Angel update

Carole Edrich gives a quick update on some of the community heroes featured in our long-running *Angels in Wanstead* series of articles and explains why her expanding project now warrants a new name

Nearly three years ago when I volunteered to celebrate the people of our community by writing the *Angels in Wanstead* column, I had no idea that I would still be planning to write it in 2017.

Indeed, I've discovered so many wonderful people that I now believe the project could run and run. Next year, I hope to expand it to Woodford, Newham and beyond, and whilst the project's Wanstead roots (and my roots) will always be strong, our future angels may reside a little further afield. There are sure to be more angels waiting to be discovered in Wanstead, but I will now call them my *Angels in the Community*, to reflect our wider neighbourhood links. Since this is a voluntary project, I want to get others involved and this will be dependent on you and the small grants that I will apply for next year. Meanwhile, as it's Christmas, I thought I'd bring you up to date with as many angels as I can.

Colin Bird, our first angel of Wanstead in January 2014, is still running to form. When I asked him whether he was still giving lifts to little old ladies, his response was: "All is fine. Old ladies of all sizes still being lifted."

Sandra Irwin of Coco still supports people who are fighting or recovering from cancer with tea and friendly conversation and the shop's last charity day raised money for the new cancer unit at Guy's Hospital. One block along, Marc Mountney of Zoology still provides free wig styling to those undergoing cancer treatment., He still supports his team, including Lola Shorter and the team in their charitable activities and more. Another block away from Wanstead Station you'll still find Monica Bujor selling *The Big Issue*. She asked to say hello to everyone she knows.

Jane Elspeth Millar and Nadia's book launch in October was so successful they've arranged a paperback print run too.

From the Larder, Richard Harris is happy in his new job working with autistic children, Olivia Smart and Rosie Evans Hill are doing well in their careers and Emma Wakeling's email autoresponse says that she will return as PR and press coordinator for the Jack Petchey Foundation (exactly the kind of job she told me she wanted) in January 2017.

Harry Gobind (Harikrishnnan Puneet) is still teaching and preaching in India, supported by his relatives in India and his son Dill at the Wanstead Art Shop.

Vanessa Downie is now running a Bollywood class for senior citizens with Khyal Arts. They're the first to do an inclusive community focused classical Indian dance class at Bhakti Yoga Centre. Meanwhile, Shardae Rose is teaching dance, as she hoped, at Wanstead House.

Ajay Rathod of KL Men's Hairdressing in Leytonstone is preparing for his trip to India and still donating all tips to charity, and on the other side of the road, Toby Hartley and his partner Rachel are giving free coffees in return for reasonable donations between 9am and 11am every Tuesday in December at Le Petit Corner. Proceeds will go to Alzheimer's research, children with cancer or both, so if you have an opinion let them know.

Larraine Fallows of Wanstead dentist Smile in London told me: "I've got some races, but because I bled everybody dry – people were so incredibly generous – I'm just running, for now… I'm sure I will raise more money in the future, but not for now."





After over a decade in the UK and having founded Mana Aroha – the charity that brings two lucky Maori or Pacific Islanders over to London each year, mentoring them afterwards to help them bring back the experiences to their own communities – Kerrin Leone went back to New Zealand. Even though she's now expecting twins, she is working as chair for the charity and becoming as significant a contributor to her community there as she was when I met her in Wanstead.

David Etherton told me: "I've just returned from MSAction in Walthamstow. Woodford Green Rotary Club presented them with eight chairs totalling nearly £1,000. What a fabulous place it is! It survives entirely on donations."

It's not all good news, though. I met Frank Charles in a queue in Wanstead Hospital in the summer. He wasn't very well at the time so I hope he's feeling better now. Also, sadly, Christine Anson married her long-time partner and then lost him to cancer only last month. Rather than flowers, the family asked for charity donations, so if you feel it appropriate leave her a donation with a note at the British Heart Foundation shop, where she volunteers.

I'm sorry I've not managed to write about all of Wanstead's wonderful angels, but it's a matter of space. I'll do my best to tell you about the others another time. Meanwhile, I hope you'll join me in appreciating how great it is to be part of a community of such wonderful, genuine people. All the very best of the season to you all!

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