

Brushstrokes

Messenger

Father
Hudson's
Care

"We must be in the hand of God like a brush in the hand of the painter"

Nicolas Barré

August 2019



We would like to express our sincere thanks to students, Elsa and Danyal, who willingly volunteer here every week to input data for us. It is vital that we have information at hand to demonstrate accountability to funders and without the assistance of dedicated volunteers such as these recording such evidence would be extremely difficult due to the demands of the work. These two young people come into the centre early on different days, quietly get on with the task in hand,

and leave at the end of their shift without fuss. Without a doubt, Elsa and Danyal have secured the affection and gratitude of the whole staff team at Brushstrokes and we wish them every success in their future lives. Elsa is in her second year of studying for a BTEC in Health and Social Care while Danyal is returning to Aston University where he is studying for a BSc in Business, Computing and IT.



Please remember that Brushstrokes' ESOL registrations for 2019/20 will take place during the first week of September.

For student or volunteer teaching enquiries please contact Jane on 0121 565 2234.

Thank you to Kelly



Thank you very much to Kelly Bodley, RE teacher at St Thomas More Catholic School, Willenhall, who visited us for the first time on a very busy Friday to assist in our community café. Kelly, as part of her Industry Day placement, helped Martin serve meals, wash up dishes and then clean up our large café area. Martin says that Kelly, who spent all day with us, never stopped working and was a pleasure to have around. Kelly adds that she hadn't expected the work to be so intense but that the experience was an enjoyable eye-opener. Many thanks to Martin for accommodating this visit and also to Kelly and all at St Thomas More for your generous contribution to our community service. Your help was greatly

appreciated. Martin says, 'Kelly was a fantastic help on Friday, especially as we were four volunteers down!' While Kelly later wrote, 'Hi, I just wanted to email and say once again thank you so much for all your kindness and hospitality on Friday. I was made to feel extremely welcome and learnt so much that I can take into my classroom. Please, in the coming months if there is anything we at St Thomas More can do to help, or if I can personally do anything, please do not hesitate to ask. Thank you again and I look forward to seeing you again in the near future.'





A huge thank you to Gemma and Nick from Smethwick Job Centre, who kindly collected donations of clothing, toys and nappies from their offices to bring in to Brushstrokes. These items will be freely given out to local people in need. Pictured are Minthe, Gemma, Harriet and Nick.



Bridgette visited Brushstrokes Immigration Adviser, Salman Mirza, with a special gift to thank him for his determined efforts to assist her with her Home Office application. After living in the UK for 18 years Bridgette has finally been granted temporary residence. Thank you for returning with thanks, Bridgette.

Brushstrokes Monitoring & Administrative Officer, Carol, was happy to receive this email from Jess, who had volunteered with us previously as an administration worker: *'I was just wanting to let you know that I am really enjoying my new job and I just would like to thank you and everyone at Brushstrokes again because I would never have imagined myself getting a paid job and Brushstrokes has helped me to get where I am today. I hope everything is going really well for you and all other staff at Brushstrokes. My job is really good too because I'm currently working on a website for the organisation that I work for. Thank you and take care, from Jess.'*

Many thanks to the Cooperative for their generous gift of £2000 to pay for a large dishwasher, extraction unit and tables and chairs for our community café. Pictured below is Jo Watters, FHC Head of Community Projects (in pink) together with the team from Central England Co-operative Limited.



