

A&I service opens for morning sessions

AS A RESULT OF £182,000 FUNDING from the Big Lottery Fund, Aberdeen Cyrenians Advice and Information service is able to offer an all-day drop in service.

Previously drop-in operated on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons. The service has now been extended and also runs from 9:30-11:30am Monday to Friday. Staff have already noticed an increased attendance in the morning sessions and anticipate this will continue in the coming year.

At these sessions there is no appointment system. Anyone can come with any query, and the majority are about housing issues and benefit issues but there are also queries about social work concerns, relationship breakdowns, housing repairs promised but not carried out, where to turn for help moving house – the list goes on

and the A&I workers try to find an answer to them all. Sometimes it is clear that a person is going to need long-term, one-to-one support and that a single drop-in session isn't going to be enough, in which case the worker will write to the council to notify them that a new service user has been referred to the resettlement team with the aim of preventing the service user becoming homeless.

At drop-in sessions, A&I workers may also hand out food parcels after assessing a service users need and addressing issues around this. Toiletries parcels and clothing are also available. Everything given out will have been donated from our various appeals. The support we receive continues to be overwhelming and every bit of donations is used.

In addition to expanding the drop-in service, A&I have moved office. There's been a bit of creative use of space and reconfiguring of rooms going on to provide a bigger and brighter working environment for the expanded A&I staff. This has resulted in the donation sorting area now having shelving around three sides to accommodate clothing, bedding, sleeping bags and other donations which are most needed at this time of year.

The revised drop-in opening hours are:

Monday	9:30 – 11:30 and 1:30 – 3.45
Tuesday	9:30 – 11.30 and 1:30 – 3.45
Wednesday	9:30 – 11:30
Thursday	9:30 – 11:30 and 1:30 – 3.45
Friday	9:30 – 11:30 and 1:30 – 2.45

aberdeen cyrenians
tackling homelessness

Are you following us on Twitter? We're at @Cyrenians2013

The A&I staff have moved into a larger office



If you would like to receive your copy of the newsletter via email, please contact ruth.morrison@aberdeen-cyrenians.org to be added to the e-mailing list

The **aberdeen cyrenians**

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NEWSLETTER

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Right: A perfect present for a homeless charity: a gingerbread house
Below: Service with a smile: Volunteers had a Thank You meal served to them by Aberdeen Cyrenians CEO Susan Montgomerie, Council of Management member Sarah Smith, depute CEO Scott Baxter, volunteer co-ordinator Jenna Ingram and Louise Nind who works in fundraising and volunteering.

Thousands of thanks

WE ASKED YOU TO HELP US MATCH and possibly even exceed the £40,000 worth of donations we received last year for our Christmas and Beyond appeal. And you did.

By the end of 2013 you had donated almost £60,000 in cash, food, clothes, toiletries, services and Christmas shoe boxes to make this a record-breaking year for our annual Christmas and Beyond appeal, and it looks like you haven't finished yet.

This is our biggest appeal of the year and we rely on your generosity to make Christmas a special time for our service users by providing them with food, warm clothing, toiletries and gifts. Your donations also go towards making sure we have adequate funding to keep all our services afloat in the coming year. Thanks to your kindness:

- Street Alternatives opened every day so that hot meals could be served from December 21 to January 5 instead of the usual four times a week
- 42 residents attended the panto Cinderella at HMT



volunteers had the tables turned on them and they were provided with a Thank You meal

- We have managed to restock our food and toiletries cupboards
- There are enough hats, scarves and gloves to give to all drop-in attendees for the rest of the winter
- Stocks of washing powder for the Street Alternatives laundry service have never been so healthy
- 50 traditional Christmas lunches were once again

donated for service users on December 25 by Mercure Ardoe House Hotel and Queen's Cross Church – as they have been for several years

- It's not too late to donate at <http://www.justgiving.com/Christmasandbeyond>

"Thank you" seems totally inadequate for what you have done for Aberdeen Cyrenians over the past few weeks. It has meant the difference between a sad, lonely and hungry time for many of the city's most vulnerable people and the chance to enjoy Christmas in a warm, welcoming environment and be part of the celebrations that so many of us take for granted.

We go into 2014 grateful for everything you have done for the organisation and its service users.

- Service users spent Hogmany at Satrosphere
- We received more than 300 shoe boxes full of gifts to distribute
- Our loyal band of Street Alternatives



aberdeen cyrenians

Rucksack Project was a big success

IT STARTED OFF AS A TENTATIVE FACEBOOK ENQUIRY and ended up as one of the most successful joint ventures Aberdeen Cyrenians have been involved in.

