

BRIDGE BULLETIN



BRIDGE
TRUST 

A BRIDGE FROM HOMELESSNESS

SPRING 2019

Sometimes the sun does shine

My name is Solomon and The Bridge Trust was a Godsend for me.

In autumn 2017 I had a heart attack. I had been working in a warehouse but had to give it up because of my health. I was living in New Hythe with my girlfriend of 5 years but things had been going wrong for a while and it was her tenancy, and she asked me to leave.

I slept rough (well, with one eye open) for about a month and a half during February and March, sometimes in McDonalds car-park. At this time I didn't see my son, now 16 who lives in Chatham with my ex-partner. I didn't want him to know; to see me like that.

I was referred to The Bridge Trust by Porchlight and I think it was only a week later they had a space for me. It was a Godsend, a blessing in disguise. The Trust was very supportive and my co-tenants (residents) were very nice people. Tonbridge was much quieter than Chatham and I preferred it. I wasn't worried about moving in as it was so much better than what I'd come from.

Nick (my support worker) helped me keep on top of my medication and keep my appointments. He was very supportive, understanding and thorough and I enjoyed his sense of humour, though he could be pushy (in getting me to do the things I needed to) when he needed to be.

The Bridge Trust gave me some things; a toaster and a bed etc. which I wasn't expecting. Now every time I switch on the kettle I think of them and think "thank God!"

In February 2019 I was accepted for a council property closer to my son, so now I see him again and I can have him round to stay. I am still getting a few bits of furniture and carpet sorted but The Bridge Trust gave me some things; a toaster and a bed etc. which I wasn't expecting. Now every time I switch on the kettle I think of them and think "thank God!". If you haven't got something you don't miss it so I appreciate all the things I have got. Nick will be seeing me for a bit longer (as part of the Supported Move-on Scheme).

I have met a couple of my new neighbours; they keep themselves to themselves but seem nice. My cardiologist has now signed me off as being fit to work, although not in a physical job like a warehouse and I'm looking forward to the next chapter of my life.

My wish is that the Trust continues as there are many people like me and they help us pick ourselves up and move on. I'm not ashamed of what happened, it's my life, it's like everything; sometimes the sun shines and sometimes it doesn't.

Community Support

The Bridge Trust relies on the support from the local communities in West Kent for a lot of our funding – about half of what we need annually, and we are always so grateful when individuals, churches, clubs and societies and businesses show their support for the work we do.

It was therefore a real boost to us when the Nevill Nomads, from the Nevill Golf Club in Tunbridge Wells, presented a cheque for £500.

A huge thank you to all the Nomads for their show of support.



Here's £70 – go buy a drill!

You probably won't be surprised to hear that in the charity world we talk a lot about "giving". Indeed I have written in the past about just this topic, but when it comes to running a charity, when it comes to trying to get support, when it comes to encouraging people to help us financially, you just can't afford to "take your foot off the gas" – we need to encourage you to give!

One thing that does encourage people to give is to know that what they give is spent directly on the cause – in our case, helping a homeless person. Indeed, even when we had our used furniture warehouse, many people would offer us furniture, only on the condition that it was given to a homeless person. (It was tempting to ask what they thought someone living on the streets could actually do with a 1960's dresser, but I digress). In any event, we do have to try to sustain our message of "please help us", or we can drop off people's radar, so to speak. One problem is that there are so many charities asking for support (about 185,000 in England and Wales by the last count). This is a problem for the public – which good cause do you choose to support? But it's also a problem for us charities, as we have to try and stand out from a very crowded and noisy market place.

Some larger charities have access to bigger budgets and more resources, and can be very creative; very noisy about their cause. For example, making films is popular these days – especially as You Tube is taking over from Google as the most popular search engine! Anyone can make a film – you only need a mobile phone and perhaps a microphone, but many charities go the whole hog and spend thousands, perhaps using a professional film company to make TV adverts and the like – something that smaller charities could not compete with (and probably should not try). This brings me back to the issue of people wanting their money spent directly on the cause. Do YOU want to give The Bridge Trust the money to make a TV advert or would you rather give the same amount to help someone improve their education or get into work, kit them out with some "interview clothes" or even allow them to get some food. Even asking for money to make our accommodation better or to keep it maintained is actually quite unattractive to many people. As an example, we run 5 properties and an office, and if we had £1 for every time we needed a drill for something, we would be rich (well maybe not!). But we don't have a drill and I'm loath to spend £70 of our supporters' money, on a cordless drill! Instead, one of us will bring our own drill in (when we remember) to do whatever is needed. If we had our own one to hand it would be so much quicker and easier! The problem is that a charity – just like any other organisation, needs money for running costs. We need an office, IT, admin staff, insurance, cleaning, and a myriad other things (and a drill!) to keep the charity going, but people generally don't like the idea that they could be paying for that sort of stuff.

