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TAKE THE MONEY OR OPEN THE BOX?

As part of their drive to deter street begging, Blackpool Council installed 'begging boxes' around the town in the hope that the public would put money in the boxes instead of giving direct to beggars. Any monies raised were to be split between two Blackpool charities. (not us!) The idea was copied from one or two similar schemes around the country but time has shown the public prefer to give direct rather than to metal boxes. Street begging is an emotive subject. Most beggars aren't homeless but trying to fund a drink or drug dependency. With recent adverse publicity about local street begging particularly at the Grand Theatre and by cash-point machines, this subject looks like it's in for a long run.

What do you think? Are you sympathetic? Do your hackles rise when you see a beggar? Go on, tell us. Ring Laura on Blackpool 297200.

INTERVIEW WITH A TAF VOLUNTEER

The importance of volunteers to any organisation cannot be overstated. For non-profit organisations, volunteers can often make the difference between remaining in operation or being forced to close.

People volunteer for a variety of reasons. For example they may be unemployed, recovering from an illness, retired, a student seeking work experience or simply seeking something more fulfilling.

Whatever the reason, volunteers make an important contribution in giving their time to develop a range of support that could not be provided solely by paid staff.

The relationship between volunteers and service users may also be more relaxed and informal and the volunteers may have more flexibility in the type or frequency of activities they can undertake.

Volunteers may also be able to offer particular skills and interests for specific tasks and projects which complement the skills of the staff.

As well as the organisation, volunteers also benefit from the work they do by:-

- Having the chance to help others
- Becoming active in the local community
- Meeting new people, making new friends
- Learning new skills
- Developing new interests
- Sharing talents
- Gaining valuable work experience
- Preparing for a new career
- Gaining confidence

- Finding job satisfaction
- Being part of a team

At The Ashley Foundation we have a small but dedicated team of volunteers who work with our residents on a daily basis.

We try to ensure that all our volunteers are involved in work that they will find valuable, rewarding and in some cases challenging, yet not too demanding.

We also try to encourage our volunteers to contribute to the organisation's overall running when it comes to decision and policy making.

Michelle Potter joined The Ashley Foundation as a volunteer back in September 2004. Michelle also works part-time at a nursing home in Cleveleys.

"I found out about The Ashley Foundation through Debbie Ellis (Senior Support Officer) and I thought the work sounded really interesting. I had a tour around the hostels and was able to start soon after".

"I like helping the residents and talking to them and feel that I have a good professional relationship with everyone at The Ashley Foundation. However, the downside is seeing somebody fail when you really want them to do well".

Michelle adds:- "I have found volunteering very rewarding and one of the many benefits has been taking part in some of the training courses which has helped me gain a lot more understanding of the homeless sector".



2 poems by Ray Bennett ex Elm House.

We said you would end up in print!!!

Much Ado About Nothing

Sometimes I start writing
About memories I have stored
Sometimes for a reason
Others when I am bored
This poem's about nothing
Really nothing at all
Yes, absolutely nothing
No memories to call
A poem about nothing
Well what could I add
Nothing I suppose
Is it getting you mad?
I am finding it hard
With nothing to write
I could have wrote nothing
Without any light
Because nothing is nothing
My subject is nothing
Then why all these lines
Writing about nothing
It has no meaning
Beginning or end
No hidden surprises
And nothing to send
Does nothing mean anything
Not as I know on
No nothing is zero
Before and when gone
Much ado about nothing.

Pop Star For A Day

I once tried my hand
At writing a song
The lyrics would not fit
My rhythm all wrong
And all this before
I'd looked at the music
The drums sounded nice
But drowned the acoustic
No title yet picked
With no singer in mind
Money running out
It became quite a grind
I ended up recording
A two-minute tape
With no background music
And no real shape
I left the studio
My head a quaver
Went straight into Boots
And purchased a shaver
Back to karaoke
After eight pints of beer
A proper embarrassment
Without any fear

The official newsletter from The Ashley Foundation -
the Blackpool charity for the homeless

Roll of Honour

A big thank you to everyone who donated gifts following our Christmas Appeal. In particular we are very grateful to Mrs Power and the children at Fleetwood High School for their very generous donation of not just one but fifteen Christmas Food Hampers! The hampers were distributed to hostel residents who had recently been resettled by The Ashley Foundation and were experiencing their first Christmas and New Year in their new accommodation.

We would also like to say a few words to our anonymous donors. We cannot thank you personally as we don't know how to contact you but we really do appreciate your help and support. We cannot even send you a newsletter because we do not know where to send it but if you should pick up a copy at your church, club, school or association, then please be assured that our staff and residents are very appreciative.

Our thanks must also go to a wonderful lady who turned up at Elm House a couple days before Christmas with 28 individually wrapped presents for every resident in Elm House!

This 'angel' didn't leave her name but we want her to know how grateful everybody was.



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To be included on our mailing list
or for any comment, please
contact the editor, Laura Cooper.

You can telephone Laura on Blackpool 297200
or write to: The Ashley Foundation,
81 Abingdon Street, Blackpool FY1 1PP
or you can fax Laura on Blackpool 626500



Prince's Trust Presentation Night



In our last newsletter, we featured Elm House resident, Adam Johnston, 24. Many Taffy Times readers asked about Adam so, for all his fans, here is a picture of Adam at his Presentation Award night held at Blackpool Football Club.

Adam has kindly offered to autograph photos on request!