

# Brushstrokes Messenger



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

March  
2021



Written on Friday 19th March  
by a super-excited Lucy Clark

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic I have been nagging the management team for a van to help with collection and deliveries.

Last month I was invited by Kelly Stackhouse to speak at a Business in the Community Community Conversation, organised in association with Midland Metro Alliance and Transport for West Midlands. I talked about the work of Brushstrokes and the need we had for a van to help not only our project, but the other projects overseen by

Father Hudson's Care. This week I received a call from Tom Bissell of MMA to say that an anonymous donor would like to GIVE US A VAN!!!

Today it has arrived, with all the documentation sorted out quickly by Jo and Noel at FHC. I cannot begin to describe the difference that this van will make to us. From bulk food order collection, big food delivery rounds and the collection and delivering of household items for our clients, this van will certainly be changing my life, and helping to improve the lives of many others.

So to the anonymous donor. Thank you. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your generosity. I hope you realise how excited I have been, and how appreciated you are

Now I just need to practise driving it...

Lucy Clark  
Resources Coordinator

This is such wonderful news and will make such a difference to our work with the community!! We will be able to use it for food and resources collections/deliveries in community projects, but also for collections of donated furniture for our homeless accommodation.

Jo Watters  
Head of Community Projects  
FHC



**Raghul elated at saving £2,500 in Home Office fees after a successful fee waiver application**



Thank you to  
Salman Mirza  
Brushstrokes  
Immigration  
Adviser



Congratulations to Brushstrokes Housing Mentor Volunteer Petelo (*above*) for recently gaining his Masters in Management and Finance from Birmingham City University.



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Apply at [gov.uk/EUSettlementScheme](http://gov.uk/EUSettlementScheme). or contact Brushstrokes on 0121 565 2234 or [info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk](mailto:info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk).

# GENERATION



Immigration Adviser, Salman (*below right*), continues in his free time to repair and give out bicycles to people in need. He says, 'Bikes are a lifeline to people who want to travel locally and for minimum cost.'

Brushstrokes adviser Lukano Omunson writes, 'My client [*above centre*] received a bicycle from Salman. He was stunned and couldn't believe what he was being given. He was lost for words with which to thank Brushstrokes.'

He said, "I don't know what to say right now... I felt quite depressed, but now with this bicycle, I can cycle to the shop, market and park to help with my mental health. As we don't have enough money for our upkeep and survival, I will use the bike for cycling to Brushstrokes to pick up our weekly food resources."

Thank you Brushstrokes so much for donating to me this bicycle. It means so much to me and my family."



## 10,000 PUSH-UPS!

By Brushstrokes Volunteer Coordinator Martin McNally

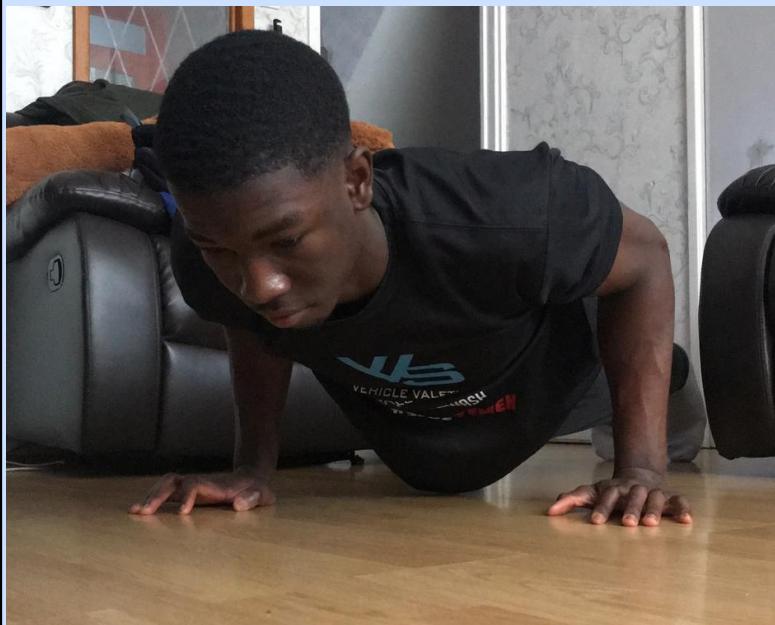
A massive Thank You to Okechukwu Achusiogu who has offered to complete 10,000 push-ups over the month of March in order to raise funds for Brushstrokes. He has seen the wonderful work that Brushstrokes does and the urgent help they give to those in great need in the community. In response he has made an Instagram link video so that everyone can follow his efforts and make a donation.

