

NEWSLETTER

JAN/FEB 2024

<https://www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk/>



UPDATE FROM THE TEAM

A belated happy New Year from Brushstrokes. After a brief break over Christmas, we hit the ground running in January and into February as we got back to the engaging and rewarding business of supporting the most vulnerable members of the West Midlands Society.

We've had some really positive activities over this last two months including the opening and blessing of our refugee house in Walsall, a hugely popular Employment Fair, some quite miraculous winter growth of greens and beans in our allotment. A full programme of events for the men and women coming to our centre to form friendships and defy winter isolation, even a fully fledged circus troupe performing to a packed hall of local kids over half term.

On a more sobering note, we have seen record numbers having to attend our foodbank already in 2024, with January seeing a massive 695 individual visits. It is these, along with the 600 individuals a month we give free advice to, who are eternally grateful for the help and support that you, our followers and supporters, tirelessly and freely give. We thank you for your continued support! Please enjoy our first (new look) newsletter of 2024.

The Brushstrokes Team.



QUOTE OF THE DAY.

“Each one you should use whatever gift you have received to help others”

1 Peter 4:10



CONTACT



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ANDRZEJ KRAWCZYK



It is with great sadness that Brushstrokes has learnt of the sudden and untimely death of Andrzej Krawczyk. Andrzej was a volunteer at Brushstrokes from 2009 until 2015.

During that time, he was an integral part of Brushstrokes. Andrzej cared deeply about his fellow human beings, particularly those who had experienced trauma and injustice such as the people who come to Brushstrokes for help.

Having been a teacher in Poland, Andrzej brought his wealth of skills and experience to teaching ESOL at Brushstrokes. He was a whizz at IT and supported other volunteer teachers to use multi-media in the classroom. Andrzej responded to need. He developed interactive teaching resources for learning new vocabulary and created and taught IT courses for people who had little or no IT skills. He helped run a weekly workclub and taught people how to use the internet to look for and apply for work. Andrzej had unlimited patience and was such a kind man. Nothing was ever too much trouble. Our thoughts and prayers are with his partner Ewa.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

FILM EVENING

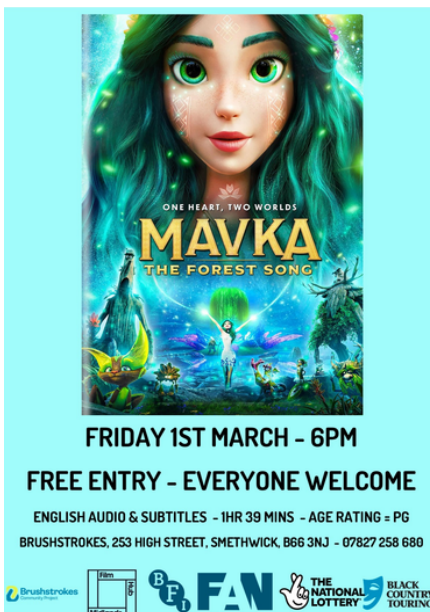
Friday 1st March 6pm
Mavka: The Forest Song



Film evening at Brushstrokes Friday 1st March at 6pm.

Come and join the fun!! Everyone's very welcome and it's free entry!! Thanks to Black Country Touring for their continued support - it's not cheap to get to the cinema these days.

With stunning visuals and a magical soundtrack, *Mavka: The Forest Song* is a heart-warming animated adventure that celebrates the power of love and the harmony between humankind and the natural world.



DR BIKE



Local cyclist, Wern, had the following to say about our Dr Bike session where local mechanic, Gavin, was carrying out free bike checks and minor repairs: "Gavin fixed my chain, brakes and checked the tyres. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it." Join us on the 19th March 11am - 3pm, if your bike would like some attention from our Dr Bike.



WOMEN'S YOGA

Moving to Wednesday Mornings soon.

