Angels in Wanstead



Lola Shorter

In the 12th of a series of articles profiling Wanstead's local community heroes, photojournalist **Carole Edrich** introduces us to Lola Shorter

Lola Shorter started working 'front of house' at Zoology because that's what she had done in previous jobs, but while there got more and more interested in hair dressing. "It suits me and it's lovely. I love to meet people and love the fact that I know all the clients". As she got more involved with the work and the people in Zoology, she became more interested in hair dressing too. She explained what happened next: "I did a blow dry of Annie's hair. It took all night to do but I was surprised that it looked OK! Later, Mark and Zena suggested I get more involved in the hair dressing. Now I do both. It's great. Even if I'm with my clients, I know everyone else and about their lives and everything. I love it!"

Lola is far more involved with Zoology than you'd think. This year, when proprietor Mark Mountney told the team he wanted to do something big for a cancer charity, she got stuck right in. Lola told me how it unfolded: "We couldn't fit it into a day so we decided to do it over a whole week. We wanted to make it fun. Normal things can be repetitive so I suggested we do different themed dress-ups, to keep everyone in the spirit. It will be varied and over the week there will be three, maybe four days when everyone dresses up. The charity week will be over half term and the kids will think it's amazing that Cinderella (for example) will be cutting their hair."

I asked how Lola had become part of it and she admits that, while she and Becks will probably be doing a lot of the administration and the themed days were her idea, with characteristic modesty she emphasises it's very difficult to know who an idea started with: "We're a team. Someone says something and someone else says that we could do this or that, and we get each other's ideas and add to them and they grow and you just can't remember. We all have different skills and ideas and that is what makes it so much fun".

Other events include a cut-a-thon, for which Lola is ready: "The main idea of the cut-a-thon is that all the stylists and colourists will donate all the money they earn that day to charity. Normally a cut takes between 50 and 60 minutes, so if the stylists agree to be fed on the move or take a 10 minute break instead of an hour, I can schedule more people in".

In 'Drag Queen Bingo', some of Zoology's talented male members will add spice to the salon one evening. Lola assures me it will be hysterically funny. She's going to be involved in arranging some of the prizes and hopes there will be hampers, cut-and-blow-dry giveaways and a funny booby prize.

'Zoology come-backs' will involve old staff donating time for the charity. For a 'salon takeover', Lola explains: "we will be the clients' assistants or the clients can blow dry our hair. They can learn techniques as they do it." This idea, like many others, is still growing. Mark wants to do some wig cutting and some clients have said in passing that they'd like to work in the salon for a day, so the inspiration comes from that. Lola is ready to facilitate as necessary and I get the impression that some of her work has already started.

So Lola has her work cut out. In addition to her normal day she'll be co-ordinating, administrating and donating what she earns to the charity. But the reason she's this month's angel is that she doesn't see there's anything special in her role, and keeps crediting the others.

Zoology is located at 145 High Street, Wanstead. For more information on their charity week, call **020 8530 3005** or visit their facebook page.

To nominate someone you know for a future Angels in Wanstead articles, email **opkikkertje@gmail.com** or leave a message for Carole at The Larder, 39 High Street, Wanstead.

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