NEWSLETTER

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Tom Hayden

Message from our Head of Operations

Covid has impacted us all in so many ways. The Good Shepherd has stayed open throughout the pandemic to provide food, support, and guidance to the people of Wolverhampton.

It hasn't been easy, but with the support of the local community, our partners, and our dedicated team of staff and volunteers, we've kept our doors open for the people that need us the most, adapting to meet the needs of people in a Covid-secure way.

At the start of the pandemic, the local authority housed all the guests from the night shelter and anyone sleeping rough in the city in a local hotel. We worked alongside the council and our partners across the city, supporting people placed in the hotel to look at long term suitable accommodation. We also worked with local food charities including Midland Langar, Outreach 4 Wolverhampton, Helping Hearts, local Gurdwaras, and the Sai society to provide a meal three times a day, seven days a week, for everyone in the hotel. Some of the people housed in the hotel had slept rough in the city for years and went on to move into their own homes. Over 130 people were housed during the initial lockdown with the vast majority of these moving on to long term accommodation. This showed what could be achieved when we all worked together and was a shining light in a period of such adversity.

We believe housing is a basic human right and in the last six months we've expanded our Housing First service, providing intensive support and long-term housing solutions for rough sleepers with complex and multiple disadvantages. We've also continued our work with private landlords in Wolverhampton to provide quality affordable accommodation in the private sector for people who are homeless. Before, we could offer someone that attended the Good Shepherd a hot meal, a shower and someone who would listen. Now we provide those crucially important basics, as well access to a wide range of support to help people move on with their lives and achieve their full potential.

With the long-term impact of Covid still unknown, we're ending this year with the same commitment and resolve to be here for the people that need us. The local community has rallied together to support us, and we've been blown away by the donations we've received during the last six months from the people of Wolverhampton, local businesses, faith, and community groups. We're only able to achieve so much through the kindness and generosity of our supporters, so a huge thank you to everyone that has been such a part of our mission and journey. We really appreciate it, and look forward to working with you again, in hopefully better times, in 2021.

Food for All!

Witnessing a large queue of individuals who are in real need of food and support is something that we see each day, and we want to ensure that no one goes hungry. Juggling finding money for food, paying the bills and keeping a roof over their head is a situation which, sadly, many people can find themselves in at different stages of their lives.

Food waste and food hunger is something which Good Shepherd is passionate about, ensuring food can be saved from landfill, and given to people who need it. We work with a range of food partners who donate food regularly which is surplus to their requirements but perfectly good to use, giving us the capacity to ensure meals are available to all those in need. Cooking hot wholesome meals for many who wouldn't otherwise get hot food, is vital to our clients. The meals we serve are varied, contain high level of vegetables and are nutritious. It is imperative we continue to support those living from financial poverty and in need of basic items which we take for granted.

The Covid pandemic has seen our numbers increase rapidly, with the Good Shepherd supporting a high level of individuals and families with both hot takeout meals and food parcels. In the last six months we have been blessed to receive over £20,000 of stock which we have incorporated as part of our meals and passed on to those with cooking facilities. This vast amount ensures we can keep our costs down but increase the number of meals we provide giving variety and extras whenever possible.

In the last six months we served 14,365 hot meals and distributed over 600 family food parcels (example in the picture) to the 50 families we support.

Annual Care at Christmas Service

Please find details of our annual church service. We will confirm this event on social media once we have a clearer indication on the restrictions with Covid19.

Date & Time : **Monday 7th December. 6:30PM**

Getting Creative!

One area which the Good Shepherd had been increasing prior to the pandemic was in providing a wide range of meaningful activities, from art classes to cookery lessons, fishing to football, film club to boxing. These activities, put on by staff and volunteers, are crucial in helping our service users rediscover their confidence and feeling of self-worth, to be able to feel part of society again, and improving their skills and social interactions.

As the Covid restrictions eased, some of the meaningful activities were able to restart, adhering to social distancing rules, including the art class at the Newhampton Arts Centre a short distance from the Good Shepherd. The art class, including photography, is led by Chris Manley, of the Wolverhampton Society of Artists, with help from Good Shepherd staff and also Leanne Hayes, a great success story who has gone from sleeping in a tent in Wolverhampton several years ago to now studying for a degree at the University of Wolverhampton.

