

opendoor

Mission Statement

- Our mission is to make a positive difference in our community
- We aim to offer resources and support to individuals, promote hope for change, and help to improve life opportunities
- Our services are free, independent and confidential

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Open Door Centre, Exmouth

Volume 4 Issue 1

Night Shift success

"I'm so glad there's someone on the streets who isn't drunk! Makes me feel much safer."

"No, we're fine thanks, but thanks for your help."

"Don't you get paid for this? Why do you do it then?"

Clubbers and party goers agree that Night Shift volunteers make a difference as we've patrolled the streets at night. Just to have our presence in town while we walk the circuit between the pubs and clubs gives reassurance, even if we're not needed directly."

Mind you, there have been complaints—like when the CCTV team were watching us distribute cakes to the door staff; they turned their camera down on the cake tin and we heard over the



Out on the streets

radio, "We're watching you and counting the cakes! Make sure you leave some for us!"

Visitors to the café have included young women needing the toilet, lads ready for a chat in the small hours, and the police taking a short break between 'shouts'.

Teams of volunteers staffing the café and patrolling the streets have been able to help people in distress, respond to CCTV requests to check on someone, and

simply be a calming presence in the high energy scene that is Exmouth early on a Sunday morning.

And what do our nearly 60 volunteers make of it? They keep coming back (some join us nearly every week, so it can't all be bad!). What's so good is the real sense of involvement with the community, the active prayer response, the faithful commitment to the project, and the inclusion of Christian people from right across the denominational spectrum. This is truly the church in action.

MegaBite Harvest

This year, instead of harvest produce many churches have organized giving for MegaBites.

The response has been truly wonderful. We're now able to offer support to a much larger number of people in need of short-term help. They can at least get a good meal inside them while they sort out more longer term issues.

We always make it clear that this is a safety net, not something people should rely on as a daily 'handout'. But it does give an opportunity to look into why they may not be receiving any benefits they are entitled to, why they may not be working, or why they may be experiencing difficulties with housing. And while we do that, they can be less anxious about surviving, thanks to your



generosity.

Who knows what harvest might grow in their lives because of the seeds you have sown this year?

We're not sitting still



The Open Door Centre can certainly not be accused of sitting still and doing nothing. It has been a really challenging and exciting time over the past few months as we move forward in many different areas of work and as we show the love of Christ to people in Exmouth.

Next year is significant in that there is a keen push across the nation through Hope 2008 to get churches working together to promote social action as a way of expressing God's love. We feel that Open Door is at the fore-

front in doing this in that many of the churches in Exmouth are actively engaged in this already.

We have begun to see lots of new initiatives start as you'll see from this magazine, and we are looking to see if we can open on more days and work on programmes with the friends who use the Centre and who need encouragement and incentive. There are many other thoughts in the pipeline as to how we can develop other exciting and much needed services for people in Exmouth so watch this space.

I want to express my thanks to Marion & Sally for co-ordinating the Contact Centre, to Adele for administering Night Shift, to Ian for his tireless work as a trustee, and to Noel for agreeing to join us on the board of trustees.

Finally, my sincere thanks to all the volunteers who work so committedly in various project areas. If we calculated the wage bill for the 100 or so volunteers involved it would come to many thousands of pounds! Thank you all so much for all you do.

Peter Chalkley, Chair of Trustees

Child Contact Centre Opens

Exmouth has launched a Child Contact Centre where children of separated families can spend time with the absent parent.

The scheme is a project of the Open Door Centre in Church Street, and will provide a neutral meeting ground for parents who have separated but want to spend time with their children. Professionals working with families will refer them to the Centre

which will open fortnightly.

The Charity supported by the National Association of Child Contact Centres was opened by Exeter District Judge John Crosse on Wednesday July 25.

Said Judge Crosse, "There is a real need for a Centre in Exmouth. It's difficult for parents to get to Exeter, and then they have to kick about for a couple of hours waiting to collect their

children.

"I remember a time when there wasn't a Contact Centre that you could refer parents to. Now hardly a day goes by when I am not involved in a conversation regarding a Centre.

"It's the best place to start the contact process and I'm sure it will be great success."

(with permission, Richard Jordan Exmouth Journal)

"Parenting needn't end when the partnership does"

Positive feedback

It's always encouraging when our customers feed back positive comments to us. Here are a few we've received recently:

"You're part of the family now!" from the CCTV team on Saturday nights.

"Thank you for listening." from a young lady who lives a very chaotic life and is vulnerable.

"I'm a man in crisis and I need

help." from a homeless man in his early forties realizing he needs to sort his life out.

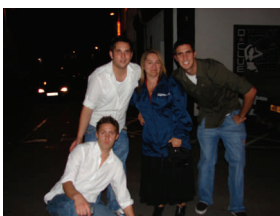
"I can't believe you're helping me." from an alcoholic who has been rejected by his family.

"What!! You do this for nothing?" from a party-goer on the street at night talking to the Night Shift team.

"If it hadn't been for you people

I'd have been dead by now." from a man in his thirties now settled and working after coming off the streets.

"I was really worried about how it would go but seeing my son run to me with his arms open was just so good!" from a dad who hadn't seen his son for five months but who came to the Contact Centre to be with him.