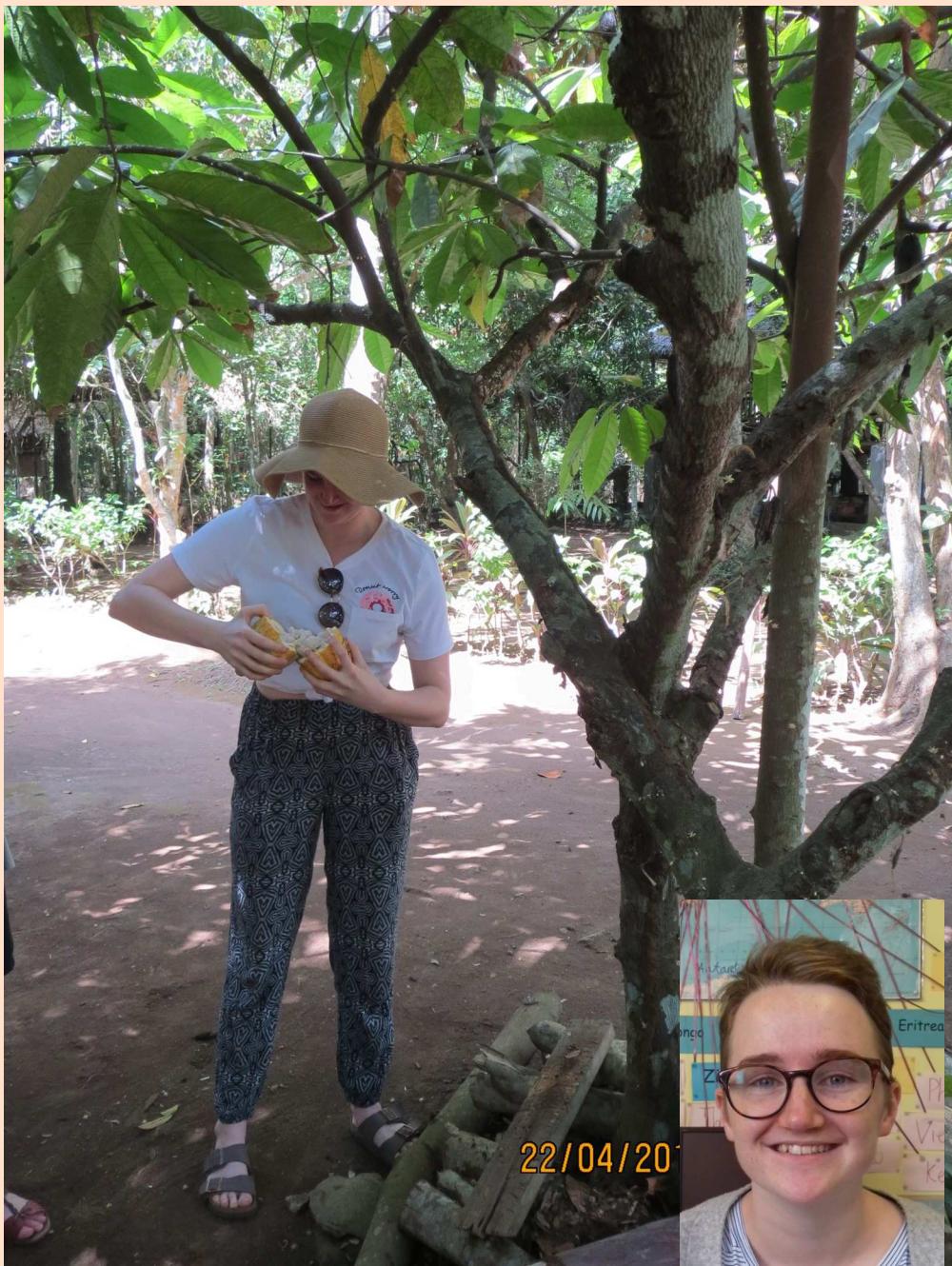
Catherine's Travels

Hello! I'm Catherine, one of the outreach volunteers here at Brushstrokes. I'm coming to the end of a year long volunteer programme with the Columban Missionaries and have absolutely loved the time I've spent at Brushstrokes as part of this year. My year has been full of amazing opportunities to get involved in different projects in and around Birmingham and I've really enjoyed getting to know so many different people.

Over Easter, I was given the opportunity to go to the Philippines to see some of the projects the Columban Missionaries are involved in over there. This experience was the chance for me to experience Easter in a completely different culture to my own (including a 3am Easter Vigil!) Across the Easter weekend I stayed with a family from the church community we were visiting; they didn't speak any English (or I should say, I didn't speak any Tagalog!). It struck me that the experience of living alongside people I couldn't easily communicate with is the reality for so many of the people Brushstrokes supports from all over the world, and in my very short experience of that, I gained a whole new appreciation of what a challenge that must be!

One of the projects I visited was focused on educating people about climate change and the need to care for our common home. Here's a picture of me cracking open a cacao pod... another new experience for me!

Thank you for all you do for us at Brushstrokes, Catherine.



