
Your Quarterly News Update and More: Issue 4, Winter 2014/15

News from the Director.

I couldn't be more proud of all who work at Open Age – staff, tutors and volunteers alike, we have such dedicated, hardworking and creative teams with 'can do' attitudes which enables the charity to provide so many opportunities to improve wellbeing amongst those 50 and over

In particular I want to mention two fantastic achievements over the last few weeks. Firstly

Catherine Pymar, our Manager of Kensington and Link - Up won the Central London Community Healthcare (CLCH) Partner Award at the NHS Trust Staff Awards ceremony. She said, "It was really exciting and great to see both mine and the charity's work recognised by CLCH. The most rewarding part of the job is to see the difference that you're making to other people's lives - it's wonderful."

Not to be satisfied with one award, Jemma Bicknell, our Westbourne Hub Manager was also one of three staff from organisations across Westminster to be shortlisted for the highly coveted Active Westminster Outstanding Contribution Award. The Active Westminster ceremony was held at Lords Cricket ground in the presence of the Mayor of Westminster and several renowned sports personalities.

Helen Leech

COMINGS and GOINGS

Coming: Russell John - Men's Group Coordinator.

The Men's Group has had a new coordinator. He's Russell John, a local boy 'Born and bred in London and lived, for the most part within a five mile radius of St Charles,' he says.

He comes to us from the Chelsea Football Club Foundation, a mere 3.8 miles away, where he worked as a Football Development officer, helping to establish the club's first Men's Health Program. Then he moved on to Men's Health Project Coordina-

tor, using football to promote, develop and deliver healthy lifestyle programs to adults.

So, clearly a Chelsea supporter, you would think. Not so. It is Arsenal and memories of the Invincibles which makes him go misty eyed with longing for past glory days. As to whether he ever gets nostalgic for his first job as a sheet metal fabricator - he completed an apprenticeship - I cannot tell you.

What I can tell you is that the

forthcoming programme includes trips to the gym, the cinema and restaurants as well as IT courses and two football sessions at the Westway.

We look forward to them..

AGM Celebrates another Year of Expansion and Success

Around 100 members and partners attended Open Age's 21st Annual General Meeting on Friday 14th November at Paddington Arts. It offered an opportunity to reflect on developments over the past financial year and acted as the launch of the new Open Age logo and branding.

Members heard that over the past year Open Age has run more than 350 activities a week, providing activities for around 1,200 different people a week. What's more many of those people are attending multiple events, resulting in 100,000 visits to ac-

tivities a year.

Attendees also heard about Open Age's expansion into Hammersmith & Fulham, extension of activities in RBKC with the running of the Second Half Centre and most recently, Open Age taking over the running of St. Margaret's Centre in Pimlico.

The AGM also saw the launch of the new Open Age logo, strapline and values. These are expressed in the statement that 'Open Age creates chances for Londoners over 50 to work, learn, take part, and stay healthy in body and

mind..'

To reflect this, Open Age launched its new strapline 'life's just begun' and reflected on the values of the organisation, to be inclusive, nurturing, dignified and uplifting.

Once the formal aspects of the meeting were completed, guests were treated to a performance from the ukulele orchestra, followed by sherry and mince pies, and a chance for everyone to relax and catch-up."

CP and RSS

Alan Potter Listens to the Voices

After a lifetime of working in education, including as a teacher, I decided as a later life learner to undertake research with the Institute of Education. I wanted to look at the quality of the learning being provided for those in later life and I was delighted that Helen (Leech) and Open Age were interested in being a partner in this venture. It has been a pleasure over the last year or so to have worked with both Open Age, in general, and with Barbara in particular, to investigate the 'quality' of learning in later life. This has meant exploring the views and ideas of older learners, and their tutors, and mapping them against research into the benefits of later life learning.

This research focuses on informal learning, which encompasses classes that later life learners

elect to join to acquire knowledge or develop a specific skill. In my research, I am asking the question 'what does 'quality' learning, in later life, look like?' and, in particular, I want to find out what the learners and tutors own perceptions of quality learning are.

