

The Informed

The newsletter for the residents of
Irish Centre Housing

Issue 14

December 2007

Mayor of Islington at Bethany House Official Open Day

On 24th October, the newly refurbished Bethany House was officially opened by the Mayor of Islington. In a relaxed atmosphere, a short film made by the residents entitled "Life in a Hostel" was shown and speeches were made in the main hall, residents acted as tour guides around the building and Cardboard Citizens played samba drums in the courtyard.

The plentiful refreshments were supplied by Peter Bedford Housing Association, residents and staff. The guest list included current and former residents, neighbours, partner organisations, the builders and project managers.

Assistant Manager, Janice Esten, has been at Bethany House since it was the YWCA and knows the building top to bottom. With the support from staff (especially Bob Tyler, Eileen Regan and Bridget McEvoy), Janice worked hard to ensure that the builders, residents and staff were able to work and live as



The Mayor of Islington with the Chair of ICH Board - John Coote and Chief Executive – Antonia Watson

harmoniously as possible whilst large parts of the house were a building site.

Janice told The Informed, "It was great that the day ran smoothly and to plan. It was also nice that so many people were there to help us celebrate on the day. Guests told me how pleased they were to see that residents were proud of where they lived."

After all the guests had gone the residents were once again able to enjoy their home and were treated to a pizza delivery and danced in the hall until the early hours! (*Rumour has it that they even cleared up after themselves!*)

Since ICH purchased the building in 2003 it was always intended to have it refurbished. The £1.3 million project was assisted by a seven thousand pound grant from the Housing Corporation and took over a year to complete. ICH Management thanks residents and staff for their tolerance whilst the works were underway.



Staff and residents join Cardboard Citizens for Samba drumming (see more on page 5)

A Focus on St Eugene Court

St Eugene Court resident warden, Rosemary McCloskey, updates us on the events at her scheme in Brent.

“One of the best events we ever had in St Eugene Court was the Birthday Party to celebrate everyone’s birthday. There was a fairly good turn out of tenants even though some of those who normally patronise the events were away on holiday. “The Two Micks” played a selection of Irish and other folk songs and everyone was able to join in the singing. They played songs from every county in Ireland. We shared this event with some of the tenants from Clochar Court, one of Innisfree’s sheltered schemes for senior Irish in Harlesden and the scheme manager Cecilia Green. Cecilia danced, sang and played the tin whistle for us. There was a buffet meal and a huge birthday cake with a large candle. Fr Bert Bromley OMI from Sacred Heart Church, Quex Road, who is a firm favourite with us all, told yarns and stories, enhanced the singing with his lovely voice and entertained us royally.

Vicky Smith from the Irish Centre in Camden Square visited to do healthy cooking with some of the tenants. The tenants cooked and enjoyed the meal afterwards. Fr Nigel Charles came on another evening and gave a short talk and then we shared a Spaghetti Bolognese supper. A lady from Brent Council Recycling came recently to give a talk on the importance of recycling. There was supper again that evening and she had a bag of goodies for each tenant. In November, Fr Bert Bromley celebrated a Mass for deceased tenants, relatives and friends of us all. This is followed by a cup of tea and a chat.

At St Eugene Court we like to invite residents from An Caislean, as well as those from Clochar Court to share our events and we try to go to events in Clochar Court, and pool our resources, when we can. This all contributes to friendship, cooperation and good camaraderie and we try to hold an event every month. Those who do not go out much appreciate them and it is a chance to meet and talk to others. We are always looking for new ideas so if anyone has any which we could use please let us know and contribute to the variety which we provide for our tenants.

On the evening of 12th December we had our Christmas dinner for residents and invited

guests. I cooked the food which was served by Antonia Watson (Chief Exec), Aidan O’Kane (Housing Services Manager), Mary Loughrey (An Caislean Project Worker), Sister Margaret Finnegan and Allister Walker. Hughie McLeod hung the decorations, Brian Harper was our DJ and the evening was rounded off with a rendition of *I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas*.

More from me in the New Year.

Rosemary”

Apology to our readers

It was May when the last issue of The Informed was produced. I apologise to you for not publishing an edition in late summer as planned.

We had some IT issues at Head Office, and as I also manage the IT for ICH, my attention was very much focused there. I’m sorry that I was unable to get the last issue out on time; however, I am pleased to say that this edition is the biggest we have ever produced. I’ve kept a couple of the summer stories in as I know how both residents and staff like to see their activities in print.

If you have any comments on The Informed, or any contributions that you would like us to consider, please send them to me at Head Office.

Happy New Year to you all.

