



We wish all our supporters a very happy Christmas and New Year.



Local Support for the Trust

Hillview School for Girls

The Trust was very pleased to be invited to attend the Hillview "Oscars" award ceremony at the Trinity Theatre in Tunbridge Wells. The red carpet was out and the ladies were duly "glammed-up" to grace this evening celebrating their Media Film Awards. Two of the films entered advertised the Bridge Trust's Sleep Out and another was made to raise general awareness of homelessness and was shown to the soundtrack of Phil Collins' "Another Day in Paradise"; itself about the street homeless.



No Jacket Required

There was a huge surprise for us that evening, as the school and the Phil Collins Tribute Band, No Jacket Required, presented us with a cheque for £3,000! This had been raised from ticket sales for the evening, and also from ticket sales and a leaving collection from a concert by 'No Jacket' a few weeks before.



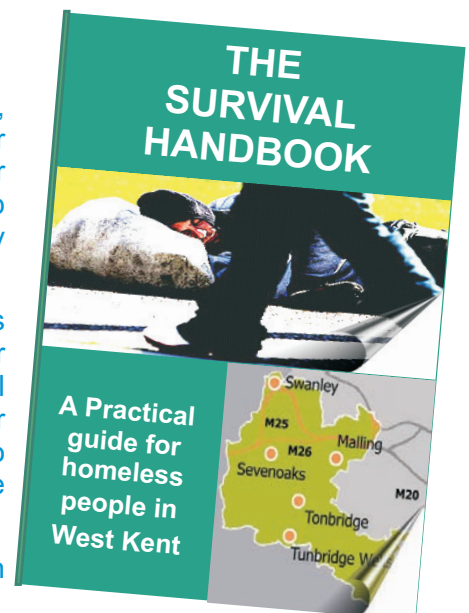
No Jacket have supported the Bridge Trust for many years and we are ever grateful for their continuing fundraising on our behalf. Their last collection for the Trust was at the Tonbridge Arts Festival, of which the Bridge Trust was proud to be a charity partner.

Resources for Rough Sleepers

Although the core of our work is to provide supported accommodation, we always keep an eye out for anything we are able to do for whatever situation homeless people find themselves in. One outcome of our Homeless Challenge Project, where four people volunteered to sleep rough for a week, was that there was no central resource that gave key information to help rough sleepers or sofa surfers find what they need.

To this end we have now produced the "Survival Handbook" which is targeted *directly* at the needs of a homeless person in West Kent. For example, the headings are not "Homelessness Agencies", or "Local Authority Addresses", but "Getting Meals and Food" and "Shower Facilities", etc. All the relevant local agencies have had the opportunity to input into this, as well as some of our own residents who have of course experienced homelessness themselves.

We just need to work out how best to present the booklet, preferably in an easily updatable format.... and then find some money to get it published!



Outreach Service Update.....

We are now almost ready to launch our Outreach/Advice service in Southborough. This has taken a little longer than planned due to staff shortages, but as we are now back to full strength it's all systems go. Thanks to all the support we received we have been able to fully equip the kitchen / laundry room / shower room / toilet and have just finished decorating the office area. We have been collecting some donated office furniture over the past months but will still need to buy some items we will need but we hope it will be ready before Christmas - we will keep you informed of progress.

One of our long-serving Supported Housing Officers, Wendy Denman left us for pastures new earlier this year but we have now replaced her with a new SHO, Brian Trott, who joins us with a wealth of experience, particularly with mental health issues. Another new addition to the team is Amanda Mankelow who has quickly added value to our reception/administration functions. For the next few months we have also engaged the help of a contract SHO - Jenny Molloy, who will be leading on our Resident Empowerment Project (reported below).

Resident Empowerment

We always aim to do better at everything we do and one of our central Business Plan Objectives this year was to provide more direct interventions to help our residents back into a sustainable existence. To facilitate this we have now set up a formal Project. Staff members and residents have formed a Working Group, one of our Supported Housing officers is the Project Leader and we have co-opted one of our Trustees - Jon Weller onto the Steering Committee. The project has already

agreed some partnership working with Town & Country Housing and we will be able to offer more and better training, education, development opportunities and ultimately a better chance at gaining employment if at all possible. Some training may need to be bought-in, but the majority we expect to source free of charge. Once the Project has been completed, the results will be integrated into our existing Support Processes to benefit all residents in the future.

Retail News

In the past few months, our charity shops have undergone somewhat of a face-lift. Both now have long-overdue new flooring and the Tunbridge Wells shop has been decorated. The Tonbridge shop especially has undergone somewhat of a transformation and has been completely re-styled with a new counter, the upper part of the shop opened up for extra sales space and the clothing rails re-positioned to give a much more open and welcoming feel to the whole shop.



New Look Tonbridge Shop

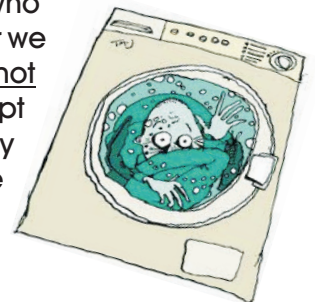
And now we are well into the 21st Century.....



.....All our outlets are finally able to accept credit and debit cards. We hope this will make your shopping experience just that little bit better. Unfortunately we have to place a minimum level of £5 in the shops and £10 in the Warehouse, otherwise our transaction fees are too high to make this initiative worth while.

White Goods Wanted

For many years now our Furniture Warehouse has reused good, serviceable, donated fridges, freezers, washing machines, cookers etc., to either give to our residents who move into their own accommodation, or to sell to raise money for our work. This year we have extended the collection of white goods to also include those that are not working. We have made an agreement with another organisation who will accept non-working appliances to refurbish. For every 10 non-working appliances they collect from us, they will return one to us in a fully re-furbished condition. This way we can reduce waste even more than we do, and also increase our supply of white goods. Therefore, if anyone has any appliances that are in good condition - working or not, please give our Furniture Warehouse a call to collect them.



