



# Two people who make a difference to many

We congratulate two residents of East Finchley who were among the six people honoured with Civic Awards by Barnet Council in March. Mary O'Toole and Richard King were both recognised for their years of service to the community. Here's why:

**Mary O'Toole**, of Elmhurst Avenue, was presented with a Barnet Civic Award in recognition of her outstanding contribution to Noah's Ark Children's Hospice. Mary recently retired from her voluntary role there. It was one in which she could call upon her own experience with her youngest daughter Helen, who was born with a life-limiting metabolic disease and sadly died in early adulthood. Through the voluntary organisations that supported Helen, Mary met families who used children's hospices and learned of their value.

Having worked with seriously ill children for several years, she knew that many families need practical support to allow them to spend time with their sick child. Mary discovered that volunteers were not used in this role and, despite advice to the contrary, she determinedly went on to establish a community volunteering programme. Since 2008 this has gone from strength to strength and other children's hospices have established similar volunteering services.

Mary's passion and commitment for working holistically shaped Noah's Ark's model of care in its formative years. She piloted a Family Link service to provide consistent and professional one-to-one support which was so successful that it is now a core service for Noah's Ark families. Mary helped to establish and will continue to facilitate Parent Groups and she also developed bereavement services, including an annual Memory Day.

Mary intends to become a Noah's Ark Family Support Volunteer in her retirement and to remain a Trustee of the hospice. We hope she still finds time to deliver *The Archer*!



Mary O'Toole with the Mayor of Barnet Cllr. Hugh Raynor. Photo courtesy of Noah's Ark Childrens Hospice

**Richard King** is well known to East Finchley allotmenters, after 13 years of active involvement. His Civic Award, however, resulted from long hours of meetings and paperwork, rather than digging and mulching.

He was nominated for the Award by colleagues in the Barnet Allotment Federation, which represents 37 allotment

individual allotmenters, were apprehensive.

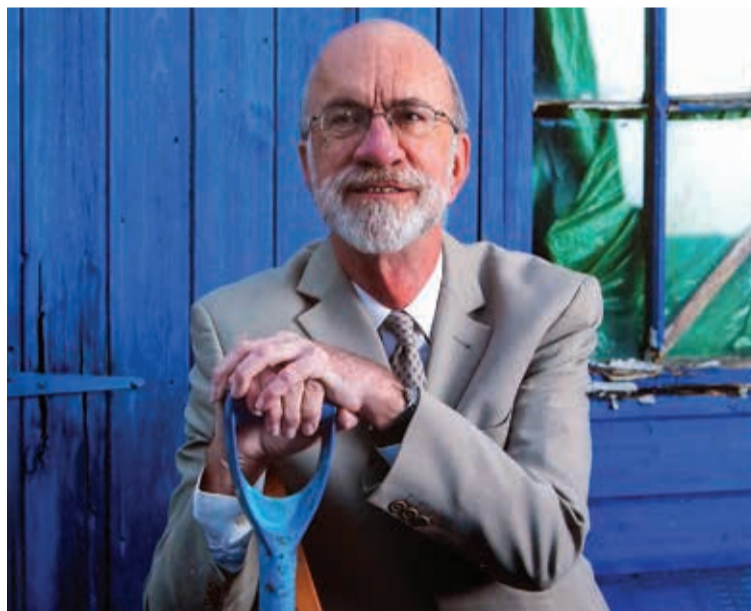
Richard volunteered to be their spokesman in negotiations with the council. He obtained *pro bono* legal advice and in 2010 it was found that a long lease arrangement would be legally possible. A standard template lease of 38 years at a peppercorn rent was worked out and the long process of agreeing detailed hand-over

arrangements for the 44 sites began.

This successful transfer to self-management, planned slowly and patiently and completed about two years ago, has interested other groups with allotment responsibilities, for example in Haringey, Enfield, Camden and Bradford. Asked what the most important message would be for allotment societies or councils tackling similar negotiations, Richard said: "Communicate, communicate, communicate!"

His background as a research scientist and as a civil servant in the Department of Trade and Industry, now retired, would have been a significant factor, as would his calm manner and his respect for people's varying points of view.

In the statement nominating him for the Civic Award Richard is praised for his "wisdom and balance" and for his "commitment and talents". He comments, however, that the award is also in recognition of "the work of the whole Federation team and the societies who held their nerve through some difficult times."



Richard King was instrumental in putting East Finchley Allotments under ploholders' control. Photo by Simon O'Connor.

societies spread across the borough. In 2006 Barnet Council proposed self-management for the societies but the implications and perceived risks were daunting. Many of the societies, and many of the 3,330

# Help for Zimbabwe women

A small charity is looking for help to make a big impact working with young and disadvantaged people in Zimbabwe and the UK.

Care For Someone (CFS) is co-led by Patricia Chinyoka from her home in East Finchley. In the UK, it works with women, specifically focusing on ethnic minority groups that find it hard to break into the labour market.

The charity, registered in 2001, runs job skills mentoring programmes for black, Asian and ethnic minority women, many of whom are refugees and some of whom are female ex-offenders resettling back into the community.

In Zimbabwe, CFS works with young people aged 16-24, concentrating its efforts on those in rural and farming areas, where projects include soup kitchens to provide at least one healthy meal a day, classrooms to teach practical work skills, assistance with school fees for disadvantaged children and a rural library scheme.

Patricia says the charity now wants to scale up its work and is looking for volunteer fundraisers with experience in bid writing to help it generate more funds. Find out more by visiting the CFS website at [www.careforsomeone.co.uk](http://www.careforsomeone.co.uk)

# Gardeners get ready

HGS Horticultural Society welcomes everyone to their annual plant sale to be held on Saturday 16 May from 10.30am to 12noon, at Fellowship House, Willifield Way, NW11. Entry is free.

There will be lots of good value summer bedding plants, vegetable seedlings and flower seedlings, and the local allotment group will be on hand with advice for 'grow-your-own'. More info at [www.hortsoc.co.uk](http://www.hortsoc.co.uk).

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