Working for a charity, I have a different perspective of course, and I when I give, I in effect say "spend this on whatever you need". I don't care if it's paper for the photocopier, a new banner for events, the electricity bill or if it's used to buy a food parcel for a rough sleeper. The thing is that you have to trust the charity that you give to and trust that they will use your money wisely and not wastefully. It's easy for me to say that as I know that any donation to The Bridge Trust will be used wisely and not wastefully, because I'm in charge of spending, so I know exactly what the money is spent on, but I appreciate that others maybe don't have that confidence in us.

So, what can we do to give you confidence in our stewardship of your donations? Well, we can be as open, honest and transparent about our spending as we can. Our financial accounts are pretty useful in that regard as they show exactly where your money is being spent, but I would argue that a more representative picture is in our Annual Report, which highlights the work we do throughout the year with homeless people, and most importantly, quantifies it. E.G. how many people have we helped to manage their mental health issues, how many ex-offenders have we helped stay on the straight and narrow, how many people we have helped control their finances and so forth, but most importantly, how many homeless people have we taken OUT of homelessness, because ultimately, that's what we are all about. It's those "outcomes" that you need to hold us to account on; it's those that measure our success. It's those outcomes that should give you confidence that whatever we spend your money on, it is ultimately having the right result – providing a bridge from homelessness to sustained, independence.

(P.S – Anyone got a cordless drill they don't want?)

John Handley, CEO



A New Patron

Following-on from our announcement of having the new Bishop of Tonbridge as a new Patron of The Bridge Trust, we are delighted to report that James Priory, the Headmaster of Tonbridge School has also agreed to be one of our Patrons.

After graduating from Oxford, James has been a life-long educator; spending his last 18 years before joining Tonbridge School, as a teacher and then Headmaster of Portsmouth Grammar School.

Balancing the Books

As a small charity we have to carefully consider the costs involved in generating funds for our work.

Whilst it may be true that it's advisable to "speculate to accumulate", that presents a potential risk when you have limited resources. This is why we primarily join existing fundraising events such as Half Marathons and Tonbridge Dragon Boat Race rather than holding Bridge Trust exclusive ones.

However, in order to make even these events worthwhile we rely on committed participants raising a little sponsorship to cover the cost of the places. Of course we want people to have fun taking part but regret that it is not possible to allow our places to go to

those who want to raise money for other causes, and there may unfortunately be times when we have to pull out of events if we don't have enough confirmed participants by the deadline. This is because it would end up costing us funds rather than raising them.

We are very lucky that we continue to have some brilliant entrants who drum up lots of support for us and a great bunch of volunteers who donate their time helping to make these events beneficial. There are things we do purely to raise awareness but mostly it's a two-fold benefit. No event is guaranteed to be problem-free but we are a charity and community fundraising is vital income we rely on to help more homeless people in our region.



The Tonbridge Daily Calendar

We were hugely honoured to have been chosen as one of three local charities to benefit from the sale of the 2019 Tonbridge Daily Calendar.

This year the Calendar sold brilliantly and we were very pleased to receive a cheque for £1,780 from Suzannah Niklas from Tonbridge Daily, from the proceeds of the sale. Many thanks to all who supported us indirectly by selling the calendar and of course those who bought it.

Running to raise funds for The Bridge Trust

A huge thanks to our supporters who ran the Brighton Marathon for us in April and the Tunbridge Wells Half Marathon back in (a not so warm) February. The Trust participates in many running events throughout the year so please "watch this space" for news of the next events we have spaces for.

Our next Half Marathon is the Tonbridge Half in October – let us know if you want to run for us.

London 10K – 21st July 2019

We have a few places left for the Asics London 10K this July. All we ask is that you pay us a £15 admin fee and raise as much in sponsorship as you can. Please contact Jhandley@thebridgetrust.org.uk



One of our residents is very grateful to have just moved on from us into independence, however in the next twelve days twelve people applied to take that space.