I am very grateful to learners for their participation, enthusiasm and their thoughts. This research differs from many others as it seeks to capture the 'voice' of the older learners themselves as to what constitutes a 'quality' learning experience. If learning is to be the best it can be, then it should meet the needs of the very people taking part and doing the learning. Following a series of discussions, and trialling a questionnaire, I have visited a number of groups to gather their opinions. All responses have been record-

ed anonymously and the feedback has been terrifically interesting and helpful.

All members of staff have been very supportive and every learner I have talked to has been great. It will soon be time to feed back everything learners really value in their learning. Early indications suggest that, amongst other things, quality learning is where learners are active in their learning, where they are challenged to learn new things and where the class environment meets all their learning needs. Everyone is proud of what Open Age provides. It is typical for them to want to be engaged in research to make things even better and to do so by asking the people that matter the most – the learners.

AP

HELP NEEDED WITH RBKC SURVEY

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea are consulting with the public on the future of Thamesbrook and are asking for your participation.

Briefly: Thamesbrook is a 56-bed nursing and residential home for elderly people, located in Dovehouse Street, Chelsea. I

t was closed, temporarily, in June following the discovery of intractable Legionella bacteria in the water system. Residents were safely transferred to other homes, which most have decided to make permanent. While the building is empty the council is considering the future for Thamesbrook

To find out more and to take part in the survey go to: www.rbkc.gov.uk/thamesbrookconsultation
Closes 31st January 2015



COMING BACK: Jemma Bicknell - Westbourne Hub Manager and Creative producer.

If the St Charles Centre has seemed a little quiet recently it might be because the storm of energy and sound that is our Westbourne Hub manager and Creative producer, Jemma Bicknell has not been in evidence.

Soon after the move from Thorpe Close she took up residence at Paddington Arts, from where she runs the Westbourne Hub. As a dancer and performer it seemed an appropriate setting for her activities.

Now even Paddington has gone temporarily quiet as she has



Blue-footed Booby trying to impress Jemma with its dance moves.

gone to Lima, Peru. According to the latest reports she has been

soaking up the culture and atmosphere while also taking time to watch penguins and blue footed boobies on the Islas Galapagos. When she comes back from her sabbatical in February we can all look forward to a newly inspired Jemma.

Meanwhile, back in cooler climes, where the most exotic wildlife is the occasional garden magpie, Elizabeth Goldrick is standing in for Jemma. She in turn is being supported by the leader of the Ukulele band, Alistair McKenzie.

Dance

Open Age Dance's performance 'Of Women' is a reworking, or reimagining of the performance 'Body of Knowledge,' which Jemma Bicknell created with ten open Age members two years ago. The original was a 20-minute performance at Richmix arts centre in December 2012.

In its previous incarnation the work was about tackling taboos around ageing and ageism and included three male performers. As all of the other groups performing were young artists it presented an opportunity to challenge perceptions of older people.

She worked with sound designer Michele Panegrossi to create the sound score; he recorded verbatim dialogue, as well as a lively tea-drinking session in a local café! Each solo was performed by the person speaking, and we ensured



Photos by Jonathon Vinasas

they were happy with what was being put on stage.

Now, with no men, it has become a very different piece, which is why it is renamed 'Of Women'.

This time she decided to focus the theme further and really

explore what the performers felt about ageing and womanhood. 'I'm delighted by how bold the women have been with their spoken solos and how they've worked together as a group,' says Jemma. Of the experience of working with the group she says that 'When I was working with this group it was the highlight of my week, quite a lively bunch, they certainly kept me on my toes, but they were so enthusiastic, kind, creative and hard-working that they were a joy to work with..'



Health Notes

Breast Cancer Rehab Exercise Pilot Running at New Horizons

Currently New Horizons are piloting a new exercise program for those who have undergone surgery following breast cancer. While exercising is always good it can be particularly beneficial after breast cancer because, according to the Canadian Can-

cer society, it can help:
improve muscle tone
regain and maintain movement and mobility in the arm and shoulder
regain the ability to do daily activities
lessen side effects of surgery,

such as pain, joint stiffness and swelling and improve well-being
For more information ask at the New Horizons reception or ring: 020 7590 8970

Raspberry and Polenta Cake

(Recipe kindly supplied by Minh-Tam Janssens)

This is the nearest thing to a Health Cake you will ever eat but before you tuck in, remember the recipe serves 12.