Steve Webb

Communication and Performance Manager
(Editor)

Twins at St Louise

Residents at St Louise might be interested to know that one of the Project Workers there, Fola Sanni, has recently given birth to twin boys.

Fola gave birth to the boys in November and all are well and healthy.

We wish them all continued health and look forward to seeing Fola again when she is able.

Grand Garden Designs at Conway House

On September 21st, residents from Conway House invited local neighbours to celebrate with them at the official opening of their new garden.

£3,000 to fund the project was secured from the Groundwork administered, Boulevard Community Grant scheme. ICH staff and tutors from the City of Westminster College supported residents in carrying out the works to the garden as part of the life skills programme. The garden has been a wonderful hub of activity whilst the work has been underway. Residents designed and carried out the work which included building a barbecue, seating, decking, laying a footpath and planting the garden.

The barbecue and seating areas were put to good use on the day as there was plenty to eat and drink for everyone there.

long lasting difference. It also shows that our relationship with ICH is strong and working well.”



Residents Sean Healy and John Chamen



City of Westminster College Tutors, Lindon and John

Councillor James King from Camden Council officially opened the garden. He expressed his ‘delight in the work that residents have carried out to transform the hostel environment and bring neighbours, staff and residents together’. Councillor King presented participants with certificates, recognising their valuable contribution.

City of Westminster College tutors, John and Lindon said: “Creating and designing this garden with residents has been hard work but also a fantastic opportunity to make a real and

Citizenship celebrated at Bethany House

The Informed is pleased to report that one of our residents at Bethany House was awarded UK Citizenship in November. Selam Semere is originally from Eritrea and has been resident at Bethany House since October 2005. She’s pictured at her Citizenship Ceremony at Camden Town Hall receiving her Certificate of Naturalisation from the Mayor of Camden.



Selam receives her certificate from the Mayor of Camden

Residents Business Plan

Earlier this year we held a number of Customer Focus meetings with our residents. We explored what our residents told us were their Top 10 most important aspects of the service:

1. The building security
2. The building cleanliness
3. Being treated with dignity and respect
4. Feeling safe and secure
5. ICH understands your needs
6. ICH values and supports diversity of peoples backgrounds and lifestyles
7. Talking to the right person
8. Efficiency and friendliness of your keyworker / warden

9. Having your issues dealt with in a timely manner
10. The time it takes to respond to reported maintenance work in your flat / room.

The meetings were thought provoking and interactive. From these meetings we were able to summarise the key points into a Residents Business Plan ... which is in itself a subset of ICH Business Plan.

To help improve your satisfaction within your home, as the provider of your home, ICH will focus on the following:

Irish Centre Housing STAFF	BUILDING and FACILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop procedure to inform residents of when staff are on duty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that all hostels have adequate door access systems and residents are aware of use and access rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update all scheme guidebooks to include staff structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inform residents of the cleaning specification and responsibilities for each site so that they can monitor and provide feedback as required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clearly define roles and responsibilities of support staff and publicise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advertise maintenance job categorisation policy.
<p>SUPPORT, ADVICE and INVOLVEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff to be re-trained on client confidentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop procedure for all residents that enables them to submit maintenance requests and to receive acknowledgement ▪ Ensure that procedure includes job categorisation feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff to be re-trained on customer care 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ICH to clearly advise residents what can be done to address Anti-social behaviour 	<p>ICH would like to thank all residents who participated in the Customer Focus meetings held this year.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop Diversity Working Groups 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assorted scheme specific actions 	

We'll Meet Again ... 50+ Drop-in

The Tricycle Theatre, in partnership with Brent Pension Service has started a regular Thursday drop-in for people aged 50+ in Brent and Camden. The sessions will take place every Thursday in the Tricycle's Creative Space. The sessions are **free of charge** and are part of the Tricycle's Social Inclusion Programme. In the coming weeks there's live music, dance classes, bingo, arts classes and pensions advice available. The cinema will be open too for the reduced price of £1.50.

Midweek Theatre Matinee Tickets are available for £2.50 each by quoting "We'll meet again offer"

ICH Housing Officer, Mifa Howard, attended the opening event, "The refreshments were delicious. The live music was toe-tapping good ... watch out Strictly Come Dancing as the 50+ posse is coming! Membership perks alone would have me jumping on the train to the Tricycle Theatre."

Tricycle Theatre, 269 Kilburn High Road, London NW6 7JR

Box Office: 020 7328 1000

Pre-Tenancy Training Success

Back in early July three residents from Conway House successfully completed their Pre-Tenancy Training and were rewarded with a trip to the Tricycle Theatre.

