The Return of Funky Feet!

Friday 4th April saw the long-awaited return of the Funky Feet nightclub at the Tooting and Mitcham Community Sports Club. It was a great evening, thoroughly enjoyed by all. Turn to page 4 to find out more!
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The Learning Disabilities Partnership Board said farewell and thank you to councillor Linda Kirby at their June meeting as she stepped down as Chair of the meetings after four years.

Linda’s time as Merton’s Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health has recently come to an end which means she will no longer be so closely involved with the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board.

The June meeting was a chance to say thank you to Linda for all the hard work she has put in, and a presentation was made highlighting just how much Linda has supported and encouraged those on the Partnership Board.

During the last four years as Chair, Linda always made sure people were kept informed with what was going on in the community and that they had their say on important issues. She also did a great job of representing the members of the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board throughout Merton.

Linda was presented with a bouquet of flowers and was wished every success in her new role as Chair of the Planning Applications Committee.

The Partnership Board welcomes the new Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah.
The Funky Feet nightclub returned on Friday 4th April at the Tooting and Mitcham Community Sports Club in Bishopsford Road, Morden.

Funky Feet is a nightclub where people with learning disabilities can let their hair down and enjoy a good boogie with friends on a Friday night.

It hadn’t been held for a while and so its return had been very eagerly anticipated by many.

The night certainly didn’t disappoint and was attended by more than 100 people!

Eight people with learning disabilities took part in a recent DJ course held at All Saints Centre. The course was 10 weeks long, every Monday and was led by Nick Carling from Fresh Track DJ Workshops. Nick taught them how to use professional equipment and put on a DJ set with the objective of performing at Funky Feet.

Emma Lundy, Nick Menton and Rachel Handy were among those who took part in the project.

Emma said: “I got the chance to use a turntable. It was fun”.

Nick said “I loved the DJ sessions, I got a chance to play the music that I like listening to. Emma, Rachel and Nick all said that if the course comes to the centre again, they’d love to do it once more.”
Those who did the course were then able to use what they’d learnt to entertain everyone at Funky Feet by selecting and mixing their tunes.

David Harrison really enjoyed his job on the night too, reprising his role as doorman which involved welcoming the clubbers and checking tickets. He said: “I was very pleased to be the doorman again at the new Funky Feet”

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the night and the chance to catch up with friends, meet new people and have a dance and a drink.

Merton Council’s Director of Community and Housing Simon Williams said: “I’m delighted to see that the All Saints Centre is providing a wide range of workshops for people with learning disabilities in Merton. I’d like to congratulate everyone who took part in the DJ skills workshop and put on a great night at the Funky Feet nightclub.”

The next Funky Feet will be on Friday 4th July. Many thanks to All Saints for organising another fantastic Funky Feet!
Your Shout’s...

We are Your Shout, a group for young people with disabilities in Merton. We have made a short film to show people what it is like to be a young person with a disability. You can see the film on http://www.fixers.org.uk/news/9583-11208/living-with-a-disability.php.

You can also go to YouTube and search for ‘Fixers disability and me’, and the video will come up.

Fixers helped us make the film. Fixers is an organisation that helps young people make changes for themselves and other people.

Everyone in Your Shout helped to make the film and five of us are in it. The overall experience was great. We were able to show what great things we could do and the talents we have. It brought us together as a group, helping one another to produce the film. This film will make people understand what it is like to have a disability.

We have just shown the film for the first time at the Polka theatre in Wimbledon. Lots of people came to see it, including other people with disabilities, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Gary King (Project & Implementation Manager, SEN & Disabilities) and Paul Ballatt (Assistant Director for Commissioning, Strategy and Performance). People really liked our film and asked us lots of questions about it.
We also told them more about Your Shout. Nick said “I spoke in public. I wasn’t nervous.” Alison added “I enjoyed it. My Dad was proud.”

Your Shout group members are aged 14-25 and we have mixed abilities. Some of us have physical disabilities, some have learning disabilities or sensory impairments and some of us are on the autistic spectrum. People with mental health needs are also welcome. We meet once a month and take turns to chair our meetings. We talk about different topics, like drugs and budgeting and we help other young people with disabilities.

If you are interested in joining Your Shout, you can contact:

Robert Hill (Wednesdays to Fridays) on 020 8545 4527 email: Robert.hill@merton.gov.uk

Jo Young 020 8274 4959 email: jo.young@merton.gov.uk

Julia Garrett 020 8274 5143 email: julia.garrett@merton.gov.uk
In April, The Prince’s Trust spent a week at High Path Community Resource Centre helping to run a variety of interesting and fun activities for everyone. Among the various sessions they arranged were an Easter egg hunt, art, cookery, and bowling. However, there was one session that really got everyone going wild! - The Trust organised for a zoo keeper called Martin to bring in some of his exotic animals! He brought seven mystery boxes into the canteen, and opened them one by one. What emerged included seven snakes, tarantulas, tortoises an a owl, a skunk, and a blue tongue lizard!

Everyone had the chance to handle the animals, some of which were friendlier than others! Merrill said: “I loved the lizard. It kissed me on the cheek and hand, and it felt quite funny as it had such a long soft tongue”. Martin gave everyone a history lesson about each animal, where they came from, how much they weighed and how old they were.

