



Volunteer Newsletter May 2011

The work an unknown good man has done is like a vein of water flowing hidden underground, secretly making the ground green. ~Thomas Carlyle

Dear all,

Welcome to the May edition of the Volunteer Newsletter, and a particular welcome to all new volunteers. I try to get a newsletter out approximately once a quarter and would encourage everyone to have their say, tell us their news, anything of interest, or to let me know if there is anything they would like more detail on regarding what we do and how we do it both here at Mary Cole House and in our Arkangel project. On that note...do have a look at our new updated web site....www.wirralark.org.uk. It has a bright, fresh new look and has attracted many positive comments since it went "live" a couple of months back. Of course it will also give you a lot of information on the project, and has a "latest news" section to keep you updated on the latest happenings and events.

Irene Kennedy

I sincerely hope that all volunteer got my letter telling of the death of Irene on March 29th 2011. For those who are new, Irene was a supporter of Wirral Churches' Ark Project for many years, firstly as a volunteer and then as a paid member of staff. She died after a determined battle with Cancer. She will long be remembered by us for her sense of humour, her courage, and her kindness to both staff and residents. She will of course live on in our extension, The Irene Kennedy Centre, named after her, which she was thankfully well enough to open last year and see up and running. Our sincere condolences to her family.



Volunteer Representatives Report

The dust seems to have settled a little now, following the new arrangements for dinner etc.

Our new trainee cook Jed has also got into the way of things and is very amenable and easy to work with.

We have acquired quite a few new Volunteers who are slotting into place and there are others who are in the pipeline. If you know of anyone who is interested in volunteering please ask them to give me a ring.

We have brought volunteers' information up to date including the Volunteer's Handbook, sheets explaining various duties undertaken and an application for Membership form which would give you voting rights at an AGM. If you do not get a copy of these please let me know and we will make sure we rectify this. I am at the Ark on a Wednesday from 9a.m.-1p.m. or ring me at home (0151 638 8983) or email me at helenfallows@ymail.com and I will deal with it. It would be good if those of you who can, let me have a copy of your email address – it is then simple to get in touch with you.

We are arranging another Volunteers' Social evening for Friday 10th June 2011 at 7p.m. here at the Ark in Sandford Street. Please do try to come along. You will be made very welcome and the opportunity is there for you to meet staff and the other Volunteers. Looking forward to seeing you.

If in the meantime you have any comments or suggestions to make please get in touch as above.

As ever, we are so grateful for the time you give to volunteering. It is very much appreciated and still a vital part of what is provided by the Ark Project. Thank you all so much.

Kindest regards

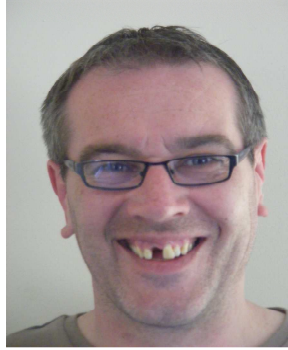
Helen Fallows
Volunteers' Representative

New staff

We currently have a few new members of staff, Jed has already been mentioned by Helen and he is doing a grand job in the kitchen.

We have two new Future Jobs Fund employees who are with us for 6 months.

Below is Dave who is working in the Irene Kennedy Centre co-ordinating the drop-in and the activities that we have in there.



We have a new receptionist, Matthew, who is in charge of all the day time comings and goings. He is here under the FJKF as well.



Arkangel and the Peer Mentoring Scheme

Wirral Churches ArkAngel Staff and service users, Ark Direct Access Hostel Staff and service users have agreed to work in partnership and are committed to executing a peer to peer Mentoring Program to assist Wirral Churches ArkAngel Supported Housing to meet its overall purpose.

The purpose of the Mentoring Program is to form an environment which will encourage and support willing clients' development. Overall, the aim is to empower "more independence in more people". One of the fundamental goals of the Mentoring Program is that it will create a self supporting group of people who can transmit wisdom informally, within a professional setting. The Mentoring Program also aims to underpin the work completed by Key workers when using the Outcomes Star tool kit.

Service users and ex-service users who choose to participate in the Program can be categorised into mentors and mentees, these roles aim to benefit the client in different ways, respectively, and through the implementation of the Mentoring Program an individual can expect to gain a set of values which are listed below.

