



# The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields

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## VOLUNTEER'S NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2007

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### Volunteer Co-ordinator – Lance Kuhn



I have been working at The Connection at St Martin's as the Volunteer Co-ordinator for 14 months now and I thought I would use this opportunity – as we progress closer to moving into our new premises – to give

you an overview of how volunteering is going and to comment on the future of volunteering for the charity.

The Connection at St Martin's currently has 128 volunteers who are active in some capacity in helping the charity deliver services to homeless clients. In addition we have another 22 people who have applied and are somewhere in the process of joining as volunteers. Along side this we had somewhere between 110 to 115 volunteers from various companies or corporations who have contributed time in the past year – as part of the support they provide to The Connection at St Martin's through their Corporate Social Responsibility schemes.

Which means – combined – we have had over 250 people offering their time and assistance to the charity as volunteers this past year, which really is a remarkable

achievement in terms of skills, time and talents made available to our clients.

Since starting in this post I have personally answered over 300 enquiries from people asking for information about joining our volunteer program, and from this number 104 have taken the further step to apply for a position. From these 72 volunteers were accepted and attended Volunteer Skills Training since July last year. Although not all were able to complete the 6 months minimum commitment we ask of new volunteers a large number of people who attended this training are still supporting us. Although it may look as though we are losing a lot of people along the way volunteering by its very nature has a very high drop out rate and this can be for a number of reasons:

- When looking for volunteer work people will usually contact several organisations at the same time (this is why I endeavour to answer every enquiry as soon as I receive it)
- Many people apply for volunteer work at the same time as applying for paid employment – with the paying job - if offered -winning out
- People will often have good intentions but not the availability required. As we use a lot of our volunteers during the

day time – and during weekdays – people who work full time or who have weekend commitments are often unable to contribute their skills

- We also have to – in some cases – advise the volunteer that CSTM is not an appropriate place for them due to either their lack of experience or their personal circumstances

Personally I'm not so concerned with the numbers of people who drop out along the way – as we have large numbers of people coming to us to volunteer with almost no external advertising – as in getting high calibre volunteers with the skills and competence we need – and then managing to retain these people.

In addition to this 65 volunteers have attended further training delivered by staff on the following topics – Understanding Homelessness, Introduction to Substance Misuse, Introduction to Mental Health Issues and Managing Violence and Aggression.

Overall the training provided has been very well received with most participants (9 out of 10) rating it as excellent or very good. We have scheduled more training for volunteers in the coming months (see the timetable inside this newsletter) and I would urge all volunteers who haven't yet attended one of these short introductory courses to do so. It is a great way to raise your awareness of the issues faced when working in the homelessness sector whilst having fun and getting to know other volunteers and staff you may be working with.

Looking at Equal Opportunities monitoring our volunteers closely represent the general population of London in coming from many different backgrounds and cultures. Although not all of the people who have applied to volunteer filled in EOpps monitoring forms – as it's optional – 98 applicants did give us some details as to their background. 42 applicants were men and 56 were women and these figures correlate well with regards to the volunteering population in general in that

more women than men volunteer in the UK. Where we're doing particularly well is in having 48% of our volunteers who identify as either black or minority ethnic communities, as having people from so many different backgrounds accurately reflects both London's population, where 30% identify as black or other, and our client group, as 42% of our clients are from black or minority ethnic groups.

Where there is still room for improvement on our part is in the few numbers of volunteers we have who consider themselves disabled and this is probably a direct result of our lack of disabled access and by the challenges faced in working with our client group. Hopefully this will be one of the things we will be able to address in our new building as it will be fully accessible.

Along with this newsletter I am sending out a questionnaire asking for your input in how volunteering here at The Connection at St Martin's is going for you and what changes you'd like to see the charity work towards. As a valued member of our workforce your opinion really does count, so please use this opportunity to tell us what you think. Your answers may be used to help shape the programme for future volunteers.

The Volunteer's Christmas party will take place this year on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> December from 5pm onwards. As we are open for clients up to and including Christmas day there are lots of opportunities to volunteer if you are spending the holiday season in London. Please see our opening times for the Christmas period inside and get in touch if you'd like to help out during this period.

Finally can I say that we are fast approaching the finishing line with regards to moving into our new building. A huge thank you to all of our volunteers who have been so wonderfully supportive during this period of upheaval – we couldn't have done it without you and I hope you will be as excited and pleased to be in the new building as I am.

# Footprints at the Connection at St Martin's

Our new client's newsletter "Footprints at the Connection at St Martin's" comes out in November.

This publication will be written by and for the clients of the Connection (with a little editorial help from Clodagh and Lance) and we are now actively seeking submissions. The newsletter will be a mixture of client's stories, poems and art work, combined with practical information about what's happening in our building and tips on how to keep safe and healthy out on the streets. If you are working directly with clients at the Connection, or you know of any client's work that should be getting a wider audience, please get in touch or ask them to send it in to Lance at [lance.kuhn@cstm.org.uk](mailto:lance.kuhn@cstm.org.uk). All clients will have to sign a permission form to allow us to use their material.

Keep an eye out for the first edition of Footprints next month.



