

Carol's pants add to our appeal

TELEVISION PERSONALITY, model and actress. Carol Smillie is supporting our socks and pants appeal. She is pictured with Aberdeen Cyrenians depute CEO, Scott Baxter, at a recent event when Scott told her about the appeal.

She has recently launched her own range of underwear and has agreed to donate some of it to Aberdeen Cyrenians..

Thanks to you, our stocks of socks and underwear has been replenished and is looking much healthier than when we asked you to help us a couple of months ago. There is a constant need for these items so we are always glad to receive them.

Carol Smillie is known for presenting the award-winning BBC series Changing Rooms which won her a National Television Award for Most Popular Factual Programme in 1998.

She became the hostess of the British version of the international television game show Wheel of Fortune in 1989. She then appeared on the BBC, firstly as a reporter on The Travel Show, and then Holiday, often as the programme's presenter. However, it was the DIY programme Changing Rooms that established her name and led to her presenting other primetime shows for the BBC, such as the National Lottery and her own morning chat show Smillie's People.

She co-authored Carol Smillie's Working Mum's Handbook. She is known for her smile, which was caricatured by the British impressionist Ronni Ancona on the UK television programme Big Impression. Ancona's impression used the catchphrase "I'm Smiley Smiley Carol Smillie", which Carol adopted and has entered into popular culture.

Do you follow us on Twitter? We're at @Cyrenians 2013.



Scott Baxter and Carol Smillie discuss pants

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Happy talk

What were TV personality Carol Smillie and Aberdeen Cyrenians depute CEO discussing when they met in Aberdeen recently? Turn to the back page to find out.

Concerns about Universal Credit

ABERDEEN CYRENIANS ADVICE AND INFORMATION workers are expecting an increase in the number of enquiries and requests for help next month when Universal Credit is introduced.

Universal Credit is a new way of paying benefits which brings together several different benefits and combines them into one monthly payment which is paid directly into the claimant's bank account. Under Universal Credit the claimant will be expected to either look for work or take action to find work. It will replace many existing allowances such as housing benefit, income-based jobseeker's allowance, income-related employment and support allowance, income support, child tax credits and working tax credits.

Claims for universal credit will be made and managed through an online account. Therefore for many people who don't have access to computers, the internet or indeed have the confidence or skills to use IT this will present many challenges. Anticipating this, Aberdeen Cyrenians has now made available four PCs which can be booked by service users between 9am and 12.30pm each day. While the organisation acknowledges this is not nearly enough, it is at least something. Payments will be made monthly and

that's seen by Aberdeen Cyrenian staff as a potential problem since most claimants are used to receiving smaller amounts more regularly. Many struggle with budgeting already and there are fears that the new system will see claimants have difficulty in making their money last. Other worries include emerging concerns about homelessness in the city.

One of the main recurring themes which Advice and Information staff deal with is the waiting time facing those applying to Aberdeen City Council before they are rehoused. At the moment it is running at 23 weeks.

A spokeswoman for the council said: "The time it takes to rehome a household is dependent on the availability of suitable permanent housing.

"The redevelopment of the former Victoria Hostel site is due to get under way within the next few weeks with a completion date of September 2014. This will deliver 20 self-contained bedsits and 20 self-contained flats and will significantly enhance the quality and suitability of temporary accommodation."

Harvest appeal thanks

THANK YOU TO EVERYBODY who is supporting our annual harvest appeal. Already the cupboards all over 62 Summer Street are filling up with donations of non-perishable food. Tins of soup, tomatoes, vegetables, tuna, corned beef, custard and fruit are coming in daily and we appreciate every single donation. Over the next few weeks an Aberdeen



Cyrenians representative will attend school assemblies all over Aberdeen city and shire to talk about our work and to accept food collections. That's in addition to the donations which are delivered to our HQ.

The food will be used in Street Alternatives meals or in food parcels over the next few months. At present we feed up to 20 people at each of the four Street Alternatives sessions each week and we give out on average 200 food parcels a month.

Psychic night tickets

HAVE YOU got your ticket for our Psychic Night at the Hilton Treetops on Sunday, October 27?

It has been arranged by former Aberdeen Cyrenian employee Yvonne Lillie who is now a full-time psychic medium based in Glasgow. Tickets are £20 each and that gets you entry to two demonstrations each lasting 45 minutes.

There is also the chance to book a one-to-one reading with one of eight psychic mediums during the evening. These sessions must be pre-booked and cost £25, payable to the reader on the night. To book a reading please call 01224 628511 or email ruth.morrison@aberdeen-cyrenians.org

aberdeen-cyrenians.org. You can get your tickets by sending a cheque to Aberdeen Cyrenians, 62 Summer Street, Aberdeen or calling in at Summer Street.

Yvonne Lillie



Why Cyrenians?

HAVE YOU ever wondered why we are called Cyrenians?

