being tiled throughout, was bitterly cold in winter.

The campus was very leafy and had most facilities for everyday living: supermarket, bank, post office, restaurant, and even a hairdresser. The newer classrooms had computers and massive air conditioners but older ones simply had ceiling fans. In winter the students would sit wearing coats and gloves, and we wore our coats as well!

Eager students

We had 16 hours of classes a week with first- and second-year undergraduates, providing them with an opportunity to hear a native English speaker face-to-face (for the vast majority of

the Great Wall. But the highpoint of all our trips was visiting the family of one of Rachel's students, a Kazakh girl, in both her home village and her family's yurt (traditional tent) in the mountain grasslands near China's border with Kazakhstan.

We had a really wonderful year, and we will always remember our students and the Chinese friends we made there.

Unwanted cars raise cash

Noah's Ark Children's Hospice is asking the public to crunch their old cars for cash as part of a novel fund-raising scheme run by the Giveacar social enterprise.

Sarah Austin, Community & Events Fundraiser for Noah's Ark, says: "This is a simple and effective way of attracting a new source of donations as well as reducing the number of unwanted or unused cars lying around. It's a win-win situation."

Unwanted cars are collected free-of-charge by Giveacar and either sold through an online auction, or disposed of in an environmentally friendly way at an authorised treatment facility. Proceeds from the sale are donated to a charity of the donor's choice, with 'bangers' that are scrapped still netting between £40 and £160 for the chosen cause.

For further information about Noah's Ark Children's Hospice and/or about how old, unwanted and unused cars can benefit the charity, contact Lorraine Feldman at support@giveacar.co.uk.

Do you have a story for us?

You can send your stories, letters, and photos by email to the-archer@lineone.net or by post to The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA. Tweet us @TheArcherN2 and find us on Facebook. You can also find out more about contributing and advertising at www.the-archer.co.uk

PARENT & BABY/CHILD ACTIVITIES

❖ Coffee & Kids, Fri 9.15-11.15, Green Man Ctr. Rachel 8343 6147.

❖ Dads' Club: Get-togethers for dads looking after young children in East Finchley. Adam 07957 441435.

❖ EF National Childbirth Trust contact Ruby Yang or Patrizia Canwell at eastfinchleynct@googlemail.com

❖ Newstead Parent & Toddler Group, Thurs 9-12-30, Green Man Ctr. Sajni 8359 3460.

❖ Parent & Toddler Group, Green Man Centre, Julia 8444 2276

❖ Stepping Stones, interactive play session for under 3s. Karen 07957 278860.

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