

familyfriends

NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to our newsletter for 2009. During the year, Family Friends gave support to 84 families through 82 volunteers. We are pleased that the importance of mentoring and befriending as a way to help families is becoming increasingly recognised: in March, Family Friends was invited to a reception at 10 Downing Street by Mrs Sarah Brown for a celebration of this type of work; our contract with Hammersmith & Fulham was expanded to enable support for a wider age range; we launched our child-focused scheme in that borough. We commissioned an independent evaluation of our services from the Charities Evaluation Services, who found that the feedback from families, volunteers and referral agents was overwhelmingly positive. We were awarded the Lady Goodman Award for Excellence in Volunteering and our status as an *Approved Provider* with the Mentoring & Befriending Foundation was renewed.

The most significant news is the feedback from families on the positive changes made to their lives, a tribute to the friendship and dedication shown by their volunteers. Several of our families would like to report good news from 2009:

- Ahmed was elected head boy at school
- Jordan visited No 10 Downing Street and met Mrs Sarah Brown
- Chris was awarded funding to go to scout camp
- Afshan joined the school orchestra
- Ali and Sarah achieved excellent results at school
- Daniel is now such a great baker that he wants to become a chef!
- Harry started ballet classes and Holly joined a dancing group
- Three families were awarded holiday grants and four families received grants to help with essential household goods
- Four families moved into better housing
- Nicola enrolled on yoga classes, Jane, an aromatherapy course and Alisha, literacy classes
- Queenie got help from the job centre to turn a business idea into a plan
- Naomi is cooking healthy food at home regularly now
- Annie and Philomena are now confident enough to take their children swimming
- Mary and Audrey started doing volunteer work
- Susan has been accepted on a teaching course, while Emily began and completed a course in counselling.

The team has grown to six this year; we were joined by Maria, Louisa, Shona and Janie, and we said goodbye and good luck to Leonora and Paulette, who did great work with Family Friends and have now moved on to other agencies.



Best wishes to you all for a very happy 2010!

The winning entry from Family Friends' drawing competition, by Priscilla aged 13.



NOTICEBOARD

1 London's youth circus presents the cream of West London's acrobats and clowns in an entertaining New Year pantomime. Albert & Friends Instant Circus's production *Babes in the Bayou* is recommended for the whole family. It runs from 8 – 10 January 2010, including two matinee performances at the Riverside Studios, Crisp Road, Hammersmith, W6 9RL. The show is 50 minutes long with no interval, and tickets start at £8. Contact the box office on 020 8237 1111 or visit www.riversidestudios.co.uk. Albert & Friends Instant Circus offers young people an extensive training programme of ground and aerial skills, music, movement, mime and drama. They run classes for adults, children and the family in and around Hammersmith & Fulham. Contact them for information on 020 8237 1170 or visit www.albertandfriendsinstantcircus.co.uk

2 Fairy or folk tales exist in all cultures, and the Victoria & Albert Museum is running an exhibition around this theme until 28 February. A selection of objects from around the world and across several centuries, will demonstrate the hold that fairy tales and magic have on our imagination and explore their origins and purpose. Free admission, Sackler Centre Entrance, South Kensington tube. Call 020 7942 2000 or visit www.vam.ac.uk for more details.

3 Learn to skate at the outdoor ice skating rink at the Natural History Museum. For younger skaters there is a junior rink and you can enjoy a cup of hot chocolate on the viewing platform. For wheelchair users, there are a number of sessions throughout the season where you can be joined on the rink by friends and family. The Ice Rink is open until 17 January from 10.00am to 10.00pm on weekdays and 8.45am to 10.00pm on weekends, but call the box office or check the website for Christmas and New Year Opening Times. Ticket prices start at £8. Visit www.nhm.ac.uk/visit-us/whats-on/ice-rink/tickets/index or call Ticketmaster on 0844 847 2527.

