



Brushstrokes

Community Project

December 2022

"This Christmas Season, do not be afraid and never give up hope"

It's the most wonderful time of the year, as we anticipate and look forward to Christmas. A time to get the decorations up, listen to carols, get together with family and friends and enjoy the season. But maybe there are many among us who are not feeling very wonderful. What if there is more to this season? Something that goes a lot deeper and is especially meant for those of us who are struggling?

Most of us are familiar with the Christmas story - Mary, Joseph, the Christ Child being born in a manger, the shepherds, the magi etc. Perhaps there is more if we look deeper? The Christmas story starts nine months previously in a small village called Nazareth, where the virgin Mary is visited by an angel from God, asking her whether she would bear the Son of God, Jesus. Quite a frightening proposition for an ordinary young girl, who had just been betrothed to marry. But the very first words of the angel were, "Do not be afraid...". Her husband Joseph, who was also troubled by her unexpected pregnancy, had a similar message from an angel in a dream, exhorting him, "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife...".

It is one thing to receive a heavenly visitation, quite another when faced with the reality of one's situation. No doubt they must have had to endure much gossip and slandering by their neighbours. We also read how this young couple had to make the arduous journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem due to orders from the authorities, with Mary heavily pregnant. It would have taken them more than a week to cover the distance. In all this, they must have clung to the words of the angel - "Do not be afraid". Even more was to follow. We can imagine Joseph worrying and desperately trying to provide a safe space for Mary to deliver her child - "Do not be afraid". Mary delivering her baby in a stable far away from home - "Do not be afraid".

The words 'do not be afraid' are intertwined with the Christmas story. We all know how this story ends with a tiny baby being welcomed into our world, into a loving family. What joy his parents must have felt to see his beautiful face. And indeed, this baby would be a blessing to all of humanity. God always comes through in the end and he will provide; he only asks us to trust and persevere. So, whatever you might be going through this Christmas season, do not be afraid and never give up on hope. Let us also never be afraid to reach out to our brothers and sisters in need and help build a civilisation of love.

*Wishing you a Blessed
Christmas and Happy
New Year 2023!*



Image from *The Nativity Story* (2006) Catherine Hardwicke.

California: New Line Cinema

CHRISTMAS REFLECTION BY : NEIL PEIXOTO & OLIVER PATTON
(SEMINARIAN STUDENTS FROM ST. MARY'S COLLEGE,
BIRMINGHAM)

MERRY CHRISTMAS



Christmas Gifts Party

A great time was enjoyed at Brushstrokes during our Christmas present distribution festivities. Numerous families, including an abundance of excited children, arrived during the three allocated slots. They were treated to festive snacks, drinks and music, as they keenly awaited their special visit to Father Christmas. As our photos show, there were lots of smiley faces and this would not have at all been possible without all areas of Brushstrokes pulling together. A great amount of donations were received from the wider Brushstrokes community; staff and volunteers dedicated hours to present wrapping and gave up their weekend at this busy time of the year to ensure that our families had a wonderful and present-filled Christmas! Thanks to everyone for their help! Feliz navidad! Joyeux Noël! Wesolych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia!



Welcome to the team

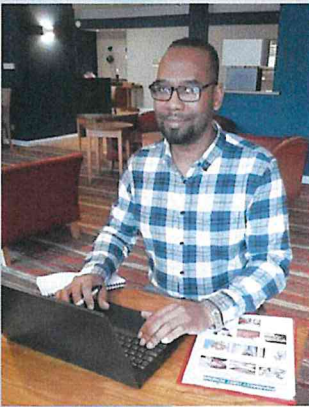


Team Brushstrokes!

Our EUSS worker has qualified at OISC level 1 or giving immigration advice last month Camiquea first came to Brushstrokes as an asylum guide and has been involved in various community campaigns securing refugees leave to remain. "Camiquea is one of the most driven advisors I have had the privilege to work with, not a stone is unturned when she has assisted EU citizens here in Sandwell" Salman Mirza Immigration advisor



Hello, my name is Parveen Khan. I am a Refugee Advice worker at Brushstrokes, I am working on Three projects (RTOF, ARAP and Homes for Ukraine). My role is to provide support to the Refugees in the local community. Thank you all for the warm welcome, I am thrilled to be a part of such a friendly and supportive Team, and I really appreciate the opportunity to work with Brushstrokes.