11th March 2pm: Men's Health Chat *Tough enough to care*
13th March 3pm - 8pm: Table Tennis
19th March 11am - 3pm: Dr bike and security marking
20th March 2pm - 4pm: Men's Nature workshop

To keep updated on our activities and events please see the link to our Facebook page, which is regularly updated

<https://www.facebook.com/BrushstrokesProject>



Monthly Update



WARM HOME SCHEME

We are currently in the closing stages of a warm home project, where we are providing information on how to increase your energy efficiency and keep out the cold. As well as practical advice, we are also giving away blankets, insulation curtains and radiator keys, subject to availability. If you are interested for a client or a vulnerable person you know, please contact our adviser Nazia.



UKRAINIAN PUPPETRY WORKSHOP

On Saturday the 17th February, the Fetch Theatre group ran a workshop with Ukrainian children in our main hall to create shadow puppets and retell a traditional Ukrainian folk tale called 'The Mitten'. This was accompanied by music on the bandura, a traditional Ukrainian instrument, and included a rendition of the popular Ukrainian Eurovision song from last years competition. A great time was had by all and it was a lovely opportunity to celebrate traditional Ukrainian culture and bring it to a local audience.



GOODBYES

Assayed (Health and Inclusion Worker) has left us to pursue his career as a doctor. Assayed is now working as a GP assistant at a medical centre in Birmingham.

Hajar (Family Support worker) has also left us to join the Housing Team at Dudley Council.

We are so grateful for all they have done for people at Brushstrokes. We will miss them both but wish them every success in their future careers.

LOVE YOURSELF, LOVE YOUR PLANET

The 14th of February was an extremely busy day at Brushstrokes. From bicycle maintenance to spring planting and including a trip to the circus! Many people also took advantage of the free NHS health checks and Yoga class and we gave away 50 trees as part of the WMCA initiative to plant 1500 trees in West Midlands.

The highlight of the day was a Circus Event provided by The Flying Seagull Project, Laugh N Play UK. With a mix of comedy, magic and circus they entertained children and adults alike, Children learnt juggling, plate spinning and general clowning. There was a lot of laughter and the event was a definite hit with everyone.

We are looking forward to The Flying Seagulls returning to Brushstrokes at Easter. Watch this space!



NICOLAS BARRÉ HOUSE

Our newly opened refugee housing project, Nicolas Barré House, received a blessing from the Archbishop of Birmingham, Bernard Langley, in January.

The project started when the parish of St. John Henry Newman decided to offer the use of an ex-presbytery house in Willenhall for the housing of local refugees in need. Brushstrokes have been working in partnership with the Parish since summer 2023 to get the house set up and ready and moved the first residents in late in December.

The blessing, which took place in January, was a celebration of our partnership's work and the event involved the residents of the house, some key team members from the parish and Brushstrokes and a group of 40 specially invited parishioners whose work and generosity had greatly helped in realising the project.

As well as the blessing from the Archbishop, there was traditional Iranian singing and music from Babak, one of the residents, the parishioners had baked a selection of English and traditional Persian cakes and the four residents planted a pear tree in the garden of the property. The whole evening was a beautiful example of a community coming together in solidarity and welcoming a new group to their parish.



BLESSING OF NICOLAS BARRÉ HOUSE
18 JANUARY 2024



WEEKLY FOOTBALL SESSIONS



This month, we were delighted to see the number of participants at our weekly football session at Hadley Stadium hit the 50 mark for the first time! It's a veritable coming together of nationalities, with notable representation of asylum seekers from Sudan, Eritrea, El Salvador, Ghana, Honduras and Iran.

The sessions are run in partnership with Benson Community Project and the support of Brushstrokes' volunteers, Bally and Kabilan, is vital to keep these sessions going. Bally commented: 'the sessions are a great example of cohesion, consistency and community'. Similarly, we appreciate those who have donated football kit to us, which we've passed on to our footballers.



HELPING THE BEES!



Also in February, we were feeling very green-fingered thanks to Rachel and Hayley from Spectra and Olivia from RSPB.



