



THE PASSAGE

Helping homeless people

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The Resurrection

Imitator of Andrea Mategna
Courtesy: National Gallery

Easter newsletter, 2013

Please help us to continue to get people like Sarah off the street quickly...

When people end up on the streets, there are always complex issues that have led to them being there. The Passage strives to help them off the streets quickly, before they become trapped in a spiral of despair.

Between October and December 2012, our **Outreach Team** identified 142 people who were new to South Westminster's streets. We helped 120 of them – including Sarah – off the streets during that period.

Sarah was brought to our **Resource Centre** by a member of the public. She had spent the previous four days and nights wandering around London alone, and was cold, hungry and physically very unwell.

Sarah's relationship with her family had become strained as a result of her alcohol dependency. Because she thought she was putting too much pressure on her parents, she got on a coach and came to London. She had no plans of how she would survive here: she had no money, nor did she have any friends to help her.

When she was brought to the Resource Centre, we offered her a quiet space and the opportunity to wash and have some food. After a while, she was able to explain that she thought her situation was hopeless, and that she would not be able to return to her home in the north of England. She described her parents as good, kind people whom she felt unable to "burden" anymore. She said that her parents had tried to call her mobile phone many times since she had left, but that she had turned her phone off because she thought they would be better off without her. She also mentioned an alcohol support worker who had been very helpful in the past.

Gemma, a member of our staff who had listened to Sarah's concerns, persuaded her to



Our Outreach Team works seven nights a week, to encourage rough sleepers to come into our Resource Centre.

call the alcohol support worker, who encouraged Sarah to go home, assured her that help was available, and offered her an appointment for the following day. Then Gemma persuaded Sarah to call her parents. Her father immediately asked her to come home. He said they had been very worried about her, and wanted to help her. Sarah was very relieved at his response and told him about the appointment she had arranged with her alcohol support worker.

Gemma booked a ticket for Sarah to travel home, and gave her some refreshments for the journey.

This was a relatively short piece of work, but with our help and support Sarah was able to think through her situation clearly. This enabled her to make some positive decisions, get off the streets and access specialist support.

Unfortunately, it is not always possible to help people to progress so quickly.

...and never to give up on people like George

Sometimes the complex issues that have led to a person ending up on the street take time (and several attempts) to resolve, but we never give up trying. George is a good example. He is a 75-year-old man who has a long history of homelessness, alcohol dependency, and physical health problems. His often challenging behaviour has frequently resulted in him sleeping rough on the streets and being excluded from other services.

In March 2012 he returned to The Passage because he was, once again, sleeping outside. His physical state had deteriorated badly: he

Fund-raising events

It is hard to believe that three months have passed since we held our Carol Service, which raised more than £20,000, at St Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey. It was a beautiful occasion, in a very special setting.

Enclosed with this mailing is information on two events for 2013: our Summer Garden Party and our *Night Under the Stars* concert. I do hope you and your friends will be able to

had a number of health problems, including being diagnosed with cancer, and was doubly incontinent. Despite his strident manner, it was obvious that he was struggling with life on the streets, and he was not getting support from anywhere – his difficult behaviour meant that his relationship with Social Services had broken down.

George was able to use our Resource Centre to shower, get clean clothing, food and a high level of support from our staff, including our health team, as we strove to get him off the streets as quickly as possible. We helped him get temporary housing from the council and arranged a Community Care Assessment – and he was allocated a social worker. His very high support needs resulted in some of his temporary housing placements falling through, but we kept in regular contact with the council and Social Services to find him somewhere suitable to stay.

Our perseverance paid off when he was accommodated in a permanent specialist residential project with 24-hour support. Initially he came back to the Resource Centre whenever he needed help, but we encouraged him to go back to his accommodation and to be supported by the workers there.

By the end of 2012, George had settled into his accommodation. His life expectancy is limited, but he will at least have some comfort in the time that is remaining to him.

attend one or both of these events. For the past few years both have sold out, so early booking is strongly recommended to avoid disappointment.

If you would like to find out how you could help us promote these events (to individuals or companies) please do contact Andrew Hollingsworth on 020 7592 1855, or email him at andrew.h@passage.org.uk.

Message from Mick Clarke, CEO

Dear Friends

Happy Easter

I wish you, and all those close to you, a very Happy Easter from everyone at The Passage. As I write this letter, snow is falling (it is meant to be Spring!) and this March is reported to have been the coldest for 30 years. The hope of warmer weather is in all our minds, particularly those of our clients on the streets. I am so grateful to those of you who supported our work during the winter; this ensured that for many people there was a route off the streets, and into the safety and warmth of our projects. When it is as cold as it has been over much of this winter, our work becomes literally life saving.

Statutory cuts

In recent years, financial cutbacks have affected our funding and, as a result, the poorest members of society. This looks set to continue. We already know that, at a time when homelessness is increasing because of the economic downturn, our statutory funding will be cut again in the new financial year. While we are determined that this will not reduce the much-needed services we provide, we simply cannot do that without your support, and we would never be able to achieve our goal of ending homelessness for the thousands we encounter each year.

Ending homelessness

We work with nearly 200 people every day and each one needs support that is tailored to their individual – often complex – needs, but ending homelessness is about more than helping people off the streets, it is also about ensuring that they are able to stay off the streets. Since it can be intimidating for people when they move into their own accommodation, we not only ensure that we help each one address the root causes that led to their homelessness, but also ensure that they have support networks to help them through the transition from street to home. This year we are launching an initiative, Home for Good, which will recruit, train and support volunteers to keep in touch with formerly homeless people who have been resettled in their areas. The volunteers will help these formerly homeless people to deal with the challenges in that transition period and to maintain their accommodation for good.

At our Carol Service in December, I said that although most of us have never experienced physical homelessness, we have all experienced inner homelessness: that feeling of being lost, without direction and without hope. I was reminded of Albert Schweitzer who said: “In everyone’s life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being.”

Easter is a time of great hope and of encounter. I hope that the stories of our encounters with Sarah and George will inspire you to continue the support that enabled us to help them to start their new lives. Initiatives like Home for Good will help them continue on that journey. Thank you again for all your support and, from everyone at The Passage, have a very Happy Easter.