My name is Mansour, I am an Inclusion Health Advisor with Brushstrokes. My role is supporting Refugees, Asylum Seekers and also the local community to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing. Some of my duties are helping them to register with GP; encouraging them to have TB & Viral Screening and Covid and Flu Vaccination; raising awareness about how the health system works in the UK and the Pharmacy 1st Scheme, and also raising awareness about how to keep your mental health positive and cope with difficult situation.

I am so glad with this role and so proud of being a member of Brushstrokes family.

On behalf of the staff and management, we would like to welcome you all to the team. We are delighted and excited about working as a team, it's great to have you all with us. Warmest Welcome!



My name is Alycia Deacon I am a new Advisor at Brushstrokes. I currently work doing outreach delivering Advice at West Plaza hotel in West Bromwich two times a week to Asylum seekers. Since coming to Brushstrokes I have met so many people and have been impressed with how friendly and welcoming everyone is. I have had the opportunity to shadow a few other Advisors when I started and this really benefited me because it led me to have a better understanding of all the wonderful things happening at Brushstrokes which I feed back to the clients I work with.



Assayed Dawood
Health & Inclusion Advice worker

We are delighted to have Assayed as a Health & Inclusion Advice Worker joining our staff team. On behalf of all the members and the management, we would like to extend our warmest welcome and good wishes!





Successful Outcomes for Afghan Families

3 Afghan families moved into their new accommodation this week.

One of the largest family of 10 has moved into their new accommodation yesterday and I assisted them.

We provided a bike to one of the Afghan client see the message please Some lovely words from Ezatullah after receiving his bike from the Brushspokes Bike Project: 'Without the bike it was really difficult for me to get to my work in Oldbury. This bike is very helpful to get me to work on time. It takes tooooooo long on the bus. The journey now just takes 15 minutes. I'm very grateful to Brushstrokes and your support.'" Brushstrokes staff member, Nasratullah added: 'I'm thrilled that my client has received a bike. It's great to see him progressing and getting involved with courses and work. I have attached his photo as well he's happy for us to use it on social media.

Me and Mansour also got 14 or 15 free gym membership for our clients.



Hello all! Our service user, Oday, is eager to play football to benefit his physical and mental health. However, he doesn't have any trainers suitable for playing on astroturf. If anyone out there has a spare pair (size 7 or ☺ we'd love to be able to provide Oday with these. Please get in touch with Bryan on 07827 258 680 if you can help!



*Brushstrokes
appreciations*

Malissa Parchment, I want to Thank Brushstrokes whole heartedly for supporting me with my Change of Condition Application. I suffered for more than 8 months without support, but when I entered Brushstrokes my life and the life of my children changed significantly when my change of conditions Application considered I was able to access public funds. THANK YOU, BRUSHSTROKES.

General Volunteer Meeting



On 23rd November we held our General Volunteer meeting. This was well attended and volunteers were able to meet up and discuss any updates, training opportunities and share success stories. This was also an opportunity for volunteers to meet with other volunteers who they would not normally see. Volunteers were also meeting their volunteer representative, Helen Nethaway. Thank you to all the volunteers who attended and assisted with the future planning of Christmas events.

(Martin McNally Volunteer Coordinator)

Women's Group



In our latest women's group sessions, the ladies have been getting stuck into several craft sessions. We have found that these types of activities have really appealed to our female service users who see this as an opportunity to be creative and also chat about a range of issues. Representatives of Public Health have also attended and led conversations with the women about the importance of looking after one's mental health and how interactive sessions such as ours are a great avenue to do this. Some of our service users have really blossomed during the past weeks which has been very heartening, and they are assuming more responsibilities with the running of the sessions. In a particular session, which was festive-themed, we made greeting cards and gift bags using a range of materials provided by Brushstrokes. One of the participants commented: 'I really look forward to attending the women's group each week. It is something for me to look forward to and it really makes me happy as it makes me get out from my house. I'm really delighted to be part of the group.'