This is why our staff often remind themselves of the starfish poem; "...there must be thousands of (stranded) starfish. How can your efforts to throw them all back make any difference? ...It makes a difference to this one"



'Rags to Riches' Dog Show 28th July at Tonbridge Racecourse Ground



Tonbridge and Malling's long-standing Dog Warden, Lorraine Baseden, is organising another of her successful dog show/fun days, this year assisting local homeless people through the 'Rags to Riches' event in support of The Bridge Trust.

We would like to help Lorraine by asking if you know of any companies who could offer to donate prizes, samples, vouchers or hold a stall to showcase your business in support of our cause. In exchange, we will promote your company through local newspapers, social media and you will have a mention in the show programme and flyers.

Stallholder fees start at £20 with the opportunity for you to sponsor a class in the show for a very reasonable minimum of £25 per class. This would enable your business to be assigned to a class and advertised alongside it. A few categories have already been reserved for sponsorship so please do hurry and contact Lorraine ASAP by emailing tonbridge.dogwarden@wardssecurity.co (please note no UK!)

A lot of people will be working hard to make this event a success, and the homeless in Tonbridge will benefit from items such as sleeping bags, food hampers and much more with the thanks of our many sponsors. With your help we can make the show even better and bigger than last year. All proceeds will go to The Bridge Trust.

We look forward to hearing from you if this is something you could contribute to or sponsor. If you need more information please contact Lorraine at the email address above, and if you cannot help, please feel free to forward Lorraine's details to any other company who may be willing to.



Tonbridge Lions Charity Walk 8.30am, 19th May 2019

The popular "Bluebell" Sponsored Walk is back again.

The event begins at 8.30am at Shipbourne Village Hall, where all entrants are registered, with the walk starting between 9-9.30 am. There are both 5 mile or 9 mile routes to choose from. If you wish to have a great morning's meandering through the local countryside and raise money for The Bridge Trust at the same time, please contact KEN on 01732 352935.

Pass it on...

When you have finished with this Bulletin, perhaps you could pass it on to a neighbour who may be interested. If you do, you can ask them to contact us if they want to be added to our mailing list.

CONTACT US

17A Quarry Hill Road, Tonbridge, TN9 2RN.

T: 01732 368363 • 01892 3152823 • E: Info@thebridgetrust.org.uk

 Like us: facebook.com/thebridgetrust

www.thebridgetrust.org.uk

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Reg. Charity No. 1050291.

Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who has donated. Here are a few since the last Bulletin:

Bell Fundraising Ltd – £150
Simply Sports – £81.91
Richard Hopkinson Architects – £1,000
Badger Bathrooms Ltd – £100
Spa International Oil Services Ltd – £50
CBS Consultancy Ltd – £150
Britain Thinks – £50
Eight Oaks Ltd – £5000
Rustrick Accountants Ltd – £100
Tunbridge Wells Hospital – £50
St Martin of Tours, Ashurst – £200
St Lawrence's, S'oaks £250 & £216.86
St Martin of Tours, Chelsfield – £740 & £150
Chevening Church – £200
St Thomas of Canterbury, S'oaks – £70
St Mary's, Kippington – £500
Tudeley cum Capel with Five Oak Green Churches – £400
Christ Church, Tonbridge – £100
Hawkenbury United Reformed – £100
St Luke's, Sevenoaks – £47 & £51.80
Tonbridge Methodist Church – £243
St Peter's & St Paul's, Seal – £250
St Mary's, Platt – £590.70
St Stephen's, Tonbridge £1714.56 & £125.15
Church of the Good Shepherd, Borough Green – £300
Tonbridge Baptist Church – £483.75
St Mark's, Tunbridge Wells – £225
St John's, Tunbridge Wells – £4,005.01
St Giles', Shipbourne – £500
Eynsford Baptist Church – £95.10
Rusthall United Reformed – £123.20
1st East Peckham Girls' Brigade – £33
Rotary Club of Sevenoaks £500
Kemsing Women's Institute – £72.10
St Dunstan's Ladies Group – £25
Higham Wood Snr Friendship Gp – £100
Hilden Ladies Probus Club – £250
Tunbridge Wells Harriers – £3,000
Ruskin Ensemble £271
The Weald of Kent Ploughing Match Assoc'n – £500
Nevill Golf Club £500
Tonbridge School – £100 & £341.70
Our Lady of Hartley Catholic Primary School – £432.63
Tonbridge Grammar School – £558.14
The Schools at Somerhill – £348.12

It costs approximately £450,000 p.a. to provide a home to the homeless. These donations allow us to continue to make a difference in people's lives.

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