



Michelle gets paws on for shop opening

By Daphne Chamberlain
Actress Michelle Collins opened the RSPCA charity shop in the High Road at the end of November. Several other humans in the crowd brought their dogs as well, and local RSPCA Chair Ann Lewis told *THE ARCHER* that this is exactly what's wanted. She said that the shop is intended to be a community centre, where animal-lovers, with or without dogs, can drop in and have a chat, find out what's going on, and (weather permitting) enjoy the garden at the back.



Michelle Collins opens the new RSPCA charity shop.
Photo by Caron Westbrook

Ann has personally worked very hard there, waging war on above-head-height nettles, starting new planting, and installing bird feeders. She told us: "We're not setting up as a cafe. We can't sell refreshments, but we can always offer a cup of tea".

The aim for the shop itself is to keep it elegant and to sell good quality stock. There is also, of course, a real need to raise money. The RSPCA is actually a collection of like-minded charities. Three North London branches (Finchley,

Golders Green and Hendon) are renting a re-homing centre for cats, which costs over £2,000 per month.

The growth of the feral cat population is disturbing. The RSPCA are reminding people that they run a free neutering service for cats from the age of four months, and are repeating the message that pets are not just for Christmas. Neither are they there to be abandoned when their owners move house.

Meanwhile, our newest charity shop needs volunteers and stock.



Pizza Hatch with Brian Zlotnick, Michael Moody, Rawji Chauhan, Karen Williamson and Ian Cormack.
Photo by Diana Cormack

Silver foxes in the kitchen

By Karen Williamson
Older men have been putting on their chefs' hats to get creative in the kitchen in Age UK's first beginner's cookery course for men. At the Ann Owens Centre in East Finchley, would-be Jamie Olivers have been brushing up their culinary skills and making friends as well as casseroles, soups and bakes.

Chicken casserole with herb dumplings followed by raspberry trifle was a winner for Rawji Chauhan, 67, who said: "The sessions have been great. I've cooked most of the recipes at home in the week afterwards."

Another cook, Brian Zlotnick, 59, said: "The course has helped broaden my understanding, knowledge and curiosity about cooking. I'll definitely be cooking more at home now."

Syd McGowan, 70, added: "My wife really likes the idea of me having a repertoire of meals I can put together."

Cooking with confidence

The next beginner's course is in January and there will be others later in 2014 as well as one-off workshops on pizza making, baking and vegetarian Indian cooking. There are plans to run more specialised workshops in future on cooking for a healthy heart and diabetes.

Lynn Anderson, who guided the men through the recipes on the five week course, said: "They were a lovely bunch of men who grew in confidence as the course progressed. They'll now be able to build on these skills and get into the habit of cooking for themselves, friends and family at home."

The camaraderie between the men has been a huge part of

the success of the course. "I've certainly had a lot of interesting conversations while chopping up vegetables!" says 68-year-old Ian Cormack.

Anyone interested in cookery courses or who wants to put their name down for future courses, please contact Karen Williamson on eatwell@ageukbarnet.org.uk or phone 020 8150 0967 or 07789 994298.

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Fallen tree

Many fences, gardens and roofs took a battering in the howling gales that hit us overnight on 23 December. This tree came down at the entrance to Cherry Tree Wood and safety crews worked quickly to clear the fallen trunk and scattered branches on Christmas Eve. Photo by Mike Coles.

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