

Mary on Safari

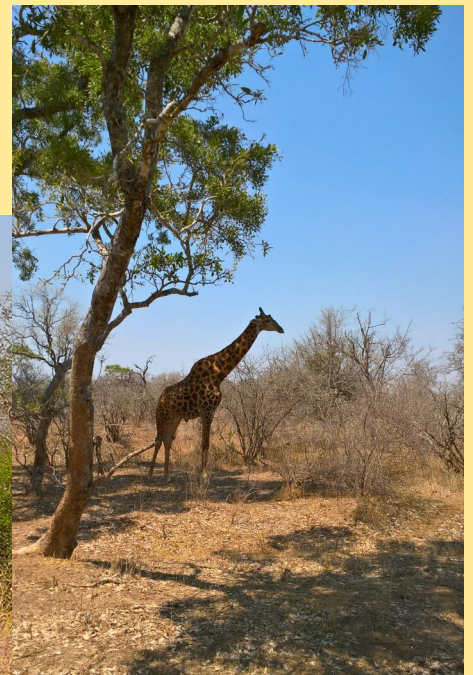


Perhaps Brushstrokes' longest still-serving volunteer is Mary Tomlinson, who has been dedicating her time to helping other people — both as a valuable volunteer and staff member — for more than 16 years. Mary, who currently assists us as a reception and resources volunteer, as well as committee member, travelled to South Africa last month to fulfil a lifelong-cherished dream. She says that the



whole trip was an amazing experience with the highlight probably being travelling through Kruger National Park to see at first hand the wonderful African wildlife, plus a cable car ride up to Table Mountain. Brushstrokes is happy to have Mary's feet back on familiar ground in Smethwick and is thankful for her kindness and untiring commitment.

(Below) Some of Mary's holiday photographs



Twenty years ago...

- A hot air balloon travelled the world non-stop for the first time.
- The European Union created the Euro.
- Pokemon fever gripped the planet.
- Mankind anticipated the end of civilization at midnight on the 31st December 1999 due to the supposed Y2K bug.
- And Brushstrokes Community Project was brought to life in a small council flat in Smethwick by Sister Margaret Walsh (IJS).



You are warmly invited to attend the celebration of Brushstrokes' 20th Anniversary
Friday 29th November 1800 — 2030
253 High Street, Smethwick, B66 3NJ



Feel Good Friday!

By Lucy Clark

Lucy is Brushstrokes' Resources Coordinator and as well as managing the practical items, such as food and clothing, to give out at the centre she also visits schools, churches and other organisations (in all weathers) to talk about the work of Brushstrokes and how others can get involved in supporting vulnerable people. She does a tremendous job in smiling(!), spreading the word and getting people on board! Here she tells us about her visit in November to St John Bosco Catholic Primary School, West Bromwich. (NC)

It's Feel Good Friday!! I have had a lovely morning out and about collecting all of these lovely things...

St John Bosco, West Bromwich 'planted' 'The Remembrance Tree'. Families have each bought a heart and dedicated them in memory of a loved one who is no longer with us. The proceeds will be donated to Brushstrokes Resource Department and the pupils will decide how best they would like us to spend the money to help with our stocks.



Feel Good Friday!