The Prince’s Trust is a youth charity which supports 13 to 30 year-olds who are unemployed and those struggling at school and at risk of exclusion.

Those who visited High Path had spent the previous week working hard to raise money to pay for these activities. They were really friendly and enthusiastic and made their week at the centre very memorable.

The Client Committee at High Path would like to say thank you to all the volunteers from The Prince’s Trust for the effort they put in to making it such a fun week, and to Martin for enabling us to get to know his amazing animals.
Danny’s Wimbledon Dash

Wimbledon supporter Danny Wiggins took on his hero Haydon the Womble in a challenge with a difference at half-time during the home match against Cheltenham Town on Saturday 22nd March.

Danny aimed to raise funds for Sport Relief by racing against AFC Wimbledon’s much-loved mascot.

The sporting challenge set for the pair was for them to race from opposing goalmouths and be the first to kick the ball from the centre spot. Danny (pictured above centre) raced from the Nongshim Stand and Haydon started from the area in front of the EcoHouse End.

However, due to Haydon’s regular participation in mascot races, it was felt that a few extra obstacles were required to even the challenge up! As a responsible Womble, Haydon found it impossible to walk past the strategically placed items of litter on the pitch, which enabled Danny to build up a good lead!

Danny, who will turn 40 in October, is a big AFC Wimbledon fan and he’d been in training for the race during the weeks prior to it.

His mum Sally and dad Tony watched the race and said: “Danny was very excited about racing against his friend Haydon the Womble in front of a big Wimbledon crowd.”

All Danny’s hard work paid off in the end as he raced to the ball in the centre circle, kicking it first and leaving Haydon well behind still picking up the litter!

Congratulations to Danny who raised a whopping £795 for Sport Relief! A big thank you to everyone who sponsored him and cheered him on.
The loss of Marion Macfarlane to everyone who knew her continues to be felt very deeply in Merton. Following her passing in February, many tributes to Marion have been made by her colleagues and friends.

In March the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board heard a tribute to Marion, led by Robert Hill and Heather Begg.

Robert had shared the role of Service User Development Officer with Marion since being appointed to the job back in 2005. Heather explained that it was originally a ‘developmental role’, meaning that the Learning Disabilities team wanted to see how it would go. It quickly became a great success and it was clear that Marion was making the role her own. It was as though the job had been tailor made for her.

Marion really loved meeting with clients at day centres and attended the High Path Client Committee where she enjoyed being able to support people with any issues they were facing, and encouraged them to speak up. She also attended residents’ meetings at Riverside Drive and Meadowsweet, and helped to come up with good ideas for articles for this publication: Partnership News.

Rob highlighted the many projects that Marion had worked on over the years, these included: Making Reviews Better, Changes in Day Centres, Transport with T.F.L., Food at Residential Homes, as well as Going to the Doctors and G.P. Training in which she interviewed 52 people with learning
disabilities, all by herself, about their experiences of going to the doctors. Marion then presented her findings to doctors, and her work on this project is still being used as a very important piece of research.

Heather said that Marion was hard-working, dogged and determined in all she did; always wanting things to be changed for the better.

Even when on holiday in Mexico, she was thinking about how things could be improved for people with learning disabilities over there! When she went back the following year, she checked to see whether her recommended changes had been made!

Marion never switched off from what she saw as her great purpose; to improve things in all areas of life for people with learning disabilities.

Robert and Marion once attended a national conference at which their role was presented as an example to other learning disability teams from across the country - a testament to the all the hard work they had both put in to their jobs.

Councillor Linda Kirby thanked Robert on behalf of The Partnership Board for presenting such a detailed and moving tribute to Marion. Marion’s sister who was also at the meeting wanted to say a big thank you to Rob and Marion’s other colleagues for all the support they’d given to her.

Simon Williams, Merton’s Director of Community and Housing said: “Marion made a real impression on all those she worked with. She communicated passion, courage, challenge where needed, humour and a real love for her job. She was a fantastic voice for people with learning disabilities. Marion, thank you for being a great colleague. We will miss you.”
The High Path Canteen, Café 19, is helped in its day to day running by several important volunteers.

Harris, comes over every Tuesday from Orchard Hill in Hackbridge and helps in the café by clearing plates and cutlery, washing up and clearing the tables. Harris said “I like helping out in the canteen; it’s great fun. My favourite jobs are washing up and clearing the tables.”

Anne Curley works in the café on Wednesdays and Fridays, and is a brilliant help clearing the trolley and sweeping.

Clive Sullivan works in the café each Monday and helps with every job you could think of, including loading the dishwasher and cleaning the work surfaces. He said his favourite job is using cling film to wrap the food that’s been prepared.

Ray Boardman has been working in Café 19 for over 10 years now and he helps other volunteers by showing them how the café runs and what the various jobs are that need doing.

Ray Brooks, Café 19’s head chef said: “The volunteers contribute hugely to the daily running of the canteen and their hard work and positive attitude make it a great place to be.”

Harris added: “I have made loads of friends here, especially Stephen.”

A big thank you to Harris, Anne, Clive and Ray for all their hard work which keeps Café 19 running day to day, and everyone well fed!