The Rucksack Project is a worldwide movement born out of the simple idea to help those sleeping rough during the freezing winter months. Friends Elizabeth McGuigan and Amber Sebold wanted it to happen in Aberdeen this winter having seen how it has taken off in other places in the past few years, so contacted Aberdeen Cyrenians about how best to progress the idea since the organisation is in such direct and immediate contact with many of the city's rough sleepers. The response was overwhelming – helped by a retweet by best-selling author Ian Rankin - with more than 100

rucksacks being delivered to the car park at Summer Street on December 14. Many were immediately handed over to rough sleepers and those that weren't claimed that day went into Aberdeen Cyrenian stock to be given out as needed. STV publicised the project by interviewing Amber at Summer Street and this helped spread the word both to donors and through the rough sleeping grapevine.

The idea behind the Rucksack project is very simple. Participants are asked to provide a rucksack and fill it with items which rough sleepers can use, such as a sleeping bag, "instant food", waterproofs, warm clothes, thermals or clothes that can be layered, roll mat, can opener, boots, hand warmers, fleeces, toiletries such as shampoo, hand wipes, tissues, lip balm.

Amber and Elizabeth visited several city centre charity shops to tell them about the project and to alert them to the possibility that there might be a run on their stock of rucksacks and items to fill them. They also set up a Just Giving page which raised almost £300.

"We were amazed at how the idea caught hold and how many people wanted to support it," Amber said. "It is such a practical way to help and we hope to work with Aberdeen Cyrenians to do it again next winter."

An eye-opening experience

I AM JULIE SMALL, a Communication Design student at Gray's School of Art.

Within my academic creative practice I wanted to use photography as a way of expanding my knowledge of the world around me. I didn't realise how oblivious I was to certain aspects of life for some people, especially those living in Aberdeen. I stumbled across Aberdeen Cyrenians through my mother – ignorant of who they are or what they do. I knew this was the perfect project for me. I started my journey with a visit to Scott Baxter, depute chief executive, and my visits continued from there.

It's absolutely remarkable the work I've seen done at the Cyrenians, even after the short time I have been visiting. My visits ranged from helping organise donations, to helping carve pumpkins for Halloween, to helping prepare the shepherd's pie and spicy potato soup for the Street Alternatives session.

My most recent visit was to the Clifton Road residential project – I went during the festive season and it was full of beautifully decorated Christmas trees and other Christmas additions to the house. My visit to Clifton Road was the most soul-searching of all my visits to present.

I live a very sheltered, privileged life...one I now realised I take for granted. Clifton Road is very important to Aberdeen Cyrenians as it sets young people up for independent living and teaches key life skills. The visit to Clifton Road was a great way to end my 2013 visits. One of most inspiring things I took away from my visits was the positivity flowing throughout each one of the Cyrenians projects, whether it be at Clifton Road, Summer Street or Margaret House. They all had a brilliant upbeat ambiance.

Looking back at my initial preconceptions of what I thought the setting would be like I can see now how far off I was. The expertise of the staff in dealing with the wide variety of people coming through the doors is to be applauded. The staff even picked up on my mood if I was having a bad day. The time I have spent with the Cyrenians has really opened my eyes to the homelessness that is prevalent in oil rich Aberdeen. I hope as my journey continues I help other people understand the extent of the work done by the Aberdeen Cyrenians.



Julie Small

Sleepout venue confirmed

PLANS ARE NOW WELL UNDER WAY for the Aberdeen Cyrenians Sleepout 2014 taking place on Wednesday 23 April.

RGU Event Management students Robert Poller, Chloe Scamps, Patrycja Graczyk and Joanne Donald are working with the Aberdeen Cyrenians to present the corporate-based event which will feature teams of two from ten companies and institutions within the Aberdeen area who will spend the night sleeping rough and raising funds for those affected by homelessness. The event team are working hard to ensure the event stays close to the values and beliefs of the charity and have now secured the roof of the St. Nicholas centre as the city centre venue. With leading names such as Wood Group, Sainsbury's, Northsound and Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce signed up

to take part, the event team are preparing to assist participants with their fundraising activities. A pre-event meeting has been arranged for all participants on 15 January at the Aberdeen Cyrenians office on Summer Street. Participants will benefit from additional fundraising support, networking opportunities and light refreshments will be provided.