By Lucy Clark — continued

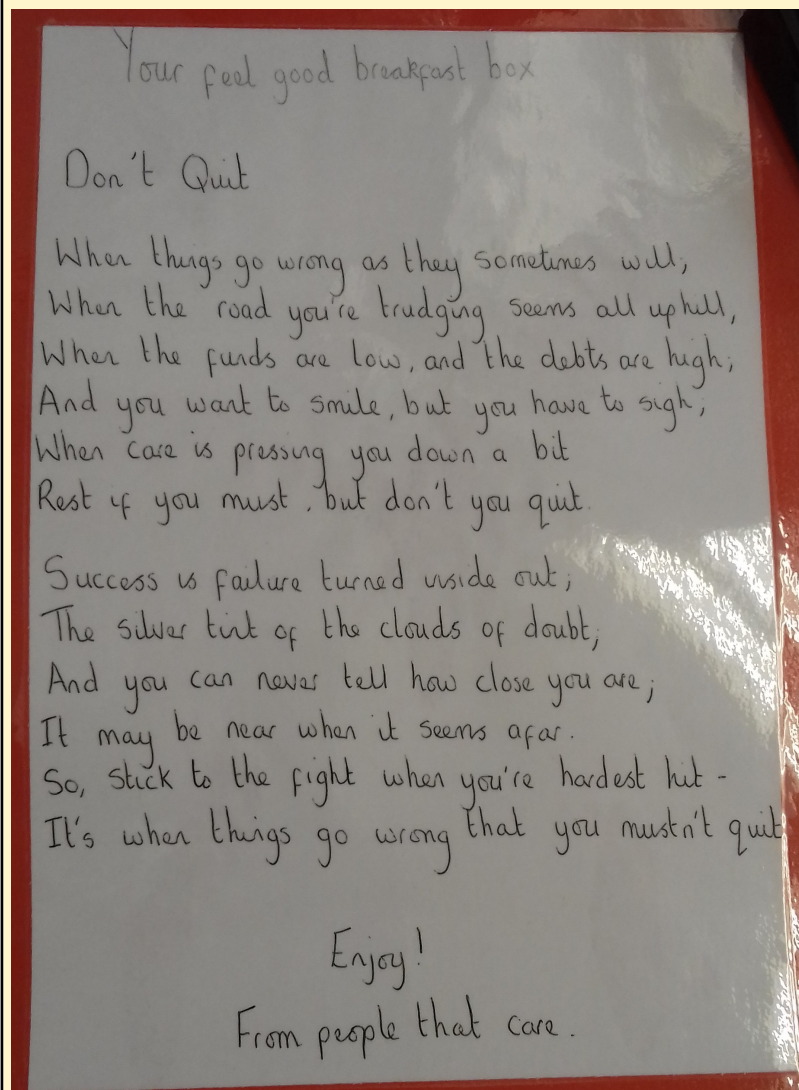
The staff at St John Bosco RC Primary School in West Bromwich come

together every week for Feel Good Friday. Last week, as a response to Children in Need, they all brought in items for breakfast and compiled these beautiful Feel Good Family Breakfast boxes. Included in each box is an emotive and reassuring poem encouraging you not to quit when things get tough.

Two young boys who raised £25 by doing magic tricks at a family party [featured in last month's Messenger] and donated it to Brushstrokes, chose to spend it on nappies for older babies. These are all now bagged up and ready to start giving out next week.

And finally, proof that working in partnership makes us #strongertogether, Smethwick Food Bank have donated 6 trays of kidney beans and chick peas to restock our shelves for our food distribution service. In exchange we will be delivering baked beans and soups next week!

Whatever you are doing today, do something that makes you feel good!



It is very easy, when we take an overview of the world we adults have created for ourselves, to despair — to slip into an acceptance that failure and sadness are here to stay. It often takes the brave, honest and trusting words of children to inspire us to hope for change. Heartfelt thanks to the lovely, generous kids and staff of St John Bosco and to Lucy for working so hard in her mission to spread kindness in practical ways. NC.

'and a little child shall lead them' ISAIAH 11:6



Evelyn's Bicycle Chain Reaction

When Brushstrokes' ESOL student, Evelyn, mentioned to her teacher, Sonia Stranger, that she was experiencing difficulties getting to class on the buses little did she realise the series of events that would rapidly unfold to ease her plight. Within days she was accompanying Resources Coordinator, Lucy, to the New Roots Bike Project in Winson Green, Birmingham where she was invited to pick out a bike that in an hour was made comfortable

and roadworthy, and which was then handed to her for free! "When Brushstrokes staff dropped by asking for help for one of their students, we sorted her out with a bike because that's what we're all about — helping others" says Martin Williams, manager of New Roots Bike Project.

Brushstrokes' Project Manager, Dave Newall, writes that this was 'A great example of partnership working to meet the needs of our service users.'

Thank you to all the caring 'links' in this particular bicycle chain, including Sonia, Salman, Lucy, Martin and the rest of the NRBP team. *Postscript: Lucy adds that a supporter on Facebook has now offered to donate a cycle helmet and hi-viz jacket for Evelyn!*

To contact Martin's team please follow this link: <https://www.facebook.com/newrootsbikeproject/>



Brushstrokes, in conjunction with Citizens Advice Sandwell, is delivering a new project called "Settling Well". 'Navigators' across Sandwell will assist to deliver very practical advice and hands-on support to migrants, such as helping their children register with a local school, helping them to access local dentists and doctors and finding groups for adults so they can meet new people and access learning opportunities. Finding access to all these

services can prove extremely difficult for families and individuals in the initial period of moving to a new country and so Settling Well should be of great benefit to many people.

Jasbir Matharu

Brushstrokes Senior Advice Worker

For further information about the Settling Well programme please contact Jas on 0121 565 2234.

