

# friends news

Spring 2015 Issue 61



## In to a Better Future

**Friends of**  
**The Connection**  
at St Martin-in-the-Fields

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# Introduction

Dear Friends. Welcome to our spring 2015 newsletter. We thought we'd try a new look for this issue and we do hope you like our makeover. It's your newsletter, so please let us know what you think!

Last year, thanks entirely to your support, the Friends raised over £250,000 for the Connection at St Martin's – from frontline work with rough sleepers to helping vulnerable young people to learn new skills and prepare for work, every aspect of the Connection's work depends on donations.

If you're able to join us for the Friends' AGM and Open Day at the Connection on 4th July you'll hear more about what your support is helping to achieve. There'll be presentations from the Connection's frontline staff and, of course, a rare opportunity to tour the building

so you can see the work that's going on first hand. We do hope you'll be able to join us.

In this issue we feature an interview with Marina D'Arco who talks about her role as Senior Worker of the Connection's Workspace project – a hugely successful and popular facility which over the past 12 months has helped over 100 homeless people into jobs.

Thank you for all the help you are giving. If you're able to make it, we very much look forward to welcoming you to our AGM and Open Day.

Very best wishes

**Debbie**

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## Can you help?

We're looking for volunteers to help out in the Friends' office at the Connection on a regular basis. Please let us know if you – or anyone you know – might be willing to share skills and time. Please fill out the form enclosed with this newsletter or send an email [friends@cstm.org.uk](mailto:friends@cstm.org.uk) and we'll get back to you. Thank you.

## Event news

Wendy and John Ward hosted a Christmas concert in aid of the Friends which raised a wonderful £1,060 for the Connection. The driving force behind the concert was classical guitarist, Fiona Harrison, and the evening featured a selection of beautiful music from Fiona and her fellow musicians.

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**Cover Image:** A busy day in Workspace. © CSTM

**Right:** Marina working with Ron to achieve his employment & training goals. © CSTM

# A hand into work

An interview with Marina D'Arco, Senior Worker of the Connection's Workspace programme

"Life can really knock you for six over and over again, you try to get up and then something else happens and you feel like the whole world is against you. Unfortunately most of us have experienced that at some point. Many of us have the fortune of having family or friends, for others it's more difficult. My job is to help homeless people look for employment if they are ready, or to look into opportunities for training or work placements which will help them to find and sustain work. As a starting point, everyone has a 1-1 interview with one of the Workspace Team during which we gather important details about past employment and personal history to find out whether there's another barrier we need to take in to consideration.

Entry level jobs in catering, cleaning and hospitality are popular for people who have been out of work for a while, and with those who

are new to the country and still have to find their feet. Others come with quite a lot of skills and experience, however they may have other barriers which are holding them back – for instance, they may not have been working for a few months or be able to provide a reference. We work with people to overcome or work around these barriers.

In terms of employers, some are very actively trying to help homeless people and we have great links with companies in the area. Some others, the clients tell us, are not. I can see how homelessness is not the best introduction when you go and look for a job. I very much enjoy the interaction with clients – you build up a personal rapport very quickly. It's a challenge sometimes, but it's a good challenge."

Marina was talking to the Connection's Sophie Balaam



# Art workshops

The Connection has launched a new weekly art workshop in the activity room for homeless people who prefer the more informal approach of drop-in sessions.

Each session is typically themed, for example the group made Chinese lanterns to celebrate Chinese New Year, and shamrocks as a way to mark St Patrick's day.

The sessions have been successful at engaging people who may not visit the art room because they experience individual barriers, like lack of confidence or fear that they won't have creative talent. But, once people get involved these doubts often disappear, and as people relax they start enjoying the session and produce some creative work, as the photos reveal!



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For more information about **Friends of The Connection** and the work we do, or how you can help, please contact us.