### How Will He Do It?

Having returned to King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys Okechukwu states "I will be taking some important exams and will do batches of 25 push-ups at a time in-between revision." Okechukwu will also be talking about his fund raising efforts at morning assembly to the whole school.

Please encourage his efforts and subscribe to his Instagram page:  
[www.instagram.com/p/CL2XrG5n1i0/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CL2XrG5n1i0/)

Good Luck Okechukwu!



**KING EDWARD VI  
CAMP HILL  
SCHOOL FOR BOYS**



### Advice Service Update

by Giulia Pizzolini, Brushstrokes Advice Services Manager

During February and March our very committed volunteer Arub has been providing essential telephone advice support to clients. She has provided triage and first consultations over the phone to support advisers dealing with an increasing number of queries on housing,

the EU Settlement Scheme and accessing financial support, and has been doing it very respectfully, thoroughly and methodically. Arub told us "I have thoroughly enjoyed working at Brushstrokes. It feels incredibly rewarding to be able to contact people and help them with their needs. I have had several clients who have expressed gratitude towards me for my work with them. There is no better feeling!" One of the service users she spoke with texted us her feedback, "Thank you for your help and support; also the lady whom I talked with earlier was a very kind and lovely person". We are very proud to have her in our team, embodying our values and supporting on the frontline!

Listening to the radio one day I heard a representative of the Special Olympics — the world's largest sports organisation for children and adults with intellectual disabilities and physical disabilities — mention the oath that all Special Olympians take at the beginning of the games. It moved me tremendously and so I researched the phrase: 'Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt'.

The oath was first recited at the start of the very first Special Olympics in Chicago in 1968 by the founder, Eunice Kennedy Shriver — an advocate for people with disabilities. She later wrote that the words originated in ancient Rome when gladiators entering the arena would declare this commitment to their personal gods.

Initially the link between fearsome gladiators and Special athletes may seem tenuous. However both require immense faith and courage to take part in their chosen fields of combat. Likewise, we can all learn something from them about facing with bravery the obstacles which may hold us back from fulfilling our true potential. Too often we allow ourselves to be funnelled into the settled security of a comfortable existence, whilst conveniently quenching the once-passionate drive to overcome challenges or achieve our dreams. As someone once said, 'Is life happening to us? Or for us?'

It is never easy to move away from the familiar and the secure, but we can all do it to some degree. We may not all win, but we will each have been brave. What other way is there to truly live? NC

*'What would life be if we had no courage to attempt anything?' — Vincent Van Gogh*



March ushered in two special dates for Patron Saints of the British Isles — David (Wales) and Patrick (Ireland). Let's take a brief look at two notable characters in the Christian calendar.

St David's Day or *Dydd Gŵyl Dewi Sant* (Welsh) falls on 1st March every year.

Did you know...?