ORIENTATION



November saw us host another successful Orientation event at Brushstrokes. This session, which has been appealing to an increasing number of service users, is particularly aimed at asylum seekers who are new to the area. As an organisation we are supporting several asylum seekers in contingency hotels in West Bromwich, so it was good to see them in attendance. The fact that so many agencies and organisations are willing to participate in this session is really heartening and certainly shows how the community is coming together to support those who are new to the community. This session saw representation from Migrant Help, SERCO, the Police, Sandwell Family and Adult Learning, Code Your Future, Citizens Advice, Dorothy Parkes Community Centre to name but a few.



Nature walk at Moseley Bog with Spectra

Our walk in Moseley Bog with arts organisation, Spectra, was a wonderful wild wander, with lots of conversation about plants, trees and nature. Alongside Hayley and Joe from Spectra, Brushstrokes service users and staff discussed the names of the native trees that we passed, and looked at and touched their leaves, noticing their shape and texture. We learned about oak, hazel (and why it is coppiced), holly, beech, and birch trees. We discussed the names of the plants in different languages and what the plants were used for in each person's culture. We particularly looked closely at the impressive silver birch bark and found some interesting fungi and patterns on the trees. It was interesting to learn about moss from our Ethiopian service user, Anania, who said that in his home country, it is dried and used as incense, and it smells really good! We even found time to talk about Jo's passion for J.R.R. Tolkien's literature, which is said to have been inspired by Moseley Bog. At the end, we talked about what we had learned during our adventure in the woods. One participant said she had learned how to identify the beech tree, which she was happy about, and one said he'd learned about the different berries on the ivy bush. We'd love to go back again with Spectra, perhaps in warmer spring weather, and see the woodland in bloom!



FILM EVENING



**FREE
EVENT!**

RATING

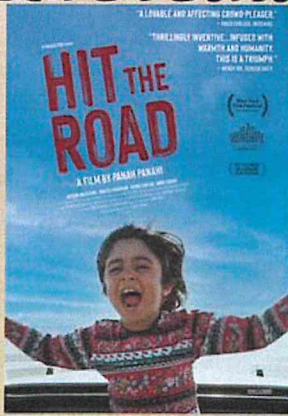
12A

1 HOUR

33 MINS

FOOD

INCLUDED



**253 HIGH
STREET,
SMETHWICK,
B66 3NJ**

the guardian

★★★★★

**FARSI
WITH
ENGLISH
SUBTITLES**

**FRIDAY 2ND DECEMBER
6PM**

Hit the Road is a 2021 Iranian road comedy-drama film written & directed by Panah Panahi. It depicts an Iranian family driving to the Turkish border to smuggle their young adult son out of the country.

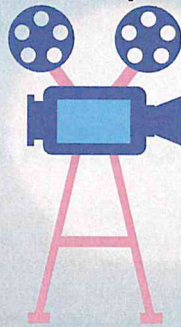
'A funny, tragic, moving and a near-perfect debut movie'

Refinery29



FILM EVENING

Our service users and the wider public have been providing us with bountiful amounts of positive feedback about the film evenings that we've been hosting at Brushstrokes in conjunction with Black Country Touring. Touching on themes that resonate with our service users and our local community, we recently showed *The Women of 10 Downing Street*, about the inspirational fight for worker's rights in Smnethwick. Indian women were at the forefront of this challenge, and they certainly inspired those who were in attendance. Next up was an Iranian film, *Hit the Road*, about a family's journey through their homeland to Turkey. As is the case for so many families in Iran, this journey was sparked by a need to flee from Iran. Our Iranian service user, Nader, gave us an insightful view into Iranian films and the challenges that filmmakers face when tackling certain subject areas. The director of the film, Panah Panahi comes from a family of politically active filmmakers. We look forward to showing more films and casting a light on the many cultures and countries represented at Brushstrokes.



Men's Group!



Recent sessions at Brushstrokes' men's group have been dedicated to cycle maintenance classes on Mondays 4-6pm. We're collaborating with Cycle Confident who linked us up with Gavin, a great local qualified mechanic. Gavin has been teaching us several valuable skills covering many aspects of bike maintenance. In our first session we learnt how to conduct an 'M' check which is a thorough way to diagnose any problems that a bike is suffering from. Other important skills that we have learnt include how to fix punctures, different areas of how to look after and replace chains, and different types of brakes. Members of the men's group who have previously been keenly involved in different areas of our bike project, such as our led rides and cycle classes, had expressed that learning maintenance skills was something that they wanted to develop. Their involvement and commitment has been commendable – they turn up early to help set up for the sessions, collaborate brilliantly together to fix the various bikes we are fixing and always have lots of energy. The environment of these sessions is conducive for participants to chat about an array of issues and areas of their life away from men's group. The tea and coffee is always flowing and even though Gavin is only scheduled to be with us for two hours per session, we often lose sense of time as we are so engrossed in our bike fixing tasks.