A wonderful Happy Birthday to friend of Brushstrokes, Tomasz, who was presented with a cake by Sija, and then 'serenaded' by the staff team.



Sweet Success for Henna

Well done to Brushstrokes' Resource Volunteer Helper and 2018 Sandwell Young Volunteer of the Year, Henna, who has secured part time employment at Sweetlife Desserts in Birmingham.

Henna says, 'I am really enjoying my work and want to give a big thank you to Brushstrokes which has helped me to build my self-confidence.'

We all wish Henna, who will also return to her Health and Social Care study course in September, every success.



Brushstrokes Volunteer ESOL Teacher — Sonia Stranger

Here is an extract of Sonia's wonderful message delivered to the Brushstrokes AGM in May 2019.



I have been a volunteer ESOL teacher/assistant with Brushstrokes since January 2018. When I arrived at Brushstrokes I had two ideas: to help, and to train to be an ESOL teacher. When I first mentioned to my friend and neighbour, Leonie, one November morning on our way to playgroup that I wanted to retrain to be an ESOL teacher she immediately directed me to see Martin, here at Brushstrokes. So, I arranged to pop in for a little chat with Martin. Anyone who knows me and knows Martin will know — that was not a little chat!

So, I told Martin my life story and in turn he directed me to Jane. I had told Martin that I was happy to do anything within Brushstrokes, I just wanted to help. I'd received a lovely welcome from Nigel so I was already sold; I just wanted to work at Brushstrokes. Having never worked in the charity sector before I didn't realise that actually, it was possible for me to help and to be helped. I can safely say that I didn't realise how instrumental Brushstrokes would become to my life both personally and professionally.

Prior to Brushstrokes I had had a career as a casino dealer. This has provided us with many laughs over the time I have been a volunteer here as my future career is set to be so different. On the first day I came to Brushstrokes I had been a stay at home mom for four and a half years. I had been out of the work force and my social life had been limited to other moms and my neighbours. In that time I never felt that I had had time for myself or to rebuild my career.

What I have got out of Brushstrokes?

Hours towards my course — In September 2018 I started a level three course, Access to Education. Part of my time here has been logged as 'placement hours' which will count towards my course. My course mates had to send emails, make phone calls and some of them are still clocking up their hours. I just had to bring in a piece of paper and carry on as I was before. I feel as though 30 hours is nothing when it comes to experience so I feel very grateful that I have been able to clock up many more hours.

A warm welcome — I have been greeted warmly and offered a drink every week. This may seem like nothing to some but when your previous work has involved rarely being made a cup of tea this makes a difference. Also, having a customer service background, I value a warm welcome from years of 'you never get a second chance to make a first impression' training.

Direction — I had no clue how to channel my desire to help. Martin not only directed me to Jane but also only signed me up for 1.5 hours commitment per week. At the time, this was a big step for me having not had any outside house commitments for 4.5 years. It eased me back very gently into the outside world

Hands on experience — Nothing can substitute the value of being in a classroom when training to be a teacher. What a classroom I got! Jane welcomed me into a class and so did the learners. Being in a class with the very people I hope to teach has motivated me no end. Every week, I just wanted to do my best for them. My college work had a notable insight which not all my classmates had. It has given me a unique chance to get to know the learners and understand the issues that they are dealing with. I remember feeling nervous because my dealings with the public in a work capacity had been limited to casinos and cruise ships. A friend advised me, 'they are just people': so very true but I wouldn't have known that had I not been in the classroom with them.

Scary experiences — Jane has an ability to challenge me without overburdening me. She has taught me the value of planning by getting me to deliver an activity without any! She has allowed me to take on tasks and then given me very useful feedback. Jane has valued my opinions and helped me feel confident that I have chosen the right path. Jane has been my biggest cheerleader and made me believe in myself.

Sense of self — When I came to Brushstrokes for an hour and a half a week, I was valued, listened to and my opinion mattered. This was the first crucial stepping stone to me finding myself again and redefining myself as Sonia, not Mommy, Love, or Bab.

A firm foundation — I feel that being at Brushstrokes provides me with a very solid foundation to go on to achieve all my future goals.