Mentors:

- Ability to communicate on an♣ interpersonal level
- Build confidence through helping others; sense of♣ achievement
- Enhance an already established sense of identity♣
- ♣ Construct an element of responsibility

Broaden organisational skills♣

Mentees:

Develop a sense of identity/conscience♣

♣ Become effectively integrated into the hostel community, local community and society as a whole

Articulate a sense of purpose and well-being♣

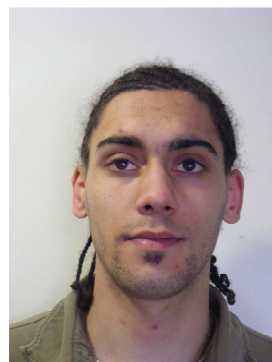
♣ Acquire the necessary life skills to become independent

Gain an awareness♣ of self-worth, self-respect, self-dignity and integrity

With the framework having been completed, the implementation of the Program is now imminent. The first point of call for this process will be through tenants from Ark Direct Hostel, who are the most in need of the irrefutable service which the Program can and will provide. In terms of future prospects, if the Program is a success, ArkAngel would like to extend it to all service providers and clients within the homeless community

If you would like any further information then please contact Dave Harrison at daveharrison@wirralark.org.uk

Below are George who is the lead Mentor, and Thomas who is coordinating the project .



Another new member of staff on the Arkangel team is Lance, who is pictured below. As an ex tenant he has huge experience and skills to bring to the team. He is also under a Future Jobs Fund contract and is working as a support worker.



Night Safe



The Night Safe project has now been launched to try and address the safety issues of those sleeping on the streets. We turn away between 20 and 50 people a month because we just don't have a bed. We now at least have somewhere to direct those in most need to. Although the project has only been running a month we have had to move it into the Irene Kennedy Centre as it outgrew the lounge!

Below is the piece about the project from our web site.

For those sleeping rough there is now an overnight facility called "Nightsafe" at Mary Cole House on Sandford St, Birkenhead.

This can be accessed at any time after midnight, clients can sit in the lounge all night and have a hot drink and a light snack.

In the morning they will be directed to the drop-in in the Irene Kennedy Centre where they can have some breakfast and staff will assist with any issues.

This is open to anyone, but anybody heavily under the influence of drugs or drink may be refused admission or asked to leave.

We are still looking for volunteers to help in this overnight provision. If anyone is interested then please contact either Joyce Lowe the Volunteer Coordinator, or Kevin Hogan the Hostel Manager.

AGM

The 2011 AGM was held on April 12th and there was a superb turnout. As well as the usual reports, Kevin the Hostel Manager gave an interesting overview of developments at the hostel including a set of statistics for those accessing our services. This made the problems that our client group have very clear and I think it is worth repeating them here. These statistics have been gathered over the last 8 months

- 300 people have asked us for a bed either in person, on the phone, by letter, through the web site or other agencies.
- Due to our number of beds we have only been able to accommodate 19% of them.
- 84% of enquiries came between 8:00am and 4:00pm
- 32% actually rang our bell
- 39% came via other agencies

- 46% needed a bed due to relationship breakdown
- 33% of the 300 (99) claimed to be sleeping rough
- Only 7% were female
- 43% had no benefits
- 49% had alcohol problems (currently in the hostel 60% have diagnosed alcohol issues)
- 39% had mental health problems (Currently in the hostel that figure is 43%)
- 28% had drug issues
- 15% had a significant history of violence.

Thomas and George from the Peer Mentoring Project gave a Powerpoint on the scheme and after them, Mark, and ex resident movingly told of his journey from the streets back up to where he is now in independent accommodation.

One of our Trustees, Eileen Hughes, resigned, and we now have a new Trustee. He is Norman Jones , a local Solicitor, and President of the Liverpool Law Society. We are sure he will bring much expertise and life skills to the Board. Revd Robert Nelson also stood down and was re-elected to the Board.

Wirral Ark Dinghies (WAD)

Wirral Ark Dinghies completes its second successful year in April 2011. Whilst providing the opportunity for meaningful occupation to many clients, it has also proved to be financially successful, covering almost all of its costs. The scheme is firmly established renovating older wooden dinghies, and we celebrated the sale of our 50th boat in October 2010. More recently we have branched out into manufacturing launching trolleys as designed by our staff and clients. However, the biggest success is measured by the commitment, enthusiasm and improvement in confidence and purpose observed in our clients, resulting in our first client securing full time employment in a related occupation.

Boats are generally donated, often after people have learnt about us via the internet. Recently a mail shot was placed in a local newspaper which proved to be a successful way of raising our profile. Similarly, the internet works for us in terms of selling, or repairing customer's boats. Recommendations from our customers have also played a big part.

The success of WAD is with thanks to the commitment of the staff and volunteers who endeavor to make the "Boat yard" an enjoyable place to be.

Barry Miller -WAD Manager

As always, many thanks to all our Volunteers in whatever capacity they help us. Please try and make the Social on June 10th, it would be lovely to see you all there.

Anne O'Marah
May 2011