After we packed away the compost, seeds and gloves, RSPB Community Connector, Olivia, had this to say about our latest nature workshop: 'It was great to come and work with the Brushstrokes folks, and indeed Spectra, once again on their quest to help nature thrive in their space. With help from Bumblebee Conservation we learnt more about bumblebees and their importance (we won't have tomatoes if our bumblebees disappear!) and planted some seeds that bees and other pollinators love. Looking forward to seeing Brushstrokes buzz soon!'

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROJECT

The employment project aims to support individuals overcome their barriers and help them get into employment, education and training.

In the past two months, we have had two successful events. Firstly, a drop-in day on Wednesday 17th January when service users came to register for employment support. We had 56 registrations.

Secondly, on 21st February, we hosted a Jobs Fair in partnership with the DWP. We had a range of employers and service providers which included National Careers Service, Embark, CPC, NHS, Ilyas Community centre and Sandwell Metropolitan Council. Over 200 people attended a very successful event.

Our upcoming volunteer fair on Wednesday 13th March 2024 is a great opportunity for anyone looking to enhance their employment prospects and gain voluntary experience.





VOLUNTEER FAIR

Come along & see all the fantastic volunteering opportunities waiting for you!

By volunteering you can:

- Develop new skills
- Connect with new people
- Gain a step closer to paid work
- Sign up to current service openings
- A great opportunity to meet representatives from local organisations
- Discover what is possible right here in your community
- You can even sign up for employment support on the day

EARN VOLUNTEER HOURS WHILE GROWING YOUR EXPERIENCE!

Wednesday 13th March 2024
10am - 1pm

If you would like to attend or if you have any questions then please contact us

 <https://www.brushstrokes.sandwell.org.uk/>

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WELCOME AHMED



Welcome to Ahmed Gadou our new Early Action Advice Worker.

Ahmed writes:
"I am a father of two lovely children. I have a background of Social Work education.

I have lived in The Netherlands for the last 15 years before I joined Brushstrokes.

I am happy to join this lovely team and I am proud to be one of Brushstrokes team members.

It is so much luck and a blessing for all of us, to have this chance to be able to give a hand to anyone who needs our help."

OCCUPATIONAL ENGLISH (OET)

Two nurses, who had been working as health care assistants in the NHS, have gained their nursing PIN through the changes in Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) criteria. Both nurses were able to combine previous OET scores with detailed evidence of language competence from their managers and support from Brushstrokes.

Jacobeth, originally from Botswana writes:

'Thank you, you are the most wonderful team I have come across. I am now a community nurse in Birmingham South.'



Parwinder, originally from India, had been working for over 5 years as a health care assistant. Thanks to the NMC changes in criteria, she is now working as a nurse at Sandwell Hospital. She said 'Thank you for all your support. I have received my PIN and am now working as an RGN.'

International Women's Day

MARCH 8TH 2024

Imagine a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. Together we can forge women's equality. Collectively we can all

#inspireinclusion

What's on at Brushstrokes Community Project

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
ESOL Classes 11am-2pm 	ESOL Classes 11am-2pm 	ESOL Classes 11am-2pm 	ESOL Classes 11am-2pm 	Music Wellbeing Sessions 10am-2pm 	Digital Skills 10:30am and 1pm
Yoga Sessions (Women's Group) 10:30am-11am 	Digital Skills 9am-3pm 	Digital Skills 9am-3pm 	Digital Skills 9am-3pm 	Wellbeing Walk 10am-11am 	 Scan here to join our Telegram and receive updates
Art & Craft Sessions 1pm-2:30pm 	Foodbank 11am-2pm 	Gardening Club (Men's Group) 2pm-4pm 	Foodbank 11am-2pm 	Community Cafe 11am-1pm 	
Football Sessions (Hadley Stadium B66 4NL) 4:30pm-6pm 		Welcome Wednesdays 5pm-7pm 		Film Evenings (First Friday of each month) 6pm 	

OUR SUPPORTERS