The student organisers said: "The support we have received so far has been brilliant! We're looking forward to meeting our participants in the next few weeks and assisting them in their fundraising activities."

For more information please contact cyrenian.sleepout@gmail.com

Keep up to date with what is happening at Aberdeen Cyrenians on a daily basis by following us on Facebook

Wernham House is always happy to receive unwanted DVDs.

Some of the donated rucksacks



Can you help us?

THERE are many ways you can help support Aberdeen Cyrenians. Here are just a few

- Become a regular donor. We can give you the necessary form to fill in
- Sign up to take part in the Baker Hughes 10k
- Find shops and offices which will take our collecting cans
- Speak to us about organising a fund-raising event at work or in your community
- Retweet our Twitter messages
- Share our Facebook posts
- Use Iceberg Print and Design for all your printing work
- Hire our training room for meetings
- Distribute the newsletter to friends and colleagues

Please get in touch if you would like more information about any of these suggestions or if you have ideas you think could help us. Contact ruth.morrison@aberdeen-cyrenians.org.

Amy's extra effort

Since Amy Gray got in touch a few months ago to fundraise for Aberdeen Cyrenians through a sponsored bike ride of the Hebrides in the spring, she and her partner, Glyn Jarvis have gone on to become Street Alternatives volunteers. They did several stints over the festive period and Amy even roped in her sister, Esther, to help out: sorting donations, wrapping presents, cooking four types of soup and a turkey. Amy and Glyn hope to leave Oban on April 26 with their bikes, catch the ferry to Barra then pedal on to the Uists, Harris and Lewis. You can sponsor them at www.justgiving.com/teams/hebrideanwonder.



Glyn, Amy and Esther in festive mood in the Street Alternatives kitchen

Zonta gift to VAW

AS PART OF ZONTA INTERNATIONAL'S 2013 campaign "Zonta Says No" (to violence against women), The Zonta Club of Aberdeen invited Fiona Whitehouse of Aberdeen Cyrenians Violence Against Women to come and talk to us about her project.

So impressed were we by her enthusiasm and dedication that we had no hesitation in donating nightwear and toiletries to help the women who come to the Aberdeen Cyrenians in extremis, writes Lesley Donaldson, President of Zonta Club Aberdeen.

In addition, a close relative of one of our members very generously donated £470 with the express wish that it go to Fiona's project. This person wishes to remain anonymous.

Zonta also donates to Women's Aid and our main fundraiser is a Charity Lunch for medical research in Aberdeen.

Pictured at the cheque presentation at Summer Street are Zonta members Aileen Addison, Sheila Riddell and Lesley Donaldson and Aberdeen Cyrenians CEO, Susan Montgomerie, VAW staff Rebecca Smith, Andrea Anderson and Fiona Whitehouse, Aberdeen Cyrenians depute manager who accepted the cheque.



Change of date for charity swim

THE CHARITY SWIM being organised by the Rotary Club of Aberdeen has been rearranged for Sunday, May 11.

Swimmers will have the exclusive use of the new Aberdeen Sport Village Aquatics Centre from 3pm till 6pm. Every penny of the registration fees will be split equally among Aberdeen Cyrenians, End Polio now and Aberdeen Sports Village. Participants will have the opportunity to swim for 20 minutes as an individual, as part of a team of five or as a team of 15.

The registration fees are

- Individual under 17 £10
- Individual 17+ £10
- Team of 5, under 17 £40
- Team of 7, 17+ £80
- Team of 15 £210

For more information and to register, go to <http://abchswim.org/register.html>.

Rough Sleeping- A Hidden Truth

WE ARE AWARE OF A QUITE A NUMBER of people sleeping rough in our city. For many they feel they have no other choice.

Typically those that sleep rough do so in places where they are unlikely to be easily found or where they can be disturbed or asked to move on.

Christmas Eve was no exception, and thanks to a concerned member of the public we were alerted to an elderly gentleman sleeping on a bench in a quiet corner of a city centre cemetery. When we went to check on him, he was wrapped up in soaking duvets and was clearly in discomfort from the cold.

There were obvious signs that he had been sleeping there for sometime. During the initial contact he refused help as he felt he could not be helped and just wanted to be left alone. There was obvious concern for him due to the deteriorating weather and dropping temperatures. It is very hard for staff to walk away from someone who doesn't feel they are worthy of help, however, they returned with dry waterproof bedding, warm clothing and flasks of hot food. Partners such as the Police and City Wardens were alerted to keep an eye out for him.