- David was the grandson of the King of Ceredigion.
- He was born in the year 500 on a Pembrokeshire clifftop in the middle of a fierce storm.
- He was an eloquent preacher and reputedly made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
- David and his monks lived an austere life, living off only bread, salt, leeks and water.
- A famous miracle took place when people at the back of a crowd in Llanddewi Brefi complained that they could not hear him preach. Suddenly the ground rose to become a hill so that all could see and hear him and a white dove sent by God settled on David's shoulder.
- David died in 589 on the 1st March. His final words to his followers were, 'Be joyful, keep the faith, and do the little things that you have heard and seen me do.' The phrase 'Gwnewch y pethau bychain mewn bywyd' - 'Do the little things in life' - is still a well-known maxim in Wales.
- David was buried at St David's Cathedral at St Davids, Pembrokeshire, where his shrine was a popular place of pilgrimage throughout the Middle Ages.



Wednesday 17th March 2021 is the date dedicated to St Patrick, the Patron Saint of Ireland.

Did you know...?

- Saint Patrick was born "Maewyn Succat" but changed his name to "Patricius" after becoming a priest.
- Despite his Irish notoriety, Saint Patrick was British. He was probably born to Roman parents in Scotland or Wales in the late fourth century.
- St. Patrick was kidnapped by pirates at the age of 16 and taken to Ireland where he was a slave shepherd.
- According to Irish legend, Saint Patrick used the shamrock as a metaphor for the Holy Trinity when he was first introducing Christianity to Ireland.
- Saint Patrick is credited for driving the snakes out of Ireland, but according to the fossil record, Ireland has never been home to snakes as it was too cold to host reptiles during the Ice Age. The surrounding seas have kept snakes out since. However he did drive out metaphorical snakes — symbolic serpents representing evil in Christianity.
- It is unlikely that Patrick ever wore green. Much more probable is that he wore blue cloth.
- Patrick died on 17th March in around 461. He is thought to be buried at Down Cathedral, Downpatrick, Northern Ireland.

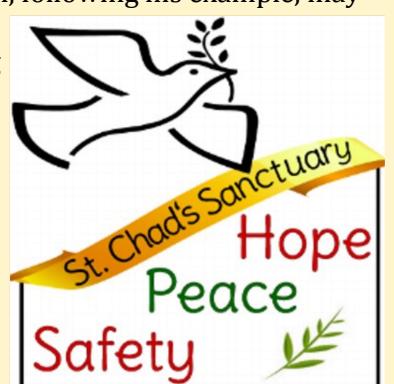


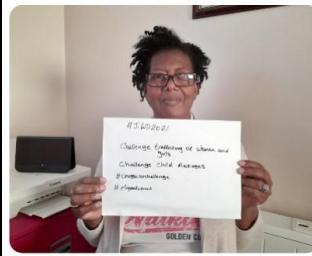
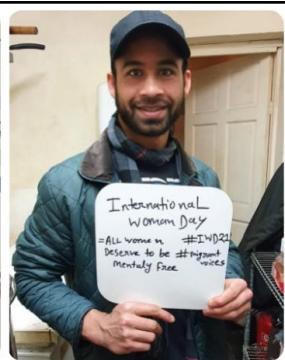
Taken from St. Chad's Sanctuary Bulletin — 19th March 2021

*St. Chad's Sanctuary, Birmingham is a sister organisation of Brushstrokes Community Project, both being established by Margaret Walsh IJS (Infant Jesus Sisters)*

Today is the feast day of St Joseph, foster father of Jesus and husband of Mary. This year has also been dedicated by Pope Francis as the Year of St Joseph so that "every member of the faithful, following his example, may strengthen their life of faith daily in the complete fulfilment of God's will." Speaking to student priests this week, Pope Francis urged them to follow the example of St Joseph by being a welcoming presence, offering discretion and humility. I

I believe this is not just good advice to student priests but to all of us, and we have the best of opportunities here at the Sanctuary to offer welcome whilst being mindful to maintain the dignity of our visitors and remember that we are here to serve.





As an immigrant Doctor who trained and has practiced outside the UK, integrating into the UK system and getting registered with the General Medical Council (GMC) is a long road that begins with a proof of English proficiency which is passing the IELTS Academic exam — a task many consider as daunting.

