



Welcome to the January edition of the WERS newsletter!

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL!

FESTIVE WEEK: THE BEST YET!

Thanks to the generosity of so many people, Festive Week was a great success this year. Donations arrived from churches, schools and numerous individuals. Around 500 bags of presents were given to clients during the week. In addition a wonderful cash donation enabled us to give an extra £10 to each of the 130 destitute clients that WERS is currently supporting. We would all like to express our thanks to everyone who contributed in any way.

A TASTE OF HOME

Just before Christmas we had a phone call from WERS supporter Paul Lewton. He and his wife Karen were offering to bring individually packaged, home-cooked meals to the project to be given to the many destitute asylum seekers who come to WERS each week for their cash support and food parcels. 'What a terrific idea! Yes, please!' we said.

We were, however, completely bowled over when we learned of the scale of this venture. During Festive Week, Paul cooked around 100 meals which went down a storm with everyone. Now in the New Year they intend to continue to cook each week and WERS has already received a delivery of 70 meals.

Since Paul retired from teaching, he has more time to enjoy his favourite hobby – cooking! He has a particular passion for food from around the world and was eager to find Congolese and other African recipes. He scoured the bookshops with little success. The internet proved to be the answer and now Paul has collected a huge folder of recipes from many countries including Congo, Ethiopia and Egypt. 'I love cooking and I want to give people a taste of home – high quality food that provides a little pleasure and warmth to those so far away from their homeland,' says Paul.

Paul and Karen also provide meals for St Joseph's drop-in centre in Benwell, as well as Common Ground and the Thomas Gaughan centre in the east side of the city. The whole operation takes a considerable amount of time and effort, beginning at the weekend with the research and selection of the week's recipes. Next comes the shopping with a keen eye for what is cheap and on special offer. Monday is preparation day with much peeling, chopping and slicing! Tuesday is for cooking, combining the basic ingredients with tasty, spicy sauces. 'It's like cooking for a big party every week', says Karen.



Paul and Karen then package and label the meals - in English and Arabic, thanks to the help of a Sudanese friend. Finally Wednesday is for deliveries and distribution and then comes the most important part: the eating and enjoying!

So far clients have sampled a variety of delicious dishes including West African pineapple and peanut stew with rice, pickled black-eyed peas and fufu, lentils and cracked wheat with baked eggs, peppers and tomatoes. The meals can be eaten cold by those who do not have access to a kitchen or can be microwaved or reheated in a conventional oven. Occasionally a meal is heated up at the project if a client is hungry and wonderfully appetising smells waft up the stairs to our offices!

'Truefoods', the name of Paul and Karen's culinary venture, is providing a unique service to destitute asylum seekers – a little warmth and cheer to an otherwise bleak existence and a taste of home.

Thank you so much!

World music fundraiser at the Cluny, Newcastle upon Tyne

Live traditional Iranian music
World music disco

**Saturday 1st March 2008
8pm – 12 midnight**

RAFFLE

BAR

**Tickets £10 Adults, £5
Children and Unwaged
£25 Family ticket
Call 0191 273 7482**

**In aid of WERS hardship fund
supporting destitute asylum seekers**

BEFRIENDING SCHEME

Some of you may have seen the recent article in the Chronicle featuring Jacqueline Djeumeni and her befriender Jaqui Jobson. It was an excellent and uplifting article and WERS thanks them both for agreeing to be featured in this way. It was particularly encouraging to read of Jacqueline's achievements – gaining her business studies qualification from Newcastle College and then securing her current job at the Rights Project.

WERS regularly receives referrals to the scheme and now has a waiting list of clients who would like to have a befriender. More volunteers are needed and Carol would be very pleased to hear from anyone who might be interested in finding out more about the Befriending Scheme.

Lindsay Cross

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Office & Clothing Store Opening times:

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri: 9.30am – 1pm

Wednesday: 11am – 1pm