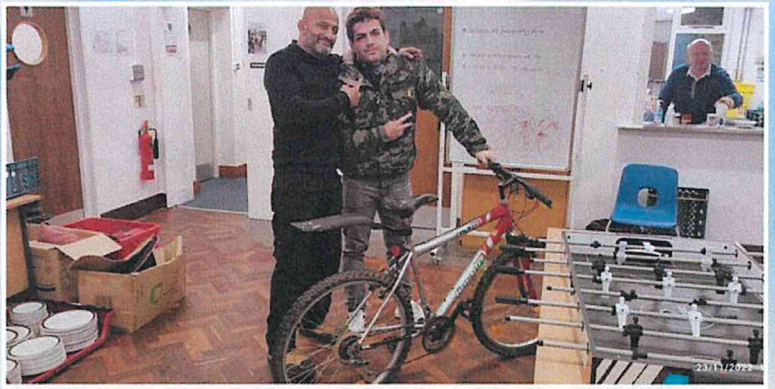


Iran comes to brushstrokes

The cycle maintenance course has been going from strength to strength and people are transferring their new found knowledge to the bike zone!

We encourage people to come socialise have fun and be part of building and fixing the bikes we get donated to us.

The latest person to come along was a young wrestler from Iran! They may have lost 6, 2 against England in the world cup but they dominate the world in wrestling



"Thank you for having me it was a very useful and informative training session by the experts."
Meena Bibi, bike leader Saathi House



Down at the Games Zone this evening, Rachel kindly dropped off a couple of lovely bikes. Straight away, we found homes for them, so keep an eye out for these gents as they whizz around Smethwick. A big thank you to Rachel and everyone who supports the Brushspokes bike project, including Steve whose bike fixing skills are proving priceless.

Some lovely words from Ezatullah after receiving his bike from the Brushspokes Bike Project: 'Without the bike it was really difficult for me to get to my work in Oldbury. This bike is very helpful to get me to work on time. It takes tooooooo long on the bus. The journey now just takes 15 minutes. I'm very grateful to Brushstrokes and your support.' Brushstrokes staff member, Nasratullah added: 'I'm thrilled that my client has received a bike. It's great to see him progressing and getting involved with courses and



The bike maintenance course is running in December Mondays 4-6 contact Bryan for more details

YES I WHEEL

Brushstrokes
Community Project

Cycle maintenance course
Brushstrokes Smethwick
Mondays 7th to 28th November
4pm to 6pm

cycl
ing
for
everyone

CONTACT BRYAN ON 07827 255 690 FOR MORE INFORMATION
CLASS DATES = 7TH, 14TH, 21ST, 28TH NOVEMBER - 4-6PM

EVERYONE WELCOME
THURSDAY 17TH NOVEMBER
3-5pm

LEARN PAPER CRAFT TECHNIQUES

Craft Session
Thurs 17 Nov at 3pm
at Brushstrokes
High St, Smethwick B66 3NJ

Drop in and take part in
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre's
latest Community Panto Project!

Join us for a fun, easy Craft Session
and make your part of a dazzling display!

Beginners welcome!

Miss it,
miss a lot!

LEARN PAPER CRAFT TECHNIQUES

CRAFT WORKSHOP
DECORATION MAKING

Starting next Monday 4-6pm, Brushstrokes will be teaming up with the organisation, Cycle Confident to offer four cycle maintenance classes for our service users and staff. Through the Brushspokes Bike Project, we've encountered several people who have been forced to stop cycling due to issues that can be remedied with basic knowledge of cycle maintenance - repairing a puncture, checking correct tyre pressure, brakes that need tightening etc. For those with slightly more advanced bike maintenance skills, the mechanic, Gavin, will be able to tailor the course content accordingly.