There are Cyrenian groups throughout the UK and Ireland, sharing a name but working independently. We all take our name from the Biblical character, Simon of Cyrene. He helped carry the cross of Jesus as Jesus was taken to his crucifixion. Aberdeen Cyrenians, like all other Cyrenian groups throughout the country, has "sharing the burden" as its guiding principle. In practical terms, this means

providing services to the homeless and other disadvantaged groups in society. Although the name comes from a Biblical character, Aberdeen Cyrenians has no religious affiliations.

What Aberdeen Cyrenians did for me

"I first started using the service eight months ago, as a drop-in client. Previous to the service I had been rough sleeping for two years due to a nervous breakdown. "I had completely disengaged from all services, doctors, benefits and housing. "After speaking with someone at drop in, Homeless was contacted and I was accommodated in a B&B. I received support to make a benefit claim and register with a GP as I had not been in receipt of money or help from health services for two years.

"I then started seeing my GP regularly

and began to engage with mental health service. I was also supported with my homeless assessment and throughout my homeless journey.

"I am now in my own tenancy and my mental health is in a much more positive place. I am back in contact with friends and family and interacting socially.

"I feel that without the help of Aberdeen Cyrenians I would still be where I was eight months ago as I did not have the confidence to approach Aberdeen City Council."

– **A service user**

2 people, 5 wheels, 7 islands, 200 miles

WHEN GLYN AND I completed the West Highland Way in May 2012, raising £2400 for charity, we were overcome with emotion and felt it was one of the best things we have done in our lives. Having good weather helped of course but it felt like such an achievement.

Since then my arthritis has been getting worse and has caused me to question whether I can do more fun fund-raising before I am less able. Then we hatched the plan – to cycle the Hebrides! This part of Scotland is stunning but is not without its challenges. With strong winds coming directly off the sea and horizontal rain, we're not taking this opportunity lightly. The training has commenced and a turbo trainer ordered to help us through those winter months.

But this time we wanted to do it for a different charity; one which was smaller and would appreciate the money more. Glyn was homeless for a period in his life and really wanted to help support those

who are less fortunate than he is now; that's where Aberdeen Cyrenians come in. Ideally we would love to raise £1000 to be shared equally between Aberdeen Cyrenians and Arthritis Research.

Our adventure starts at Oban on the 26th April 2014, catching the ferry with our push-bikes, travelling through Barra, the Uists, Harris and Lewis with our camping kit stowed and some good waterproofs.

To help us on our way please consider sponsoring us through our just giving site at <https://www.justgiving.com/teams/hebrideanwonder>

Amy and Glyn x

Amy Gray and Glyn Jarvis



Amy Gray and Glyn Jarvis take a break from their training schedule

One of our more unusual donations this month was a sack full of potatoes from Dyce Gardening Club. They had grown them, as a community effort, to clean the ground before planting flowers, and distributed the crop to various homes and residential projects.

We are on the hunt for talented amateur musicians who would be prepared to busk in aid of Aberdeen Cyrenians. More details about the event next month, but if you can help please contact ruth.morrison@aberdeen-cyrenians.org.

Volunteer's view: Lynsey & Ketu Tilagucaguca

I FIRST JOINED Aberdeen Cyrenians in September 2012 when Jenna came to City Church to recruit volunteers.

I was instantly interested as I had been thinking about getting into volunteer work and this seemed like a great opportunity.

So I signed up and when Jenna said: "Come on in and get introduced to people and the procedures at Street Alternatives," I thought I would be going in for a tour and a little 'get to know you' talk and so I showed up dressed up to go about my day afterwards in a full length maxi dress. Safe to say the look on my face may have changed slightly as the realisation that I was going to be cooking hit me. Anyway, apart from a small argument with the built-in tin opener, my

volunteer experience had begun on a high note.

On returning home, I spilled all the excitement of my first volunteering adventure to my husband who decided that it sounded like a good idea and decided he would come along after church the next time and get introduced and join. So he appeared at the door and was greeted with a friendly "Hello" and asked to produce his service user card. The look of confusion on his face was hilarious as was the look of horror on the face of the volunteer manning the door who had mistaken him for a service user.

Anyway, after the initial misunderstanding, he joined us as well and we have been at the Summer Street Cyrenians for Street Alternatives ever since

then and we thoroughly enjoy it. The volunteers are always helpful, friendly and work together as a team very well. The staff who work for the Cyrenians are extremely dedicated and selflessly give up their evenings and weekends to make sure everything runs smoothly and will always drop everything to come in if there is any problem.

Cyrenians has also taught us a lot about ourselves and allowed us to be more thankful and humble about our situations. It has also taught us not to judge people so quickly without getting to know them initially.

The service users are good, friendly people who enjoy having a laugh with us and they are always polite and accept any food that we produce, no matter how burned the bacon may be. (It has been discovered that, as a vegetarian, cooking bacon is not my forte). We have lots of fun in the dining room/kitchen while we bob along to music on the TV and get involved in conversations and stories with the service users as they tell us about their week. I very rarely leave Street Alternatives without a smile on my face from the service we have completed. We hope to be involved in the Aberdeen Cyrenians for a long time to come and have truly enjoyed our volunteering adventure so far.