Chris is the father of photographer Stuart Manley, who has volunteered his photographic skills to capture some fantastic images for the Good Shepherd over many years, and now works for Soihull-based Jask Creative marketing agency who built our new website and offer us various other support.

Here Comes Pod!

The Good Shepherd is also launching a new podcast, with thanks to a grant received from the Heart of England Community Foundation.

The grant application, under the ‘Doing Things Differently’ programme, will see Good Shepherd staff work with service-users to deliver regular podcasts, focusing on different issues of the day and featuring interviews with prominent local personalities.

Keep an eye out on the Good Shepherd’s website and social media channels to listen to the podcasts!

Can you support this Christmas?

All the year around we have a Big Give campaign running where people can make donations to support the Good Shepherd in delivering our services to the homeless and vulnerable.

Christmas time is that little bit different, as we have a different Big Give donation page open, where your donations actually count double!

Between December 1st and 8th, any donations that we receive to this page will be doubled, up to a maximum of £10,000.

If you are considering supporting us this Christmas, a huge thank you! And if you can do it between these dates via the below link we can actually make even more of your donation.
https://donate.thebiggive.org.uk/campaign/a051r00001eQ83ZAA

Regular Giving

Regular monthly donations are so important to any charity as it gives the financial stability to know that there is a steady and predictable income coming in each month.

How many of us open the fridge and cupboards and have food readily available? We know that makes us fortunate. For many people, Good Shepherd is a lifeline whether for a week, a month or far longer. People come to us for a range of reasons and we never judge, everyone is welcome. Food is the magnet which breaks down the barriers to gain trust which in time helps many to open up and be honest about their situations so we can provide further help and support.

Could you forsake a takeout coffee each week and donate this to our food service? If the answer is yes - then please consider Regular Giving and drop us a line. Your support provides us with stable financial support and ensures that no one wakes up hungry in Wolverhampton.

If you are interested please email **admin@gsmwolverhampton.org.uk** or call **(01902) 399955** and ask for Helen.

Thanks Carl and Karl!

Former Wolves stars Carl Ikeme and Karl Henry have been great supporters of the Good Shepherd for many years, and that has continued again in recent months.

We are delighted that former Wolves and Nigeria goalkeeper Carl has agreed to become our first ever ambassador, stepping up his long-standing support for the Good Shepherd by continuing to promote and highlight our service and activities.

“It is an honour to be part of the charity and I am immensely proud,” says Carl.

“It is the people behind the scenes at the Good Shepherd who do all the work and keep this place running – they are the real stars.

“I’m just honoured to be a part of what they are doing and try and promote the charity and help them get donations and support.”

Meanwhile, Karl, gave up his time to turn out in a charity football match, appearing for AFC Bilbrook Vets against Diffusion FC after a successful bid in our Silent Auction from Chris Williams, of Advanced Recruit. “I am always keen to support the Good Shepherd when I can, and so to do the auction bid, and end up getting the boots back on again to play football, was perfect,” says Henry.

“It was a lively and competitive game but, most importantly, gave the chance to raise some vital funds to support the charity during these challenging times.”

Our Mission is to ensure the most disadvantaged and marginalised have the support and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential

J's Story

“This place is like a godsend for me, and the people are amazing.”

The words of ‘J’, one of the members of the Good Shepherd’s volunteer programme, which offers service users the opportunity to become involved in working to help the charity and further their own development.

One of the very few positives to the hugely challenging time of the Covid-19 pandemic, has been that many rough sleepers were able to take up the opportunity of moving into accommodation, and the Good Shepherd have also been able to continue their volunteer programme, in keeping with necessary regulations.

One of those is 'J', one of several of the volunteers who have been working hard in the kitchen under the guidance of head cook Louise, helping to cope with the increased demand for the food takeout service during the pandemic.

I came to Wolverhampton almost two years ago, and initially I was in a hotel for a couple of weeks before I ran out of funds,” says ‘J’, who has previously worked as a chef.

“I then went to St George’s Hub, where someone put me in touch with Paul Burns from the Good Shepherd, and within a few days he had found me accommodation in a private rental.

'' I started volunteering straightaway, to keep myself busy and to help with my mental health, as I suffer from various issues including anger problems, anxiety and depression.

“The Good Shepherd fed me, clothed me and gave me support, particularly when I was new to the area and didn’t know anybody.