How brushstrokes has helped in my future goals

Today, I handed in my last piece of work for my course. In September I will be going on to do the 'Diploma in Education and Training'. In the future I hope to continue on to an ESOL specialism and be a fully qualified ESOL teacher. Without Brushstrokes I wouldn't be so sure of my future plans and I wouldn't feel so supported or confident. I am excited to take on more teaching at Brushstrokes in September because I know that it will help me grow in ways that I haven't even imagined yet.

On the 5th July 2019 I collected my certificate for completing my Access to Education course at Halesowen college. I started the course in September 2018.

It is thanks to Brushstrokes and more specifically, Jane, that I have been so successful this academic year. I have been volunteering as an ESOL teacher and assistant since January 2018. This has given me the opportunity to shadow experienced teachers, deliver activities and whole classes. I have been encouraged and supported by Jane and the whole of the Brushstrokes team. My belief in myself and confidence in my own professionalism has soared and I feel as though this is largely due to the time I have spent at Brushstrokes. In September 2019 I have been accepted onto a Diploma in Education and Training (DET) again at Halesowen College. This is an intense course which is going to put my academic and teaching abilities to the test of their absolute limits. However, I am looking forward to this next step and challenge in my journey to become a qualified ESOL teacher. I am also looking forward to continuing my volunteering at Brushstrokes this year taking responsibility for my own class. I would just like to express my gratitude to Jane and all the Brushstrokes team because without them I really wouldn't be where I am today.

Sonia is without doubt one of the loveliest and most diligent of people you would ever meet and we wish her every success in her new teaching career. Thank you for all your hard work at Brushstrokes.



A huge Thank You to student placements, Wiktoria and Fatima, both aged 15, who spent the best part of a week with us in mid-July. The young ladies were charming and very hard working. Here they write about themselves and their time at Brushstrokes:

I'm Wiktoria, from St. Paul's School for Girls, and I'm doing work experience at Brushstrokes. I'm hoping to develop and build on skills that will be useful to me in the future. These include: communication skills, organisation skills, and many others. During my time here at Brushstrokes I carried out a variety of different jobs which will hopefully give me an insight into adult life. I am very grateful for this opportunity as I know that I will learn and take away a lot from this experience. The week was very enjoyable and beneficial to me.



Hello, my name is Fatima and I go to Hillcrest School; I am currently in Year 10. I was inspired to do work experience here because my mum used to come and learn English. I like helping people and enjoy working with the staff.

Brushstrokes is a very friendly environment to be in and the staff give great care to me and other volunteers. What I had hoped to do at Brushstrokes was to help people learn English and to make them feel safe. The best thing was helping in the café because I was serving food for the people as well as seeing new faces... and there were many volunteers helping out; on the other hand it was tiring!

Pictured are Fatima and Wiktoria. Well done, girls!

Dear Martin McNally,

Thank you for allowing me to spend a week at Brushstrokes. I enjoyed working in brushstrokes with many of the wonderful staff. I found it really useful to be in a real workplace, the most important thing I learnt was helping by preparing clothes and food for the clients. This will help me prepare for the world of work by making the clients feel happy and caring for them. The placement also helped me to realise that I have good skills in distributing food to service users and that I can do more to develop my skills in picking up calls and communicating with people. Thank you so much for taking the time to organise my placement and caring so much for me especially showing me around on my first day.

Yours sincerely,
Fatima Akbari



After being here for more than 18 years
Brushstrokes Community Project
has finally outgrown its current premises at
St Philip's Parish Centre and is relocating to:

**253 High Street
Smethwick, B66 3NJ**



Our telephone number remains the same:

0121 565 2234

Email: **info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk**

We will be fully open from Monday 2nd September 2019

Removing to a different location is never an easy task. We wish to thank all the kind people who have provided their time or finances to assist us in this process. Thank you to all Brushstrokes management committee members, staff and volunteers, plus our kind friends at Barratt Homes, Halesowen, Central England Co-operative Limited, Cox's Crane Hire, and partners: Father Hudson's Care, The Parish Church of St Philip Neri, The Infant Jesus Sisters and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.



LEFT: A fond farewell to Danyal, our Aston University student placement volunteer, who has been helping us to enter data into our recording systems. Danyal has been a true star and we will miss his quiet, unassuming efficiency. Best wishes from all at Brushstrokes including (pictured) Fatmire, Hawar, Jas, Jane (Danyal), Sija and Carol.



