



Youth club thrown out after months at new home

By Diana Cormack

Last autumn East Finchley's youth club, known as the Monday Club, began meeting at the Archer Academy hoping that, after ten years, it had found a permanent home. An increase in attendance included some challenging youngsters who have benefitted from joining the youth club.

At the end of June the club was refused entry to the secondary school in Eagans Close by an employee of the lettings management agency Schools Plus. Earlier on the same day club founder Maureen Clemetson had been told by phone that their contract had been terminated, so she should come to the academy that evening to turn club members away.

The previous week she had been warned that if incidents shown on CCTV footage of club night were repeated, their contract would be rescinded. Maureen and her co-organiser Joe Strong say they have not seen this footage nor received any written record of unacceptable behaviour. They deny that any has occurred.

"Our behaviour record is actually outstanding and our young people deserve massive credit, not the closure of their club," Joe told *THE ARCHER*.

Stanley Field

Young footballers from the Monday Club were active in the fight to keep Stanley Field for the community in 2012 and it was a provision of the site going to the academy that their sports facilities would be available to local people outside school hours.

Having their allocated football time and pitch space reduced in favour of a boys' club from Camden was upsetting, as was finding the hall they used had sometimes been otherwise allocated, said Maureen.

Academy statement

We asked the academy why the youth club had been evicted. The school gave us a statement which said: "The Archer Academy facilities are available for use by the wider community outside of school hours, and 20 different groups have already benefitted from this in our first year, a number which we are confident will grow.

"Outside of school hours, the facilities are booked and managed by Schools Plus, an experienced lettings management agency. They have informed us of their decision not to renew a customer for operational reasons, and we understand that the

customer is finding alternative accommodation."

Mike Deakin, of Schools Plus, told us: "It would be inappropriate for us to discuss individual contracts, so I would refer you to the statement as issued by the school in agreement with us."

Bishop Douglass School has recently agreed to house

the Monday Club. The move to their latest home came as Maureen Clemetson was given an award for her services to young people in the community, see below, and as the Monday Club organises a family fun day at Martin Primary School on Saturday 20 August., details on page 8.

'Dedication and commitment' of youth club organiser

Eleven years ago Maureen Clemetson became aware that the closure of the Herbert Wilmott Youth Centre in East Finchley left many young people in our area disengaged and pushed them to the fringes of our community.

Maureen responded by inviting children into her home to play and very soon found her home swamped with hordes of youngsters looking for a space where they could relax and have fun. After that, Maureen moved her Monday Club through many different locations: The Old Barn, The Methodist Church, St Mary's, Martin School, Bishop Douglass and The Archer Academy.

New award

Over the years Maureen and her volunteers have engaged with hundreds of young people locally and in 2013 she received a Barnet Civic Award.

On 9 July Maureen attended the community awards event of AAA Strike 4 Success, a north London organisation that acknowledges those who make a contribution in the community in helping people aspire to a brighter future.

Cheryl Armatrading, director and head of the company said: "We decided to present an award to Maureen because of her love and passion for others, especially children and young people. Her dedication, commitment and effort in providing support for the youth goes above and beyond her call of duty as a citizen in the community.

"Maureen is an inspirational individual and the service which she provides in East Finchley is desperately needed. AAA Strike 4 Success Management



Maureen with Cllr. Patrick Vernon OBE

is honoured to present a lifelong community award to Maureen, a remarkable person whose work has endured despite several setbacks."

Accepting the award, Maureen made an impassioned speech regarding the prejudice and difficulties involved in working with the young and disengaged. She promised to carry on her work in East Finchley and is busy organising a Family Fun Day on Saturday 20 August at Martin School.

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Head in the clouds: Paresh reaches the peak of Kilimanjaro'

Long climb to the roof of Africa

By Diana Cormack

In mid-June, pharmacist Paresh Shah and members of his family ranging in age from 24 to 60 set off to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, a dormant volcano and the tallest peak in Africa.

With his three cousins, one nephew and a brother-in-law, Paresh had spent several months studying the different routes to the summit, with their eventual decision being based on scenic beauty. As he said: "We didn't want to just climb up and come down."

Training and briefing

As they were all so busy, the actual decision to go was only taken in April, leaving little time for preparation. Paresh, pharmacist at C. W. Andrew, High Road, N2, trained by walking along Fortis Green to Muswell Hill and Ally Pally, then gradually built up to hill walking.

After arriving in Tanzania, the group spent time with friends and family before moving to a hotel for briefings from the organising company. They were joined by an American and a Canadian and these seven climbers were led by three guides and supported by 18 porters and a chef.

Paresh told *THE ARCHER* that the food was fantastic, but the real touch of luxury on their trip was a portable loo!

Slowly to the summit

Each climber had to carry a backpack weighing 7-10 kilos containing food and water, plus clothing to suit a variety of conditions as they were travelling from rainforest areas through to mountain terrain.

Paresh felt daunted when he first saw the huge mountain in front of them. Once they got going, he realised the importance of mental concentration along with physical endurance. "You have to respect the mountain and listen to the guides who tell you to take it slowly, slowly," he said.

Just after midnight on 21 June they set out on their final stage, an eight-hour trek to the summit, tackling strong winds and ice under their feet. The view from the top was so incredible that Paresh found it hard to describe.

Would he do it again? Yes he would, again with his brother-in-law, because he was the one who first suggested the idea but was sadly prevented by illness from completing the climb.

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