GameZone Wednesdays from 5pm B663NJ

Broken 😞

FIXED!! 😊

If it goes round We will attempt to fix it. Brushstrokes we don't do lists. But what we do do is crisps (sometimes)

Brushstrokes
Community Project

BLACK COUNTRY TOURING

Film screening The Women of 10 Downing Street
Friday 11 November 6pm
Brushstrokes Smethwick High Street B663NJ

This is the third film that we are showing in partnership with Black Country Touring as part of their programme to encourage the showing of films in community spaces. The inspirational film, The Women of 10 Downing Street, touches on many issues that are unfortunately still very much affecting working life in Smethwick and the country as a whole

Brushstrokes
Community Project

Immigration & Asylum
Drop In Advice
Mondays 9.30 till 12.30
Benson Hub Benson Road
B18 5TD

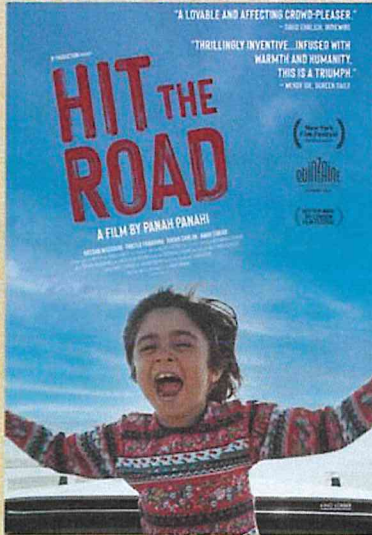
FILM EVENING



**FREE
EVENT!**

**RATING
12A
1 HOUR
33 MINS**

**FOOD
INCLUDED**



**253 HIGH
STREET,
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the guardian



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ENGLISH
SUBTITLES**

**FRIDAY 2ND DECEMBER
6PM**

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'A funny, tragic, moving and a near-perfect debut movie'

Rolling Stone

COME AND EXPLORE MOSELEY BOG

With Spectra Arts Company



Take a mindful and relaxed walk through the beautiful Moseley Bog with Spectra, to learn about the native trees, get to know the woodland, the ponds, the streams, and the wildlife. We'll stop to listen to the sounds of the woods and notice the smell and feel of the trees and leaves.

On Tuesday 29th November 2022

Meet at Brushstrokes at 11am

Please contact Bryan on 07827 258680 or Chra on 07894 406 263 with any enquiries and to confirm attendance.

Wear sturdy shoes and a coat.



INTERNATIONAL MENS DAY November 19

BECAUSE

- 76% OF SUICIDES ARE MEN
- 85% OF HOMELESS ARE MEN
- 70% OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS ARE MEN
- 40% OF DOMESTIC ABUSE VICTIMS ARE MEN
- MEN ARE THE MAJORITY VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME
- MEN ON AVERAGE SERVE 64% LONGER IN PRISON
- MEN ON AVERAGE ARE 3.4X MORE LIKELY TO BE IMPRISONED THAN WOMEN WHEN BOTH COMMITTED THE SAME CRIME

Struggling with your rent?

LET US HELP YOU!

If you're struggling with your rent then we're here to help. Call us on 0121 737 5148 for advice

BECOME AN ASYLUM GUIDE VOLUNTEER

Are you interested in helping Asylum Seekers? Would you like to learn what more can be done to help them? Then you may be the ideal person to become an Asylum Guide Volunteer!!



Why not come along to our Asylum Guide induction on

**Thursday 5th January and Wednesday 11th January
between 10am - 3pm**

Where we can explain how you can play a part in helping those that need some guidance.

(Refreshments will be provided)

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ATTEND
Please contact

abqa@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk
or call 07570346848



**Get cost of living tips and advice
to your phone**

Add us on WhatsApp - 07585 997453
AND TEXT YES



TO UNSUBSCRIBE TEXT STOP

www.sandwell.gov.uk/supportingsandwell



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

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OUR VISION FOR SANDWELL

Parish of St Philip Neri

Deeley
CONSTRUCTION

Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

FareShare
foodcloud

CONSORTIUM

ESB

REFUGEE ACTION

Harborne Parish Lands Charity
Providing a service for those in need

Infant Jesus Sisters

Charity no. 234216

LOTTERY FUNDED

Sisters of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd

PLATER TRUST