Volunteer Shop Mangers Wanted

We intend to make use of some small shop space that came with Barden House in Southborough, to sell small furniture items and to promote our Furniture Warehouse. If anyone would like to volunteer to help out for two hours on a weekday morning then please contact the office - we really need you!

The Difference You Can Make

It is often quite difficult to explain the difference that your support for the Trust can make to people's lives. By far the best way to illustrate this is for someone we have been able to support to explain it themselves. So in the words of Jamie.....

It's been over a year now since I first met the Bridge Trust, and I keep being told "...if you had only seen what you were like last year, you were so different!" Well, I know I've put on weight! The fact is, I have come a long way in this last year and I will always be grateful for the Trust's support.

I've moved around quite a bit over the last five years and have gone through a few "rough patches" to say the least. Typically, I'd been on benefits and unable to afford to live anywhere, and in my case this would lead to other problems, mainly depression and guilt. It had been drummed into me (intentionally or not) that I was a useless person, whose children should be embarrassed of.

I was therefore shocked to get a call offering me a room in Tunbridge Wells. Here we go again new house, new town. Could I come along for a chat? I felt nervous, and I'm sure Bridge Trust staff would now confirm that I was petrified!

I am so glad I got that call though. As soon as I met people at the Trust's office, I realised that this was the first time I was being treated as an adult in a long time. I was being offered help, but nobody was doing anything for me. This was the first time I didn't feel like a victim.

I'll never forget the feeling of being given some keys and moving in - relief mainly. I was still lacking in confidence and I took a little while to mix with the others, but I met some really nice people who taught me my first steps to start being responsible again and getting back my self esteem. I still felt under pressure to "move on", but I was told there was no rush, and to take it steady.

Right. New town. Time to get out and about. I had decided to try voluntary work in order to meet people and get a bit of structure to my life, and when I mentioned this to staff I was offered the chance to get involved with some conservation work. I also used the Trusts resource centre to get involved with helping at the local theatre, which, after a while, brought some confidence back. It was walking distance from the house and so I treated it like work. Okay, I wasn't being paid, but in my mind I now had a home, and a job and self-reliance.

After about three months with the Trust, I was offered another room and a bit more responsibility. I was continuing voluntary work, and had even managed to write an up to date CV. It was around this time, that a paid position came up at "work", and it was suggested I apply. At first, the idea seemed impossible, but the staff at The Bridge Trust were serious about the idea. I was given help with the application, and then offered an interview! Again, my confidence was telling me there was no point, but I then thought "So why do these people, who have slowly got to know me think I can do it?"

Well I did apply, and I got it, and after about three days of shock, I had a huge sense of pride in myself. One of the best things I did this year was tell my two boys "Daddy has a job being a teacher."

I was loaned a laptop from the Trust, to help with work, as well as the use of the photocopier, the Trust also has a shop, which provided my first clothes for the job!

I was soon in a position to "move on", although this was never rushed. I still had lots of support in switching from where I was to full-time employment, and self-dependence. I now run a course as the tutor, and meet and work with over sixty people. I guess that's been the biggest thing gaining my confidence and making my own decisions, and The Bridge Trust gave me the place to start. For me, it wasn't just the accommodation, it was also learning to lose that guilt, and value myself again.

Merry Christmas.

A New Patron



As a charity who's work is rooted in the Christian faith, we are very pleased to announce that the new Bishop of Rochester, The Right Revd James Langstaff has agreed to become a Patron of The Bridge Trust. Bishop James has a particular interest in urban regeneration initiatives and social and affordable housing. He is Chair of Housing Justice, the national voice of the churches on housing and homelessness.

It's Back!

Yes, for all you avid Sleep Outers, the Bridge Trust Sleep Out is back again for its annual installment of fun, food, drink and (sometimes) sleep. The Sleep Out will be held on Saturday 30th April 2011, at Tonbridge School. Please put this date in your diaries as this year we are hoping that it will be bigger and better than ever. More details will be published nearer the time. If you want to take part please contact the office for Sponsor Forms.

E info@thebridgetrust.org.uk



Asics British 10K Run

Once again the Trust has secured 6 places for this across London 10K run. If anyone would like to run for the Trust, please contact us for details. All we ask is that a minimum of £50 sponsorship is raised.



It's Christmas!

For the 3rd year running the children of the St Dunstan's and St Thomas's churches in Southborough made 4 of our houses giant Advent Calendars. This year they decided to hang the 25 presents onto 4 washing lines - interspersed with Christmas cut outs. We attended the church youth groups to help make them and to add to the washing lines - interspersed with Christmas cut outs. We attended the church youth groups to help make them and to add to the "organised chaos" that ensued.

In any event it was great fun and meant that our residents were reminded that there are many people who do care about them.



The Icing on the Cake



This year the ladies of the local Sugarcraft Guild were kind enough to make our residents 11 wonderful Christmas Cakes. Each one was so superbly decorated, it was almost a shame to let them be eaten.

Bridge Trust Contact Details

Office 17A Quarry Hill Road Tonbridge TN9 2RN 01732 368363	Furniture Warehouse 9 Cannon Lane Tonbridge TN9 1PP 01732 365988	Tonbridge Shop 17 Quarry Hill Road Tonbridge TN9 2RN 01732 356955	Tunbridge Wells Shop 104 Camden Road Tunbridge Wells TN1 2QX 01892 526308	Southborough Shop 118 London Road Southborough TN4 0PN (Opening Jan 2011)
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