## **The Connection at St Martin's Volunteer's Christmas Party**

**Please join the staff and volunteers for a drink and food on  
Wednesday 19 December 2007 from 5pm to 8:30pm**

**R.S.V.P. Lance Kuhn 020 7269 0278 [lance.kuhn@cstm.org.uk](mailto:lance.kuhn@cstm.org.uk)**



The Connection at St Martin's runs a number of short introductory courses for volunteers in our day centre. These are facilitated by trained and experienced members of the service delivery teams and are a great way of developing new skills, increasing your knowledge of working in the homelessness field and can help in building confidence. We work in small relaxed groups where the focus is on your participation and they are an excellent way to meet and interact with other like minded volunteers and members of staff.

If you would like to register for any of the courses listed below please get in touch with Lance Kuhn – Volunteer Coordinator – on 020 7925 7893 or by email [lance.kuhn@cstm.org.uk](mailto:lance.kuhn@cstm.org.uk)

Date	Course	Time
Wed 14 Nov 2007	<b>Dealing with Violence and Aggression</b> – how would you handle a confrontation? Simple group work that will explore methods of handling and build confidence in dealing with aggressive behaviour.	5pm – 7:30pm
Wed 9 January 2008	<b>Understanding Homelessness</b> – ever wonder what the causes of homelessness are and what the various departments at The Connection at St Martin's are doing to help alleviate this problem? Then this is the course for you.	5pm – 7:30pm
Wed 13 February 2008	<b>Introduction to Substance Misuse</b> – what are the main substances we see clients using and what to do when confronted with someone under the influence?	5pm – 7:30pm
Wed 12 March 2008	<b>Introduction to Mental Health</b> – this course offers a brief introduction into the issues facing a person with mental health problems. Will increase your understanding and empathy with clients who may be experiencing mental health issues.	5pm – 7:30pm
Wed 9 April 2008	<b>Communication Skills</b> – want to learn to listen better and hear what's really being said? Would you like to become better at communication? Then please book your place on this short course.	5pm – 7:30pm
Wed 14 May 2008	<b>Dealing with Violence and Aggression</b> – as above	5pm – 7:30pm

This newsletter is produced by and for the volunteers of the Connection at St Martin's-in-the-Fields. Is there some aspect of volunteering in the homeless sector that you would like to see grace these pages? An important event coming up that you'd like people to attend or a personal story to tell? Why not contact Lance to discuss your ideas? Telephone 020 7925 7893 or email [lance.kuhn@cstm.org.uk](mailto:lance.kuhn@cstm.org.uk).



**Message from  
Colin Glover - Chief Executive**

With the Church reopening its doors and the Café in the Crypt reopen for business it is clearly time to start planning for our own return to Adelaide Street, even if this is unlikely to happen before the middle of February. In preparation for this we have been reviewing everything we do and have concluded that - by and large - we provide exactly the right range of services we should, therefore when we return to No 12 there will be a lot of familiar activity going on at familiar times. We have also concluded that rather than change our services we need to be much clearer about why we deliver the range of services we do, who we expect to use them, much clearer about what we expect our users to do and what they should expect from us, and finally, much clearer about what we expect to achieve.

Clarity of aim, clarity of use and clarity of impact have emerged as the building blocks for our future planning.

The review process has also thrown up a clear message that if we aim to provide first class services then we need first class support systems. We will therefore be spending more on our IT, our training, our cleaning and maintenance and on our internal and external communication. This will still only be a fraction

of our budget and much less than other charities in the sector. We will also be renewing our commitment to work with volunteers. Currently over 250 different individuals are involved in volunteering (whether as individuals or through their companies). Before I knew this impressive figure I challenged Lance to produce a plan to double the number over a three year period. Whether this is possible remains to be seen but the commitment to expand the use of volunteers, who bring so much extra to our services and to our organisation is undoubtedly there.



Photo – Martin Haigh

**Radio 4 Vicar's Appeal**

It's that time again when Radio 4 run the Vicar's Appeal – which is a huge fundraiser for The Connection at St Martin's. The appeal will be broadcast on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2007 and we need volunteers both of those days through to the evening. We're looking for up to 25 people each day to volunteer for 2 hour shifts manning the telephones and taking pledges from callers. If you would like to support this valuable fundraiser please email the PR and Events Officer Geraldine Ellis at [geraldine.ellis@cstm.org.uk](mailto:geraldine.ellis@cstm.org.uk) or contact the Volunteer Coordinator – Lance Kuhn – on 020 7269 0278 or email [lance.kuhn@cstm.org.uk](mailto:lance.kuhn@cstm.org.uk).



**Christmas 2007 to New Year 2008**

Date	Day Services	Night Centre
<b>Saturday 22 Dec</b>	Open – normal working day service 9am to 1pm	Open
<b>Sunday 23 Dec</b>	Open weekend service 9am to 1pm	CLOSED
<b>Monday 24 Dec</b>	Open – normal working day	CLOSED

	Day Services	Night Centre
<b>Tuesday 25 Dec</b>	<b>Christmas Festivities</b> Opening hours 9.30am to 1.30pm	CLOSED
<b>Wednesday 26 Dec</b>	Opening hours 9.30am to 1.30pm	CLOSED
<b>Thursday 27 Dec</b>	Opening hours 9.30am to 1.30pm	CLOSED
<b>Friday 28 Dec</b>	Opening hours 9.30am to 1.30pm	CLOSED
<b>Saturday 29 Dec</b>	CLOSED	CLOSED
<b>Sunday 30 Dec</b>	CLOSED	Open
<b>Monday 31 Dec</b>	CLOSED	Open
<b>Tuesday 1 Jan 2008</b>	CLOSED	Open
<b>Wednesday 2 Jan</b>	Normal services resume	Open