LEEK AND POTATO SOUP

(from the BBC website)

A smooth, creamy vegetable soup full of flavour.

Serves 4-6 people

Preparation time: ½ hour

Cooking time: 10 to 30 minutes

You will need:

1 tbsp vegetable oil

1 onion, sliced

225g/8oz potatoes, cubed

2 medium leeks, sliced

1.2 litres/2 pints vegetable or chicken stock

150ml/5fl oz double cream or crème fraiche

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method:

1. Heat oil in a large pan and add the onions, potatoes and leeks. Cook for 3-4 minutes until starting to soften.
2. Add the vegetable stock and bring to the boil.
3. Season well and simmer until the vegetables are tender.
4. Whizz with a hand blender or in a blender until smooth. Reheat in a clean pan, stir in the cream or crème fraiche, heat through and serve.



Family Friends was one of 40 charities from across the country invited to attend a party at 10 Downing Street to celebrate mentoring and befriending. The reception was hosted by the Prime Minister's wife, Mrs Sarah Brown on 10 March. Services Manager Leonora Borg, Mentee Jordan and Volunteer Aleks attended on behalf of the charity. They received a tour of Downing Street and Jordan was complimented by Sarah Brown on being the smartest person there!

Families' Experiences

When I made the decision to finish my violent relationship I felt it was the right one. I thought I was strong and could manage on my own with my little daughter. After a while though I started to doubt my decision to leave my husband and thought maybe I should have stayed for the sake of my 3 year old with the hope that he would change.

Then I was introduced to Nadia, a Family Friends volunteer. It felt like a bright star had come into my life. She really listened to me and tried to convince me that my decision to leave was right. Nadia always told me that I am a good mother and good person. It was very important for me because I had heard the opposite for the past 3 years. My old friends were fed up with listening to me talk about the same subject a thousand times, but I just wanted to talk, talk and talk. Nadia was always there to hold my hand, give me a cuddle and what's more important listen, listen and listen patiently.

Now time has passed and I can see that Nadia was right, I feel much stronger and happier. As she used to say, we all have ups and downs and we need time to grieve. I still have things to sort out with my old relationship and I now feel strong enough to face them!

Jane

One day last February, I met Karen for the very first time. It took me 10 minutes to get to know her. The very first trip me and Karen went on was to Holland Park. We went to the adventure area and played on the swings and the trampoline. One of my favourite trips was going to the National History Museum. When we were there I saw a dodo from the island of Mauritius and a sloth the size of a fully grown standing bear! My other favourite trip was when I went to Westfield shopping mall for the very first time in my life. On that day we wandered around and had a chunky chocolate muffin the size of clenched fists and a juice box. I'm currently in year six and I am working hard to go to a very good secondary school. My volunteer and I have been practising my sample tests for example my maths, English, non verbal reasoning and verbal reasoning. The library has also helped choose suitable wonderful books for me.

I enjoy Family Friends' help because I couldn't go to these places because of my brother's condition, but now I can with Family Friends by my side!

Mehdi aged 11

A Volunteer's Experience

I became a volunteer for Family Friends because I wanted to become more involved in my community. I had brought up my children without a family network and wanted to help another mother. Mothers, whatever their circumstances, experience feelings of isolation and huge anxiety, that is perhaps the very nature of motherhood, which bonds us with our children, but which can be lonely and difficult. I support a single mother with three children who is highly qualified in her field but needs to bring in more money. In the beginning I think she was terrified by the prospect of having committed herself to two hours a week of having someone in her house who she did not know. However, the parameters of confidentiality, taught in my training, never to discuss the details of her life with anyone except Family Friends, I think reassured her. We have developed a sincere friendship and, between talking over cups of tea and walking together, she has concentrated the two hours a week on completing her application for training college.

I have found it really hard from an emotional point of view... I want to tip the contents of my purse into her hands, take them all back into the warmth of my house, make clothes for the children, but Family Friends is committed to 'helping people to help themselves' and therefore giving pride and dignity to those we help, which is a far greater gift.