Registering with Brushstrokes was an amazing and a very smart move because an experienced tutor was available to guide me and others, not just on improving our written and spoken English but also on revealing good strategies to apply when writing this exam. I had interesting tasks that improved my imaginative power, creativity and as well helped me coordinate and harness my mental ability to maintain that complex relationship between my brain and hands while in the hot seat of writing the examination.

Despite the lockdowns, the Zoom App was put to maximum use to ensure that the lessons were achieved. It has been an amazing journey for me and I can now confidently move on to the next level of sitting the main medical examinations so that I get my license to practise as a medical doctor in the UK.

Brushstrokes is now an important part of my life and I will forever be in partnership with this great organization and its project. I am eternally grateful.

Dr. Funom Theophilus Makama



Many thanks to Esther and the lovely people of the Seventh Day Adventist church who meet at Wordsley Methodist Church for their kind donation of food for us to give out. Esther's congregation carried out community fundraising and was then led to deliver the proceeds to Brushstrokes. This food will be very warmly welcomed by those in need across our borough and we are very grateful to the church for their generosity. During her short visit to the centre Esther took great interest in our work and we hope that a lasting friendship may develop between our groups.

**Supported by**



## **Building Society**

A new project — 'Safe and Secure in Sandwell' will be offering housing advice and information for new communities starting this month.

This new project, funded by Nationwide for the next two years, will provide housing information and advice to individuals from new communities in Sandwell and Birmingham. The project will work with community groups to increase understanding of housing rights and responsibilities and helping people feel more confident to take action on housing issues before they reach crisis point. Specialist housing advice will be available at Brushstrokes to help prevent homelessness and to support individuals to sustain tenancies. We will be recruiting and training a small team of peer housing mentors from new communities who will help deliver the project and raise awareness of housing rights in their communities. Hawar Amin will be leading on this project. If you are aware of individuals from new communities who require housing advice please refer via [info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk](mailto:info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk) or encourage them to call us on 0121 565 2234 .

Dave Newall  
Project Manager  
Brushstrokes Community Project  
Strengthening and supporting refugees and migrants  
across Sandwell, West Birmingham and beyond

— continued from page 4

Back in December we started to support K, the mother of a 7 year-old child, who had been victim of domestic violence. She was provided with shelter by Sandwell Children's Services who then referred her to Brushstrokes for specialist support. Thanks to the intensive work of our resources, and immigration teams and a welfare benefits specialist we supported her and her child through a difficult transition, ensuring they had the basis to start a new safer life. K is medically vulnerable and shielding and is not in a position to be able to provide for herself and her son. Our resource team supported her by providing weekly food parcels. In addition, we made an application to the Home Office to enable her to access public funds, which was successful, then made the relevant benefits applications for her. As benefits take several weeks to be put in place, to ensure they wouldn't become destitute in the meantime we have also obtained emergency funding from the British Red Cross, thanks to a new partnership we created to address financial difficulties related to the Covid19 pandemic. In March, K and her child were offered longer term accommodation and we supported them to set up their home with donated furniture. She is very grateful to Brushstrokes.

Giulia Pizzolini

### Brushstrokes to brush strokes

Dear Friends, it is with some sadness I report that after four and a half years of service my contract as Centre Coordinator at Brushstrokes Community Project is ending. Thank you to Dave, our Project Manager, for extending my time here and my sincere thanks to everyone that has contributed to this very enjoyable part of my working life. I am certain that the Brushstrokes Messenger will continue, under new editorial energies, to reflect the amazing work of the staff and volunteers here as well as to express our deep gratitude to partners and supporters. I will be moving into a new role as a self employed painter and decorator and will, of course, be offering a special 'Brushstrokes' discount :)

Best wishes to everyone. Stay safe and happy.

Nigel Chandra



### Contact us:

Brushstrokes Community Project

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Smethwick,  
B66 3NJ

Phone: 0121 565 2234

E-mail: [info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk](mailto:info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk)

Website: [www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk](http://www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk)

### Brushstrokes receives support from:



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