RIGHT: Another sad goodbye was in order for Sister Hortense from the Sisters of the Good Shepherd whose placement here came to an end. Hortense has been an amazingly committed volunteer with our Resources and ESOL teaching departments and has amazed us all with her tirelessness and cheerful sense of industry. We wish Sister Hortense every blessing on the next stage of her journey. Together with Hortense are some members of the Brushstrokes team including (left to right) Sija, Hawar, Fatmire, Nigel, Lorraine, Christy, (Hortense), Harriet, Jane and Martin. Sister Hortense kindly wrote to us: '*Dear colleagues, I am very touched by your gesture yesterday, thank you so much everyone. I am grateful especially to you managers for having accepted me as a volunteer at Brushstrokes. I received so many benefits including free English classes (thanks to all the teachers). The opportunities to meet people who come from different countries were really rich for me because I could see the different cultures and religions of each country. The flexibility and skills of Brushstrokes touched me a lot; you have special talents to welcome everyone without exception. If you still have questions to ask me, I am at your disposal. Best wishes, good luck and continuation for all the projects!*

Hortense



Wedding Celebrations for a lovely couple!
Warmest congratulations to Brushstrokes' Resources Coordinator, Lucy, who got married on Monday 5th August to Simon on the beautiful island of Crete. We wish the new Mr and Mrs Clark every success on their journey through life together.



This photo marks the end of an era whereby the familiar green Brushstrokes' container was removed from the St Philip's Parish Centre car park and relocated to its new home in the High Street. The container will be used to store tinned and dried foods prior to distribution to individuals and families. Many thanks to Lee and Paul of Cox's Cranes, Oldbury, for a highly efficient and safe transfer operation. Upon learning that Brushstrokes is a charity, Julian, the manager of Cox's stated that he would carry out this removal job for free. We cannot thank Cox's enough for their kindness in this matter and would wholeheartedly endorse their service to others.

**Cox G (Oldbury) Ltd
146 Dudley Rd East,
Oldbury
B69 3EB
0121 552 4413**





Brushstrokes ESOL teaching volunteer, Vivien Heenan, was recently presented with a Valued Volunteer Award from Sandwell Volunteer Centre.

Vivien has been a volunteer at Brushstrokes

for over fourteen years. She is pictured here with Hawar Amin (left) who was one of her first students in 2005. Hawar now works at Brushstrokes as an adviser.

Thank you to all our valuable volunteers whose generosity of time benefits all at Brushstrokes. Well done Vivien!

Newsletter
Dear Friends,
should you no longer wish to receive this newsletter please let us know by email and your contact details will immediately be removed from our mailing list.

Thank you for all your support.



Many congratulations to Lucy, Brushstrokes Resource Coordinator, for passing her Emergency First Aid at Work certificate.

What's on at Brushstrokes 2019

Monday

Advice and Information: 0900 — 1200 drop-in.
Resources distribution (appointments only).
ESOL/IELTS classes.

Tuesday

Food distribution (1200 — 1500).
ESOL classes.
Beginners IT class (1500 — 1650).

Wednesday

Advice and Information: 0900 — 1200 drop-in.
Work Club 1500 — 1700 (appointments only).
Resources distribution (appointments only).

ESOL/IELTS/Life in the UK classes.

Thursday

Food distribution (1200 — 1500).
ESOL/IELTS classes.

Friday

Immigration drop in service (0900 — 1100).
Knit and Natter (10.00 — 12.00).
Community Café (1200 — 1400).
EU Settlement Scheme Clinic (090 — 1200)
Resources distribution (appointments only).

Contact us:

Brushstrokes Community Project
253 High Street,
Smethwick,
B66 3NJ

Phone: 0121 565 2234
E-mail: info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk
Website: www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk

Brushstrokes receives support from:



Charity no. 512992

Parish of St Philip Neri

TESCO
FareShare FoodCloud

FareShare powered by foodcloud
Fighting hunger, tackling food waste



ESB



REFUGEE ACTION



LOTTERY FUNDED



INFANT
JESUS
SISTERS



Charity
no.
234216



Sisters of
the Good
Shepherd