Sarah



Hellos and Goodbyes

Thank you very much to all the wonderful volunteers who have dedicated their time to Family Friends' families this year. We have been very impressed by the wonderful support you have provided. During 2009, eight new groups of volunteers joined from our training programmes: Aida, Aileen, Alkan, Allie, Andrea W, Ann-Marie J, Ann-Marie M, Brenda, Brian, Carol P, Caterina, Charlene, Charmaine, Chewang, Chike, Christine, Claire W, Cristina, Darren, Debbie, Deepti, Delores, Dihann, Edward, Elizabeth J, Farida, Gabriella, Gillian, Grace, Hafsa, Haima, Heather, Helen H, Honey, Ibrahim, Jamila, Jane B, Jeevan, Jemima, Jennifer, Judith, Kanika, Leon, Lily, Louise, Lucy, Magda, Maire, Marcia, Maria, Marie W, Martina, Martyna, Maureen, Maxine, Melanie, Michael B, Michael H, Miranda, Miriam, Natalie, Neil, Nicole, Olu, Olutola, Patricia M, Preeti, Princess, Qin, Rhea, Rob, Rocio, Ruth, Saliha, Sarah M, Sarah N, Sharon C, Shuhui, Soundouss, Stella, Stephanie, Taranjit, Tina, Tracy, Victoria F, Victoria H, Yaourou, Yodit, Zeleka and Zoe.

We have said goodbye to several volunteers in 2009: Aleks, Althea, Anne, Carol B, Chewang, Eni, Gladys, Hannah, Hassiba, Helen, Hendrix, Hilary, Isabel, Kasey, Katie, Marlene, Nicholas, Nicole, Nina K, Nina T, Norma, Rakhi, Renu, Ruth B, Sharon S, Sharon W, Silvina, Tonmoy, Zara and Zeleka.

We wish you all good luck, and thank you for your befriending work. Special thanks go to Carol B who has volunteered for Family Friends for 10 years. Congratulations to Juliana, Ellie, Patricia, Sharon and Urszula who were awarded **Make A Difference Awards 2009** by the Volunteer Centres.

We are very grateful to Julia Tugendhat, Mandy Alaa (Campden Charities), Paula Jordan (Triple P Parenting Programme), Simon Lawton-Smith (Mental Health Foundation), Hannah Kinsey (ChildLine) and Sarah Stalker (RBKC Child Protection Team) for conducting our on-going volunteer training; also to Dr Imogen Brunner for her consultancy work.

As ever, thank you to our funders and referring agents, without whom our work would not be possible. In 2009 we were delighted to receive funding from the following organisations for the first time: London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham – Children's Fund, Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea – Targeted Support/Positive Choices.

Special thanks go to BBC Children In Need, Campden Charities, The Henry Smith Charity, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham – Early Years, The Northmoor Trust, RBKC Primary Care Trust, RBKC Family & Children's Services, St Helen's Old Girls' Charitable Trust, John Lyon's Charity and Sammermar Trust for their support. We are grateful for donations received from Grace Benson, Barnabas Brunner, Georgina Cooke, G & J Charitable Trust, Judith Francis, Elizabeth Jack, Juliana Johnston, The Federal TST Company – Albert and Lyn Fuss, Leopold de Rothschild, Notting Hill Preparatory School and Waitrose.

Thank you Junior League of London for the wonderful hampers they have provided for our families; and Furnish for delivering them. A big thank you also to The Mayor of Kensington of Chelsea for allowing us to celebrate our 15th Anniversary in the Mayor's Parlour.



PLEASE NOTE: The office will be closed between 5.30pm on 23 December 2009 and 9.30am on 4 January 2010 inclusive.

For emergencies, please contact Family & Children's Services on 020 7373 2227 (Kensington & Chelsea) or 020 8748 8588 (Hammersmith & Fulham).