The next day, Christmas Day, staff returned to the cemetery with more hot food to find that he had gone although had left the empty flasks. A short distance away he was spotted in the company of another man. Both were soaked to the skin. However they were persuaded to jump in the car and come up to Summer Street for a change of clothing, footwear, some heat and a

Christmas meal. It turns out this other man was also sleeping rough in an adjacent park. Again sadly this other individual did not feel worthy of help or felt he would be able to manage by himself living in a house.

All too often because we don't see something we assume its not there. Rough Sleeping is a prime example of a problem where the perception is that it does not exist in our city and is something that exists elsewhere.

The sad reality is that it does.



Rough sleeping in Aberdeen this Christmas

Looking for an easy way to support Aberdeen Cyrenians? Raise money for us every time you shop online with Amazon, M&S, Tesco or 2,700 other retailers. www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/aberdeencyrenians

Street Alternatives Christmas Day 2013

IT WAS MY FIRST Christmas Day at Street Alternatives service as a volunteer, so I donned my Christmas jumper and Santa hat and headed to Summer Street, writes *Mary Holland*. Staff and volunteers had done a great job setting the table and extra treats of cupcakes and sweets were at each setting.

A choice of home-made soup got things off to a good start and then the main meals, donated by Mercure Ardoe House Hotel, went down a treat – turkey and all the trimmings. A choice of donated Christmas pudding or trifle (or in some cases both) meant that everyone enjoyed a lovely lunch. Santa arrived (in the form of Murdo) to give everyone a present. The practical presents, such as socks and other treats of chocolates both went down well. It was great to see all the smiles on everyone's faces and that was all down to the generous donations from the shoe box appeal.

The meal was rounded off my more chocolates and of course After Eights before everyone headed off.

The team for the day included staff, regular and new volunteers and also Frank Cassidy from The Press and Journal who all felt privileged to share part of their Christmas day with the service users.

A great time was had by all.

Summer Street at Christmas

TO PARAPHRASE THE WORDS of Louisa May Alcott in *Little Women*, Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without any presents and thanks to so many of you, Aberdeen Cyrenians was inundated with all kinds of presents. We hope these words and pictures will give you a flavour of Christmas 2013 at Summer Street which was made possible by you:

David Donaldson from Sodexo prepared turkeys, donated by Barra Bronzes, along with all the trimmings to serve at our

Volunteer Thank You Christmas Dinner. Mrs Duncan plays bingo to win various food items and then generously donates her prizes to Aberdeen Cyrenians. Staff and volunteers who served the Christmas lunch provided by Mercure Ardoe House and Queen's Cross Church. Volunteers sort through some of the hundreds of shoe box gifts.

Depute CEO Scott Baxter with the giant Christmas pudding donated by Hudson Catering. We asked you to guess its weight in return for a £1. Steve Edwards was the only one to guess correctly – 12.02 kg.



David preparing the turkey



Scott with the giant Christmas pudding (Scott's the one with the hat!)



Some of the staff and volunteers who helped serve the meals



Mrs Duncan



Volunteers with some of the many shoe boxes

Hogmanay for the homeless

SATROSPHERE SCIENCE CENTRE invited rough sleepers out of the rain on Hogmanay for a warm meal, a hot drink and the opportunity to explore some exciting science.

Food was donated by Asda Beach Boulevard and Hudson's Catering supplied the staff to make it into meals. Street Alternatives service users were offered soup, followed by cottage pie and finished with cheesecake and chocolates. Leftover portions were given to service users to take away.

Following the meal service users were able to explore Satrosphere's hands-on exhibits and to watch the We Are Aliens show in the planetarium. Volunteers and service users agreed this was a fun and enjoyable way to bring 2013 to a close; a year which has been particularly challenging for some.

Aberdeen Cyrenians volunteers were joined by volunteers from TAQA, Shell and Satrosphere to allow the lunch to go ahead.

John Law, CEO, Satrosphere Science Centre said, "It was an honour and a privilege to provide a little comfort to the homeless community of Aberdeen here at Satrosphere, especially during a very difficult time of year for those who find themselves without a roof over their head. We are delighted to have supported the excellent work of Aberdeen Cyrenians, and we will continue to support them during 2014 and beyond if we can be of benefit to those less fortunate than ourselves."



Tables all ready for Christmas service users in the Street Alternatives dining room