Pre-tenancy training is designed to prepare residents for managing their own tenancy. The sessions covered were:

1. Why tenancies fail
2. Viewing an offer
3. Dealing with Neighbours
4. Dealing with rent arrears
5. Dealing with bills and utilities
6. Preparing to move

Congratulations to Ahmet and Henok who have already moved on. Hopefully it won't be too long before Sean has a new roof over his head too! He's busy working with St Mungo's on their Putting Down Roots gardening project.

Pre-tenancy training runs at Conway House, Bethany House and St Louise. Residents at these schemes should talk to their keyworker if interested.



Sean Healy, Ahmet Myftari and Henok Tekie at the Tricycle Theatre

Here come the drums!

Since August, some Bethany House residents have taken part in a series of Samba drumming and dance workshops with Cardboard Citizens. They have learnt how to play the traditional Samba drums including the Surdo, the Repenique, the Snare Drum and the Tamborim. As well as the drumming they have also got to grips with the necessary samba dance steps.

They've been doing so well that they performed alongside other groups in the Mayor's Thames Festival in September and have played other events since ... including the Bethany House Open Day!

Congratulations to all of the residents who have taken part and to Cardboard Citizens for making the venture such a huge success.



Drumming at the Thames Festival



Drummers with London Mayor, Ken Livingston

Burgers, Prizes Dancing and ... Healthcare!!!

When the days were long and the nights were warm one of the more popular resident events were BBQ's.

St Louise had their annual event in June. It was well attended by both staff and residents and even an officer from the Metropolitan Police dropped by to wish them well. The food was prepared by staff and residents and the music was courtesy of St Louise resident DJ – Chantelle Malcolm – who ensured that everyone kept moving to her beats.

During the evening there was a multicultural dancing competition with residents demonstrating how they do things in Africa and the Caribbean. Prizes were given to residents in categories: Best Dressed, Best Hair Style, Best Dancers and the Cleanest Room!!!

St Louise resident, Monique Santos, commented, “All in all the occasion was a chance to come away and experience the nicer side to staying at St Louise giving you the chance to look into cultures from neighbouring countries and meet new people ... as well as filling your stomach.”

Conway House had a BBQ in August to coincide with the visit of a mobile X-ray unit. There has been an increase in TB in London year on year since the 1980's. Camden Primary Care Trust provided the unit and a radiographer assisted residents and staff to have an x-ray and provided results on the spot. The radiographer was able to detect if TB was present or if any other chest abnormality is suspected and then appropriate referrals to the local TB or Chest Clinic made if necessary.

Whilst the van was parked outside the good weather assisted as staff and residents prepared a range of BBQ food for residents waiting for an X-ray and for those who had just had one. A raffle ticket was issued to residents who had been screened and a prize draw was held at the end of the session. Prizes included a mobile phone and local shop vouchers.

A good time was had by all and residents reported that they were glad they had attended and to have been given a clean bill of health.



Striking a pose at the St Louise BBQ



Cooking up a feast at Conway House

WHAM

During the summer months, some of our residents from Bethany House and St Louise were involved in the making of a short film entitled, “Life in a Hostel.” In the film residents share their thoughts and challenges and of some positive experiences.

The film was shown at the opening of Bethany House and was one of the highlights of the event. Congratulations to those who took part for doing such a good job.

Embrace Cooperation are a not for profit organisation promoting education and exchange programmes for young people. WHAM (Women Helped to Advance in Media) is one of their projects and they assisted our residents to make the film.

Christmas for Our Residents

ICH always tries to do something special for our residents in supported accommodation, and this year is no exception.

At Conway House on 21st December there is a Christmas party throughout the afternoon with competitions and prizes. The Christmas lights will be turned on by a DJ from Choice FM! (Congratulations to Barbara Oppon for organising this.) On Christmas day dinner will be served in the canteen, the manager and his staff will personally provide waiter service directly to the tables for their residents.

The Hampstead Wells and Campden Trust have donated hampers for our residents at Conway House, An Caislean and Hackett House. The hampers contain Christmas treats such as chocolates, Christmas puddings and tinned goodies.

At St Louise there will be an early Christmas celebration for the residents on the evening of 14th December which is being organised by Kensington Temple Church. 21st December, Cardboard Citizens theatre group will be performing their latest show. On Christmas day staff will also prepare a buffet for residents.

St Eugene Court had their Christmas dinner on the evening of 12th December for residents and invited guests.

Townsend House and Hepburn Court will each be hosting a Christmas get-together with a buffet on 20th December.

Bethany House staff will celebrate Eid-ul-Adha with a communal meal on 20th December. Staff will cook Christmas lunch for residents on Christmas Day supported by a resident who has experience as a chef.

