



Family hub to provide better start in life for young children

By Margaret Crockett

Newstead Children's Centre in Fallows Close, off Tarling Road, N2, is to be rebranded with the help of extra funding to become a Best Start Family Hub. The Best Start in Life strategy focuses on ensuring that all children have access to high-quality care, learning opportunities and support so they can thrive and be ready for school.

The early years of a child's life, up to age five, are a vital period for development. Local MP Sarah Sackman successfully campaigned for the new facility, pointing out that a high level of East Finchley families experience deprivation.

Around the Grange and Strawberry Vale estates there is a significant proportion of children living in households below the median income and with a higher reliance on support services.

She stated: "Children in East Finchley deserve the best start in life and I am proud that our local campaign has been successful in placing a Best Start Family Hub at Newstead Children's Centre. This Best Start Family Hub will be transformative for many children and parents in Finchley and Golders Green."

The Government announced in late March that families struggling with the cost of living can save money on services as hundreds of new Family Hubs open. This brings services together under one roof, making it easier to get help at the right time. Investment over the next three years will provide more joined-up support.

Eligible families can save an average of £9,250 a year through funded childcare, free breakfast clubs, expanded free school meals, holiday activities and food programmes, alongside the expansion of Best Start school-based nurseries.

Family Hubs offer 'stay and play' sessions where parents and their children can meet other families, advice and courses to boost parents' confidence, support with children's speech and language, help in managing their behaviour and emotional needs, guidance on creating positive home learning environments, plus health services and advice. Beyond early years, there are also activities for young people.

Newstead Children's Centre is Barnet's East Central Hub. Families can contact the Centre or pop in to find out more.

Andy Whiting, Early Years and Primary Service Manager at the Centre, explained that the team aims to "build on the successes of the Surestart Children's Centres and Child and Family Early Help Hubs. The Best Start in Life strategy highlights the importance of engaging parents and carers to help plan future service delivery."

Looking for volunteers?

Are you looking for volunteers to help in your community group or organisation? Our Be Part of It column is published on page 2 every month and gets results. Submissions are free and are included subject to available space. Please submit your listing up to a maximum of 80 words to news@the-archer.co.uk, marking your email 'Be Part of It'.

Tell us the news

Have you got a news story or an interesting photo for us? Our readers are our eyes and ears, and we are always pleased to hear what is going on in East Finchley. Tips, ideas and stories, large or small, are very

The Archer online

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Nalin Shah, centre with sashes, surrounded by customers and friends at his farewell party. Photo Geoffrey Davies.

Goodbye to store owner after 47 years

More than 50 people gathered at Galaxy Drug Store in Church Lane, N2, at a farewell party for owner Nalin Shah as he retired from the family business after 47 years of selling essential household goods.

The sun sparkled, a giant red heart balloon donated by Jenni Mann Flowers next door was hurled into the clouds by a fierce gust of wind, dainty homemade samosas were served on bright orange plates and a huge cake was cut. And then another appeared, like magic.

Everyone sang For He's a Jolly Good Fellow. Nalin made a speech that was wise, funny and heart-warming. He spoke of helping out in his parents' textile shop in Tanzania, saying: "They taught me that only people have value, not money - and the importance of civic duty."

"I'm delighted with everyone who donated to Nalin's retirement fund," said Darren Mitchell, who organised the farewell party at the end of March. "He's a great man with a kind-hearted soul. Thank you, Nalin, for your years of service to the community. We appreciate you, sir." Galaxy Drug Store adverts from over the years were stuck to the windows as testaments to the shop surviving the recessions of the 1980s and 1990s, the crash of 2008 and Covid 19. When King Charles was crowned, Nalin

strung bunting across the shop. "Well, cash is King," laughed his sister Indira. "He never set up digital payments."

Friends and neighbours talked of Nalin's knack of always having what you needed and, if he didn't, his willingness to get it for you. And there was often a kind of serendipity at work: you'd pop in for some Brillo pads and come out carrying an enormous water pistol and a birthday card.

But Nalin mattered more to people than just what he sold. "It's the chats that I'll miss, and his generosity and kindness," said Liz, who's lived on Church Lane for 38 years. "He helped me so many times, especially when I opened 19 years ago," said Rasan, from Apiavi, another family business nearby. What of the future? A few people wanted something similar, like a family-run hardware store. Others didn't want to think about it as it was Nalin they wanted, really. But everyone was adamant about one thing: they didn't want another coffee shop.

Woodland dates

A public meeting is being held by the Cherry Tree Wood Café on Wednesday 6 May at 6pm where everyone is welcome to come along and hear what has been happening in the wood and what plans there are for the year ahead. On **Sunday 10 May** from 4pm to 5pm there will be a litter pick to keep the wood tidy. Volunteers are welcome to join in. Meet by the café. For more information, email friendsofcherrytreewood@gmail.com

Nature club

The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood are launching a nature club for children to be held on the first Sunday of each month. Starting on Sunday 3 May, children aged eight and under with parents or carers are welcome to this free event to be held at the Nature Circle next to the playground. No booking is needed, just turn up at 2pm to spend an hour discovering nature together. Future dates are Sundays 7 June, 5 July, 2 August, 6 September and 4 October.

From The Archer archives...

By Jane Marsh

**10 years ago:
May 2016**

Staff at the Phoenix Cinema paid tribute to longtime friend Victoria Wood, who died in April 2016. Head of Cinema Kate McCarthy said: "Victoria will always hold a special place in the heart of the Phoenix. She was a generous and charming woman who created a sparkle whenever she visited, and we will remember her with warmth and joy."

**15 years ago:
May 2011**

We highlighted plans progressing to keep Stanley Road Playing Field for sport and recreation, with the support of the London Marathon Trust. Later in the same issue we reported on local parents' call for a new secondary school in East Finchley, at a public meeting organised by the campaign group Local Schools for Local Children. As we now know, the new school initiative won the day, and part of the Archer Academy now stands on what was the Stanley Road Playing Field.

**25 years ago:
May 2001**

In April 2001 a milk float, several cars and a house in Leslie Road were attacked with stones and bricks, mid-morning in broad daylight. The windscreen of the milk float was smashed and the driver injured, resulting in serious bruising and cuts requiring nine stitches. After a police chase, four local boys, thought to be responsible, were apprehended and taken into custody.