

LANCASTER MEN'S HUB NEWSLETTER



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Let's Befriend!

You don't have to walk too far on the main streets of Lancaster before you encounter someone sitting in a doorway with a sleeping bag or sitting on a bench looking as though they're "down on their luck". You might give them some money or offer a sandwich or a hot drink; you might say, "Hi," or you might keep looking ahead and continue walking. At the LMH talk on 29th April Alex Campbell of "Let's BeFriends" shared important insights into this serious social problem and also offered inspiration about how we: all of us; can play a part in closing the "revolving door" of homelessness and addiction.

Alex knows what he's talking about. He told of his years of addiction and rough sleeping and of the



years he spent trying to get well only to relapse before finally entering a period of recovery which has extended to 6 years so far. "The problem of homelessness and addiction can seem endless," he told us. "You try to abstain from drug or alcohol misuse; you get placed in housing; you can't find the support you need to live in a house or flat so you relapse; you lose the housing and you're back on the street again and your substance misuse

increases. It's a revolving door."

But the exciting news is that befriending can be the wedge that jams that revolving door open. Alex showed us the facts and figures behind his explanation. "More than any other intervention befriending helps people towards recovery and makes it possible for them to keep their housing. Befriending makes available the support people need to move from active addiction to abstinence, to detox and ultimately recovery, whilst managing the responsibilities that come with maintaining a stable home."

And that's where LMH members come in. If you have the time to offer and the capacity for empathy then you could be suitable to become a befriender. You would receive training and guidance as you assist your befriender in accessing appropriate support services in the local area. All volunteers complete a DBS check, an induction period and safeguarding training and the support for befrienders is ongoing throughout the duration of the befriending relationship.

If you feel you could become a befriender please check the LMH website (thelmh.org.uk) or contact Alex directly on 07548 121662

Well-being Festival. 14 May

On Saturday 14th May, 10am - 2pm, Lancaster Methodist Church is celebrating Mental Health Awareness week by hosting a Wellbeing Festival at the Cornerstone, its centre on Dalton Square/Sulyard Street; Lancaster Men's Hub will be participating in this important initiative. The event aims to promote a range of positive health activity run by organisations across the District and bring them to the attention of our local community; it would be great to see you there and there's still an opportunity for you to get involved.

Goodbye, and thanks for all the food!

About a year ago Lancaster Men's Hub entered a partnership with the Band of Brothers to share the Friday Elevenses and provide refreshments and a light lunch for both groups. One fortunate effect of this was to introduce us to Murray Cuthbert, a retired chef, who volunteered with Band of Brothers. Since then Murray has worked with both organisations and has been an invaluable asset to the development of Lancaster Men's Hub's Elevenses programme. His subtle takes on Middle Eastern cuisine and his expertise in operating professional kitchens has brought new experiences to both Band of Brothers and Lancaster Men's Hub members; very little of Murray's creations has been left uneaten over the last year! Murray has also helped to set up some kitchen training for members of the two organisations and his steady support and hard work will be much missed.



Unfortunately, Murray has now retired from his role with Band of Brothers and we shall struggle to replicate his expertise, but Lancaster Men's Hub will continue the collaboration with Band of Brothers, albeit with a slightly simplified offering initially, and hope that we can maintain the high standards of food and kitchen discipline that Murray set; thank you for all you have done for us Murray.

Don't forget that we have Elevenses every Friday from 11.00 pm at the Cornerstone on Sulyard Street. Free coffee social drop-in. Everyone is welcome.

Benches for Claver Hill

Claver Hill Community Food Growing Project has finally received the benches that Lancaster Men's Hub undertook to donate to enhance their nature trail. Claver Hill Community Food Growing Project is a 6-acre field off Ridge Lane in Lancaster dedicated



to allowing local people the opportunity to learn how to grow their own food. The land is held in trust for the community and hosts a wide variety of groups who cultivate food and other crops for communal benefit. Lancaster Men's Hub agreed to supply them with benches to be placed along the nature trail that runs through the site and provides the project with recreational and educational benefit. Lancaster Men's Hub still has no workshop facility of its own, and it has taken time to fabricate and install the benches, but the Hub is proud to support Claver Hill Community Food Growing Project and looks forward to further cooperation in the future.

Since the newsletter is now going out to all members, here's a short brainteaser; feel free to use whatever sources you need to work out the answer. The first correct answer randomly selected will have the privilege of setting next month's brainteaser.

What do the following have in common: Conan Doyle's most famous creation, a village in Shropshire that held the first Olympic Games of the modern era, the general who recaptured Cawnpore in 1857 and an antique firearm?

Answers, with reasons, to John on johnstrivens@hotmail.com by 27 May.

