



Youth club still out in the cold

By Janet Maitland

An unsuccessful attempt has been made to reopen the Monday Youth Club at the Old Barn Community Centre in Tarling Road. "It's a disgrace," said Maureen Clemetson, who runs the club. "There's just nowhere for young people to go in East Finchley."

The centre was a busy hub of community events and activities for 25 years, helping to keep children off the streets and providing support for local parents with its pioneering out-of-school services. But since a group of new trustees led by Reverend Geoffrey Muhoro took over the Old Barn in July 2010, all services have been discontinued, or forced to move out, or closed down because of health and safety concerns.

At a meeting between the Reverend Muhoro and members of the action group chaired by the council last November, it was agreed that the Reverend would meet with Maureen Clemetson to discuss the Monday Youth Club moving back into the building. But when they met no progress was made.

"The Reverend refused to talk about us moving back in," said Ms Clemetson. "What can I tell the kids? I've tried everything. I speak up for the kids. There's no one else doing that."

Local campaign

The Old Barn Action Group has been campaigning to restore the community centre to local people for over a year. Will Hudson from the action group informed *THE ARCHER* that the

council, who own the building, do not recognise the management committee as legitimate owners and have not accepted any rent payments.

Last June, 93 local people submitted applications to become members of the Old Barn in order to put pressure on the management to recommence community services, but the applications were not accepted.

Misleading photos

The management have recently launched a new website for the community centre at www.oldbarncommunitycentre.com

"The site claims that a youth club is open five nights a week and that a lunch for the elderly is held every Thursday but this is just a façade that the Reverend is creating," said Will Hudson. He claimed that none of the website photographs showing young people in various activities was taken either inside or outside the centre.

To help the action group, contact Will Hudson on 07870 647284 or rendofstrife@hotmail.co.uk. Everyone is welcome at a public meeting to discuss the future of the Old Barn at the Green Man Community Centre, Strawberry Vale, on Tuesday 17 January at 6.30 pm.

Advance advances

By Daphne Chamberlain
Early last year we ran an article about a project called Advance, explaining its aims and asking for volunteers to help achieve them. Advance provides a voice for elderly people in care homes and day centres. In just over a year it now has 33 volunteer advocates who speak up for people and empower them to speak up for themselves.

One lady with impaired communication skills has said: "Without an Advance volunteer advocate's intervention and support, I would not have been listened to, and would have to give up my financial independence."

In this case, it was her son who was going above her head, and the care home manager who called in Advance. In another case, it was staff who were not responding to a resident's physical or social needs, and an Advance volunteer is liaising with Social Services to place him elsewhere, nearer his family.

Advance in Barnet

Barnet has 120 care homes and day centres, and so far 30 of these have signed up to Advance, with 24 receiving regular visits. As residents get to know and trust the volunteers, they tell them what they want and need.

Advance, which is a branch of Advocacy in Barnet, works closely with the Care Quality Commission, giving valuable feedback. The all-important volunteers, who are all over 50 years of age, are themselves gaining experience and confidence through training, one-to-one support and supervision. *THE ARCHER* will introduce you soon to a local Advance volunteer.

For further information, visit www.advocacyinbarnet.org.uk or contact Janet on 020 8201 3415 or Heena at heena@advocacyinbarnet.org.uk.



Busy mum and inventor Claire Bardner.
Photo by Hannah Eiseman-Renyard

Local mum's child safety invention

By Hannah Eiseman-Renyard

East Finchley resident Claire Bardner has created an innovative product to help children when they get lost and it's won two awards from the Global Women Inventors and Innovators Network.

The Me Finder was born when Claire, a mother-of-three, lost her two-year-old son in a crowd. "It was horrible. Apart from scanning the crowd there was nothing I could do," she recalls. "I never intended to get involved in any of this, but when Billy got lost I couldn't let it go."

The result, after nearly two years of prototypes, was the Me Finder, a brightly coloured band which looks like a digital watch and stores up to five phone numbers. That's enough for parents' mobiles, phone numbers of grandparents and trusted friends or even a teacher's phone number on a school trip.

Empowering the child

The device is simple, but it is the crucial link between teaching children what to do if they get lost and having the means to contact people. "I looked into GPS, but that was really polarising," says Bardner. "Really our

kids just need a phone number. I'm a great believer in teaching children everything. If you can teach a child what to do then they are empowered and they are less at risk."

The Me Finder, available in three different designs, is part of wider safety teaching at www.kidsshowsandtell.com.

Though the Me Finder already has international distribution on a small scale (including selling online in Aer Lingus) Claire is seeking wider distribution. With both the British Female Inventors Award and the Special Recognition Award from the Global Women Inventors and Innovators Network, it surely can't be far away.

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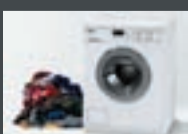
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