“They don’t judge you here, they just accept you, they want to help you and make you better.” “A lot of people don’t realise that, and think they are just here to give out food, but when you talk to them there is so much different support that people can access.”

‘J’ has also previously struggled with addiction, and spent around three years homeless, sleeping in bins, abandoned buildings or fields, and eating from bins.

“Having been in that situation I know what it is like and the idea of anyone else having to go through that is a bad thing,” he adds.

“I know I can’t fix homelessness, but in volunteering I can help the helpers, and give my time back to help make a difference for everybody else.

“Recently and during the pandemic, I have been volunteering in the kitchens most days, and am making good progress, as well as working on my different issues.

“There is a great atmosphere working here, they look after me, and I will be forever indebted to the Good Shepherd.

“Without this place I dread to think where I would be now – they have given me a second chance.”

– 'J'

Can you Sleep Out to Help Out?

After the fantastic success of the first ever Molineux Sleepout last year, Wolves Foundation are again supporting the Good Shepherd with new 'virtual sleepout' for 2020, with Covid-19 restrictions meaning a repeat of the event this time last year is unable to take place.

The Sleepout will be back when regulations allow in 2021, but the Foundation are again linking up with the Good Shepherd to suggest fans take on a sleepout in their home environment to support the two charities in their efforts to reduce the effects of food poverty within the city.

Supporters are being encouraged to take part in the virtual sleepout on the night of 27th November 2020, for an entry fee of £10 for adults and £5 for children, with additional fundraising via the Just Giving page very much encouraged with participants urged to become a 'Sleepout Star' by raising a suggested £50 target.

Anyone who raises at least £50 will be entered into a draw for a full signed squad shirt from Wolves for the 2020/2021 season.

The entry fee alone will ensure participants are able to get involved in virtual activities around the sleepout on the night, which will feature Zoom calls with some well-known faces, including Foundation ambassadors and former players.

Last year's event included appearances from Good Shepherd ambassador Carl Ikeme, Foundation ambassadors Karl Henry, S-X and Jay Blades, as well as musical legend Jaki Graham and her daughter and radio broadcaster Natalie, and former Wolves goalkeeper Matt Murray.

Helen Holloway, Admin/Finance Manager at the Good Shepherd, said: "We were hugely grateful to be asked to link up with Wolves Foundation for the first Molineux sleepout last year, and the funds raised had a really positive impact on our services.

"As well as the funds, the whole experience of spending a night sleeping outdoors in the cold of November was a real eye-opener for everyone involved, including staff and volunteers from the Good Shepherd who took part.

"It is such a shame we will not be able to repeat the sleepout experience this year due to regulations - hopefully we will all be back in 2021 - but to be asked by the Foundation to link up for this virtual sleepout is something that we really appreciate and we are looking forward to working with them to raise awareness and funds for our two charities."

Anyone interested can sign up here: https://tickets.wolves.co.uk/en-GB/categories/events

Message from the Brothers

We often say that things change all the time at Good Shepherd Ministry as we continually adapt our services to meet new needs and unexpected situations. However, 2020 has been an exceptional year. In January we made our big move from our previous 'home' in the Darlington Street Methodist Church to our new location on Waterloo Road, right across from Molineux football ground.

We had barely settled in when the Covid-19 crisis hit us. As a result, since the end of March, in line with official advice, we have had to stop all our indoor services (hot meals, showers, clothes distribution etc) but have continued to provide 'takeaway' hot meals and other food each day. Fortunately we have been blessed to receive generous donations from a variety of sources – Wolverhampton Council, Wolves FC, faith groups, supermarkets and other businesses, and individuals.

As well as our 'short-term' support for our homeless and near-homeless service users, we are very much involved now in helping to meet their long-term needs. This part of our work has actually expanded this year despite the Covid-19 crisis.

We would also like to introduce Brother Michael. In August, Brother Michael Newman joined the Brothers community in Wolverhampton and is now helping out at the centre. Brother Michael is originally from Middlesbrough. Over the years he has been involved with various health and social care projects run by the Brothers. He has spent the last six years in a training role in Malawi, Africa.

Thank you as always for your wonderful support.

- *Brother William, Brother Stephen, Brother Michael, Brother Charles*

Our vision is to end homelessness and create sustainable pathways out of poverty

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@GSM_Wolves
Good Shepherd Services CIO
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