A welcome on the streets

On the church steps

After helping at the Open Door Centre each Friday for some time I find I enjoy the company of staff, volunteers and clients and look forward to going. I'm usually on the door when callers check in to use our facilities. We have a friendly chat and though many people keep things close to their chest, slowly stories unfold.

Coming out of church one Sunday morning recently I found a tattered, tired looking man sitting on the steps. Someone had brought him a cup of tea and a biscuit. "Do you know about the

Open Door Centre?" I asked him. "Yes," he said, "but it's closed."

"I'm sorry about that. We don't have enough volunteers to open every day," I explained, "but if you go there tomorrow morning at 10 you can get a free coffee or tea, and a wash and shave. They've got changes of clothes too for anyone who needs it and a lunch at twelve."

On the next Friday when I went in, I did not recognize the man! He had shaved his beard off and he looked smart and clean, de-

spite the fact that he was sleeping rough. A few weeks later, he was applying for work, and he'd brought along another man he'd found sleeping in a shelter.

Last Friday, another person who'd quarrelled with his family borrowed our telephone to phone someone for help. His brother rang and arranged to meet him in the supermarket where he bought food. The man was so grateful. "I thought he was finished with me," he said. "Why are you people so helpful?"

Noel Harrower



The journey started here

Prison can offer hope

When 38 year old Jez came to the Centre he told us he had two court hearings pending. He was addicted to drugs and had contracted Hepatitis C through sharing needles.

We were in regular contact with his solicitor to try to avoid Jez having to travel to Exeter twice in a week or facing arrest because he'd missed a court date.

Eventually his solicitor arranged

for both charges to be faced in one appearance. Jez knew that with his history and the seriousness of the charges he would be likely to go to prison.

But he also knew that prison could give him a real opportunity to start to sort his life out. Exeter's EDP Drug and Alcohol Service outreach team work with the Probation Service to help people like him in prison.

We have heard since that through EDP and Probation's intervention he has been offered a hostel place on release where he will stay for 3 months while he addresses his addiction problems.

As we went with him to the bus stop on the morning of his court appearance he said, "Thank you for not judging me for being an addict."

"With his history and the seriousness of the charges he would be likely to go to prison"

Café

The Open Door Café now opens three days each week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10am—2pm.

In June, after taking a week out for training, we re-launched with new menus and new teams. Our existing volunteers covered the new days and we've recruited new volunteers to cover gaps so that each day is staffed and we can provide the advice and sup-

port services that are part of our work.

On average we expect to see 20-30 customers each day and serve 20+ meals so there's plenty of room for growth. Food is freshly prepared and cooked on the premises so that we can produce meals to a high quality and consistent standard. Our volunteer cooks work to standardised recipes and always use fresh ingredi-

ents because we want to provide the very best we can for our customers, many of whom rely on us for their regular meal.

The café is open to everyone so why not pop in one day for a coffee when you're out shopping or just take the weight off your feet? Or maybe enjoy one of our great meals sometime? You'll always be welcome and you can find out more about what we do.



Satisfied customers



opening doors to a brighter future

The Open Door Centre is a registered charity, operating as a joint venture between local churches in Exmouth and district, engaged in community action, and acting as an expression of Christian compassion.

We work under an equal opportunities policy for the benefit of the community and though motivated by our faith we do not impose it on our clients who may have their own faith or none.

All our funding comes through voluntary donations, largely from the local community and from supportive Trust Funds.

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Friends of Open Door

We want to record our deep appreciation for all the support we receive from the Friends of Open Door. You have no idea how much it means to us to know we have your regular, consistent, generous donations. We're able to plan ahead and take bold steps because we have a secure foundation to build from, and we want you to know that we don't for a moment take you for granted, but genuinely thank you for all you do.

During this year we have advanced our activities and started new ventures as you'll see from this magazine. Inevitably this has involved us in extra expenditure beyond what we had budgeted, but the trustees have felt this to be both justified and manageable within current reserves. In the longer term, new strategies are needed but an extension to our Friends scheme of a further 50 donors as part of that strategy would go a long way toward meeting our target. If you're not already involved, would you consider doing so in 2008? More information is available on request.

Teamtalk



We welcomed Gary Conlin in June as Deputy Manager following Sharon Engel's departure to a new post in Southampton. Sharon brought her many skills to the Centre and we miss her cheerful efficiency and caring nature.

Now Gary brings new skills and is quickly making an impact with our visitors. His ability to relate to people and help them work toward solutions is really appreciated and his leadership of the volunteer team is generating extra enthusiasm and motivation.

We must also say goodbye to Rev'd Ian Morter due to pressure of work commitments. Ian

has been a much valued Trustee for several years and has brought his wide experience and gifting to the benefit of the Centre. Thank you, Ian, for your wisdom and prayerful support. We wish you well in your new role as Rural Dean.

Café staff briefings each morning include lots of laughter and banter (and coffee!) and we have a growing sense of community among the teams. We're getting to know each other better, we're having fun together and the experience of being a volunteer feels increasingly like teamwork. We have a better idea about where each of us fits and how we can use our strengths to best advantage.

An important part of our briefings is the opportunity to reflect on why we do what we do and to begin each day with prayer together.

And the same is true of team briefings for Night Shift and Contact Centre. There is always the chance to bring everyone up to date with the latest happenings, and time to be with God before we open the doors. This sense of team working together to bring God's presence and love within the reach of people we work with is vital to us and expresses the essential ethos of what the Centre is all about.