Lynsey & Ketu Tilagucaguca



StrEAT Alternatives cook book

We are delighted that Lord Provost George Adam has agreed to write the foreword to the StrEAT Alternatives cookbook which will be published in November and will make an ideal Christmas present. More news about it next month.

Currying favour with discerning diners

ABERDEEN CYRENIANS has been involved in helping to find the best curry chef in the area.

Aberdeen's Best Curry Award - Chef of the Year has been organised by Aberdeen Lions Club as a charity fundraising event with the final to be held in the Beach Ballroom on October 13.

Aberdeen Cyrenians involvement was to host six cookery demonstrations in the Street Alternatives kitchen and dining room at Summer Street. Places were limited to 30 at each event, and after the demonstration, those attending were able to enjoy a two-course meal featuring the dishes which they had just seen prepared. They were provided with score cards to mark the meal on such things as value for money, overall experience, quality of the meal and the cookery demonstration.

The six curry houses which took part in the demonstrations were Eva Tandoori, B Raj India, Qizmot, Cinnamon, Shri Bheema and Café Bombay. All their ingredients were sponsored by FMC and all the ticket money came to Aberdeen Cyrenians.

All six curry houses will receive a Chef of the Year finalist certificate, provided by Aberdeen Lions, at the awards dinner. Scott Baxter, Aberdeen Cyrenians depute CEO and a judge for the Best Curry Award, said: "We were very pleased to be involved with this event. Everybody loves curry and we have had the chance to see some of the best curry chefs at work in

Lots of happy diners at our first curry lunch



our own project kitchen and to invite a whole range of people into the building. "Aberdeen Lions put a lot of effort into organising this and we are very grateful to them for letting us be part of it. We look forward to working with them in future and maybe even on next year's Curry Awards."

A beautifully presented meal by Eva Tandoori

Advice and Information for all those who need it

LAST YEAR, Aberdeen Cyrenians Advice and Information workers dealt with around 880 people at their four-times-a-week drop-in sessions.

That figure is likely to rise this year, partly due to welfare reform leading to more people are seeking help and advice, and partly due to the appointment of two more members of staff which means additional drop-in sessions.

Drop-in is probably the most visible of the A&I services, but it's not the only one. In addition to covering drop-in sessions, A&I workers all have a caseload of service users, and they are also involved in the volunteer-led Street Alternatives project. At the moment, drop-in sessions are held on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons. Anyone can turn up with any query. The majority are about housing issues but there are also social work concerns, relationship breakdowns, housing repairs promised but not being done, 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 asking permission to add a new service user to the caseload in the hope of preventing the service user becoming homeless. The thinking is that it is better to invest time and resources now to prevent homelessness in the future in which case the homeless person will end up in the system anyway. At drop-in sessions, A&I workers can also hand out food parcels in deserving cases. These are running at about a dozen a week at the moment. They also allocate cards to attend Street Alternatives sessions.

Caseload clients are service users who have been assessed as statutory homeless and have been placed in temporary accommodation by the council for anything up to six months. They are referred to Aberdeen Cyrenians for support in the transition from temporary to permanent accommodation in the hope of breaking the cycle of homelessness happening again. That's achieved by making sure all benefits are in place as well as advice about budgeting if necessary, that the permanent tenancy is suitably furnished, it is safe and in an appropriate area. Further down the line

there might be A&I support in looking for employment, training or volunteering. The support goes on for as long as the A&I worker thinks is necessary so that the service user can avoid homelessness again for the same reasons.

An A&I worker is present at all Street Alternatives sessions. The service is volunteer led but an A&I workers is there to oversee who comes into the service which is available only to those who have already attended drop-in and are deemed to be in need of Street Alternatives. This service offers hot meals, personal care and laundry facilities four times a week. A Street Alternatives card is valid for just two weeks and the reason for that is that the organisation is keen to be a short-term answer to get people back on their feet. Aberdeen Cyrenians is the only food-providing organisation in the city to operate the card scheme. A&I workers encourage service users to address their issues rather than rely on Aberdeen Cyrenian services indefinitely. If the service user has no benefits, an A&I worker will try to source benefits rather than issue card after card. Similarly with homelessness, the workers would prefer to ask what they can do to resolve the

situation than have a service user return to Street Alternatives and drop-in again and again. Once a card runs out, a service user's situation is reassessed to see what progress has been achieved since last time – for example, has the service user made the job centre claim as advised and if not, why not?

Many people who use the service aren't homeless. They have tenancies but increasingly A&I workers are dealing with welfare sanctions when a service user is on a hardship payment which is 40% of the Job Seekers Allowance and simply doesn't cover gas, electricity and food. Thanks to Lottery funding, the A&I staff is about to rise to eight workers. The two new members of staff will work mainly with drop-ins allowing the present six to concentrate on caseloads.



Polite request from Ruth Ogilvie, manager of Wernham House: "Wernham House gladly collect any working televisions for service users' rooms. They can be old style model as we can buy digital boxes if necessary." You can contact her on

Wernham House are always happy to receive unwanted DVDs.



Our food collection weekend at Asda Bridge of Dee was a great success with more than 40 trays of food donated. Thanks to Asda and to everybody who contributed.

ASDA