INGREDIENTS

225g (8OZ) of unsalted butter, extra for greasing
225g (8OZ)sugar
3 eggs
125g (3OZ) ground almond
125g (3OZ) polenta
1tsp baking powder
1tsp salt
Juice and zest of 2 lemons
200g (7 OZ) raspberries
Icing sugar
Crème fraiche to serve

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 160C.
Line and grease a 23in spring form tin.
Beat the sugar and butter until creamy and pale.
Add in one egg at a time.
Fold in ground almond, polenta, baking powder, salt, lemon juice and zest.
Pour half the batter into the tin, place a layer of raspberries and pour over the remaining batter.
Bake for 50-60 minutes or until golden.
Leave to cool then remove from tin and dust with icing Sugar
Serve with Crème fraiche and a few raspberries for a little extra Christmas indulgence.

Editor Wanted

We are looking for an editor to work with members of the newsletter group.
If interested please contact **Jenny** at Second Half Centre – jmarshall@openage.org.uk or call her on: **020 8962 5500**

Running the GoodGym

Open Age have benefitted from the affects of GoodGym. But if you're imagining members queuing for a go on the parallel bars after a quick workout with the medicine balls think again. Simply put, members of GoodGym see that as a waste of energy. They are runners who would rather be doing something more useful than

pumping iron. So they run and provide help to isolated and vulnerable people over the age of 60 or community organisations in Westminster.

They have twice put their considerable energy into helping out at Glastonbury House, deep cleaning on the first visit then cleaning all the yoga mats the week after.

They are due to strike again too! Churchill Hub Facilitator Carolyn Sellick says that they turn up, on the run, of course, and do what you want for forty minutes in return for water and biscuits. Then they write a blog about the task afterwards.

Those Services at a Glance:

Group runs: *a weekly group of runners that can help out community organisations with a specific task.*

Missions: *one-off, time limited, practical help to an older/vulnerable member of the community that needs help. E.g. clearing a garden of overgrown plants, or helping someone to clear out some large items. Runners are not professional trades people but are DBS.*

Coach runs: *GoodGym can provide runners for friendly social visits on a weekly basis to someone in their area that is over 60 and lonely, isolated or immobile. The older people are called coaches because being paired with someone who would like a visit gives the runner the motivation to get out the door and go running.*

The Royal Garden Hotel

The Royal Garden Hotel is the 5 star, 1960s building on Kensington High Street where, last August, Open Age hosted An Audience with Esther Rantzen. It is also the hotel that has adopted Open Age as it's chosen charity and while such things can be little more than PR stunts enabling companies to boast about their corporate social responsibility The Royal Garden is different.

Since choosing us as their charity, because they wanted something local, they have run a series of fundraising activities. Central to these activities are the monthly funding challenge. Each month a different department comes up with an idea for raising money. Clearly

some departments have more opportunities for raising cash than others - cooks can bake and sell cakes (175 ordered so far),

housekeepers cannot - so a straight money contest seems unfair. Is unfair. So amongst the staff the contest is as much about ideas as money, ideas that have included: an exercise bicycle ride, a talk from the executive chef, cake decorating, a film show and an omelette making contest. Then away from the interdepartmental competitions there have also been sealed bid auctions for tablets or World Cup tickets. Then there was a cohort of volunteers who turned up and helped paint the Open Age offices.

It all sounds like good fun and worthy into the bargain but the cynics out there may want to know what difference it actually makes. The answer is a lot. Most of the money that come into charities like ours are from sources that, rightly, ring fence it closely. What that means is that funding for a particular activity - say employing tutors - can only be used for that activity. What every charity needs is money that isn't tagged in that way and can be used for a variety of purposes as the need arises.

Money like that - like the money from The Royal Garden Hotel - to a charity like ours, is pure gold.