



Growing confidence: Support worker Sarah Nneke catches up with Robbie while he gardens. Photo Mike Coles

Gardening gives more than just pleasure

By David Gritten

It's hard to imagine doing gardening work as an activity that could radically change one's life but East Finchley support worker Sarah Nneke insists on its merits.

Sarah, who is familiar with the problems raised by autism, has been working with a young autistic man named Robbie, 26. Robbie hit upon gardening as a means of showing his talents to serve people in the area; it was an activity he started only recently, during lockdown. "A few weeks ago," Sarah recalls, "a lovely lady forwarded me his details, praising the gardening job he had done for her." And since then Robbie has done several gardening jobs for people in East Finchley, all of them to wide acclaim.

He has turned out to be a natural, and as Sarah tells it, the experience has had a massive impact on him.

"This experience has really helped Robbie with his confidence and his pride," she observes. "I'd like to thank everyone who has been involved and had their gardens done by Robbie."

Sarah herself has been delighted by the entire episode: "It's just been amazing, and I'm so thankful to live in a commu-

nity with such lovely people."

Five go mad... and cycle to Paris!

By John Lawrence

Last year a group of mums from East Finchley and Muswell Hill challenged themselves to ride from London to Brighton, a total of 61 miles, to raise funds for the local pre-school where they all met. Now this year, they are being joined by a novice cyclist and pushing themselves even further by riding 275 miles from London to Paris over four days in the middle of July.

The friends are raising money for two charities close to their hearts: Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, the UK's leading cervical cancer charity, and Refuge, which provides support to women and children who are survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

Helen Style, one of the mums, said: "Training has probably not been as good as it should have been! Through the winter, being fair weather cyclists, we had extra spin sessions at The CyClub in N2, who have sponsored one lot of t-shirts for us.

"Now we're doing hill training up Swains Lane, Highgate

Sweet spot for newly arrived chef

By Lynn Winton

Many East Finchley residents are continuing to sponsor Ukrainian people looking for a safe haven. In last month's edition we reported on photographer Tetiana Shedko, who is trying to start a new life with her young family.

For this issue I went to interview patisserie chef Elena Petrovich, who has arrived via Krakow from a small commuter town near to Kyiv and is living with her host family in the heart of N2. She is in regular contact with her husband and parents back in Ukraine and is naturally very anxious for their continuing safety. It is no surprise that with her cuisine qualifications she already has a full time job at the Bald Faced Stag in the High Road and is working there as Chef de Parti, also making all the desserts. Fortunately my five regular pub quiz team members were more than willing to help me check out the menu at the Stag. We tried every dessert and they were all delicious, which is not surprising considering that whilst Elena has the highest level of French-style patisserie training, she can also elevate a typical gastropub dessert offering into a thing of beauty.

Tying for first place was the Bramley apple crumble with vanilla bean custard and the salted caramel tart with hazelnut ice cream, either of which would have not been out of place in a



Just dessert: Elena Petrovich and one of her fabulous creations

Michelin star restaurant.

Private orders too As well as her demanding job Elena is taking private orders for all kinds of competitively priced cakes and desserts. You can contact her on 07746 623873 and her Instagram @chocoglam_bakery has lots of inspirational cake ideas.



Ticket to ride: The five friends in training for their long-distance ride to Paris

Hill and Muswell Hill as well as a long ride on a Sunday of approximately 70k so far. We need all the luck we can get. Please dig deep into your pockets. We want to raise as much as possible for these amazing charities."

One of the group, Melissa Rockman, a dentist at Cavendish House Dental Practice in East End Road, N2, agreed to take part and then had to learn

to ride a bike. Helen said: "She's a great spinner but had never learned to ride on two wheels. She's been amazing." All money donated will go straight to the two charities as the cost of the trip has been fully funded by the riders. You can support the charities through the group's fundraising page here: <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/fundraising/allez-les-femmes>. Bon voyage, ladies!

What's on at the Phoenix in July

By Zalan Pall, of the Phoenix Cinema

From a new, highly-anticipated biopic to incredible live theatre, live podcast and old classics, there's a lot to enjoy at the Phoenix over the coming months.

The man, the legend, the King of Rock & Roll. The standard rock biopic formula gets all shook up in *Elvis*, with Baz Luhrmann's dazzling energy and style perfectly complemented by Austin Butler's outstanding lead performance, until Thursday 7 July.

For families, the Phoenix provides an amazing Black History Walks event on Sunday 3 July centring around African superheroes. This animation festival for six to 60-year-olds, will feature a variety of African-themed cartoons and authentic black history. This is an interactive presentation consisting of short clips of films/cartoons and black history information.

Following the success of the Flash Gordon live podcast last month, *The Smersh Podcast* returns to the stage of Phoenix on Thursday 7 July to deliver another fun-filled, entertaining event, celebrating the 40th anniversary of Rambo's debut in *First Blood*.

On Thursday 14 July a portrait of the "world's greatest living explorer" Sir Ranulph Fiennes comes to the Phoenix, a film that goes beyond the record-breaking achievements to explore the man behind the myth. *Explorer* tells the definitive story of an inspirational leader but it goes beyond a simple retrospective, ultimately revealing the man behind the myth.

For theatre lovers, NT Live presents *Prima Facie* starring Jodie Comer, which is already looking like the hottest ticket of the summer. Suzie Miller's award-winning play takes us to the heart of where emotion and experience collide with the rules of the game. Justin Martin directs this solo actor tour de force at the intimate Harold Pinter Theatre for a strictly limited season.

For those who would like to see some older films back on the big screen, the Phoenix presents a Classic Season screening three tremendous films in July. On Saturday 2 July the 90th anniversary restoration of Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932) sinks its teeth onto the big screen. On Sunday 17 July, we show *Pickpocket* (1959), one of the greatest films from minimalist French director Robert Bresson. To round off the month on Sunday 31 July, Wim Wenders spreads his wings in *Wings of Desire* (1987).

FUN and MUSIC for BABIES and TODDLERS in N2 on **TUESDAYS** and **THURSDAYS**



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