Hackett House will have Christmas dinner on the evening of 20th December. Supported Housing Officer, Charmain Gordon will be doing the cooking.

Christmas parties are a great way to meet old friends and make new ones. Do please attend your scheme's Christmas celebrations.

Irish Centre Housing would like to thank all donors, partner organisations and friends for their kindness and assistance at Christmas and throughout the year.

Office Hours at Christmas

Conway House, St Louise, Bethany House and Townsend House hostels will be staffed as usual 24 hours a day throughout the Christmas and New Year period.

Head Office and Hepburn Court office will be open as usual except on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day. These offices will be closed on 25th, 26th December and 1st January.

Residents from St Eugene Court, Caulfield Court, Highgate Rd or Dunne Mews who need to contact a member of staff while Head Office is closed, should call Conway House – 020 7372 6633. Hepburn Court residents should call Townsend House on 020 8207 1562. Should you have a need for an emergency plumber (or similar) the staff at Conway House will be able to arrange this for you. Please note that routine and non-emergency work will not be undertaken during this period.

Merry Christmas to all!

Green Christmas

The Woodland Trust's Christmas Card Recycling Scheme is aiming to recycle 100 million Christmas Cards and plant 24,000 trees. Help them by:

- Recycling YOUR cards from 2 - 21 January
- Take your cards to any WHSmith, Tesco, TK Maxx or M&S store.

The stores will send the cards for recycling, and 17 trees will be saved for every tonne of paper recycled.

Other useful environmentally friendly tips:

- Send an e-card / online greetings card
- SNUB. Say No to Unwanted Bags. Every plastic bag takes 500 years or more to decay in a landfill site. Use a re-usable shopping bag or re-use a carrier bag
- Buy your fruit and veg loose (without packaging!) and then you can pick the best ones too!
- Bigger is better! Buy drinks in bigger bottles rather than small ones. One large bottle generates less waste than several smaller ones.

Challenged by Corrigan

Residents at Conway House have been participating in a film with famous chef, Richard Corrigan. The film is one of a four part series made by the Irish broadcaster RTE, called *Corrigan's Challenge*. In the series, Richard Corrigan aims to improve catering in establishments where the clients have little or no other options. The other films feature an Irish army base in Kosovo, Croak Park Stadium in Dublin and Mountjoy Prison in Dublin.

Once Conway House had been identified as a subject, it was decided that some of the residents should be closely involved and benefit from Richard's expertise. Initially there were six residents, but by the final filming on 11th December there were just three remaining: family members Declan Nugent, his nephews Keith Nugent and Darragh Nugent.

The film was recorded over the course of about a month. Training sessions were held at the City of Westminster College student kitchens, where the guys began to learn new skills. The final session involved the guys preparing a meal at Conway House under the guidance of Mr Corrigan. The meal of peppered fillet steak with champ (a special Irish variation of mashed potato) followed by Christmas pudding and



Richard Corrigan with Keith (background) Darragh and Declan

custard was served to some of ICH's managers and invited guests.

The guys had plenty to say on their involvement: Darragh: "It was a good feeling working with Chef, an experience of a lifetime and I got plenty of new knowledge about food and flavouring!"

Keith: "It was an experience money could not buy. I gained new independent living skills and Chef's experience was invaluable."

Declan: "I'm grateful to have been part of the process. I learnt lots from it and want to continue cooking as a result of this."

The film will be shown on RTE in Ireland on 20th December. A copy will be available to us afterwards.

Some useful telephone numbers

We appreciate that while Christmas and New Year is for many a time for celebrations, it can also be a difficult time for others. If you need some help, or someone to talk to, you might find these numbers useful.

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|--------------------------------|--|---------------------------|----------------|
| ◆ Narcotics Anonymous | 0845 373 3366 | ◆ National Drugs Helpline | 0800 77 66 00 |
| ◆ Alcoholics Anonymous | 0845 769 755 (10am to 10pm 365 days per year) | | |
| ◆ Al Anon | 020 7403 0888 (for friends and family members of problem drinkers) | | |
| ◆ Drink Line | 0800 917 8282 | ◆ Shelter Line | 0808 800 4444 |
| ◆ NHS Direct | 0845 46 47 | ◆ The Samaritans | 08457 90 90 90 |
| ◆ Spectrum Day Centre | 020 7267 4937 | | |
| ◆ Cricklewood Homeless Concern | 020 3273 0049 | | |
| ◆ Overeaters Anonymous | 07000 784985 (Support for all eating disorders) | | |

Management and Staff at ICH wish all of our residents a very merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.