Thank You from Oluwafunke

My name is Oluwafunke Ehinola. I am a single mum of two and I am an asylum seeker. I moved to Smethwick in 2018, so it was my housing officer that introduced me to Brushstrokes, and ever since I've been going to the organisation they have been of great help to me and my kids. They help me with food to eat and they provide clothes for me and my kids. To crown it all they help with an ESOL class. This ESOL class has made a lot of impact in my life. Brushstrokes really does help and they will even ask you if you are satisfied. I really don't know what I would have done without this organisation (Brushstrokes) and I'm using this medium to say a big THANK YOU to my two teachers, Sister Julianna and Andrew.

Thank you for your kind words, Oluwafunke. We wish you and your lovely son every success in your future.



knit & natter



The Brushstrokes Knit and Natter group is run by Sara and Kathy and aims to help ladies of all ages and backgrounds rediscover their self confidence as they learn new knitting skills. The class is free and all materials are also provided free of charge. If you would like to learn new skills in a warm, friendly environment please do visit us where you will be made to feel very welcome.

Every Friday 10.00 — 12.00

Latest news: Males are now also welcome to attend!!!



In 2018 Brushstrokes Community Project was involved in carrying out local research on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme to explore the reasons for irregular European migration from Africa. The final UNDP report is now ready and can be downloaded following this link: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/ScalingFences.html>

The Scaling Fences: Voices of Irregular African Migrants to Europe report presents the results of an extensive study exploring the perspectives and experiences of 1970 individuals who migrated through irregular routes from Africa to Europe, originating from 39 African countries. Its aim is to contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between migration and development. The Scaling Fences report is the second major review of contemporary development issues affecting Africa to be published by UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa. Highlights include:

- 58% of respondents were either earning (49%) or in school (9%) at the time of their departure. For a majority of those earning, income appears to have been competitive in the national context.
- For 66% of respondents earning, or the prospect of earning, was not a factor that constrained the decision to migrate.
- 62% of respondents felt they had been treated unfairly by their governments, with many pointing to ethnicity and political views as reasons for perception of unfair treatment.
- 77% felt that their voice was unheard or that their country's political system provided no opportunity through which to exert influence on government.
- 41% of respondents said 'nothing' would have changed their decision to migrate to Europe. Average earnings in Europe far outstrip average earnings in Africa, even in real terms.
- 67% of those who did not want to stay permanently in Europe said their communities would be happy if they returned, compared to 41% of those who did want to live permanently in Europe.



(Left) Brushstrokes volunteer Alina helping Timothee use a laptop for the first time. Timothee was a fast learner and quickly discovered the joys of YouTube! Thank you to Alina for giving her free time up so generously in helping others to develop necessary information technology skills. Should you, or someone you know, require assistance in learning how to begin to use a computer, set up email, make online job applications etc. please contact Brushstrokes or attend our free 'drop-in' IT class on Tuesdays between 1pm and 2.30pm.

(Right) Many thanks to Abbi and Sam — staff members from Barratt Homes, Halesowen — who visited Brushstrokes to lend a hand with our resources service. The ladies worked very hard alongside Lucy and Fatmire in organising our food distribution. Thank you to all concerned at Barratt Homes in supporting us in our work with vulnerable people.



It is a certain fact that we all remember our first bike! The joy, freedom and independence represented by our very own set of wheels stay in our memory long after our bodies have outgrown its metal frame.

(Left) Beaming with pride, eight-year old Essa stands beside his new bike courtesy of Brushstrokes' resources department. Shazia, his mum had made a request to the centre to see whether we could assist in providing a small scooter or bicycle for her son and Resources Coordinator Lucy immediately set to work locating such an item.

Many thanks to Barratt Homes, Halesowen for donating this smart, mint condition bicycle. It is certain that it has gone to a good home and will provide this young man with thousands of hours of pleasure.

Thank you to all who, when considering the good things they possess, choose to think of others too.





Asylum Early Action



Refugee Women Connect



Bristol Refugee Rights
Safety • Solidarity • Action for Change



REFUGEE ACTION



EARLY ACTION EXPERT PANEL

People seeking safety in the UK are often forced into poverty and homelessness. Asylum Early Action aims to find ways of helping people in the asylum system before they reach crisis point. We need to make sure the voices of Experts by Experience are at the centre of our work

We need Experts By Experience from across England to use their knowledge and experience to help people in the system avoid crisis. The Early Action Expert Panel will come together every 3 months to:

- Receive training in research skills, advocacy and public speaking.
- Give advice and make recommendations to help organisations provide the best support they can to help people avoid crisis.
- Build evidence to influence the Home Office to take Early Action and prevent crisis

If you would like to find out more and get involved, please contact:

JONATHAN KAZEMBE — Early Action Expert Panel Engagement Worker, Refugee Action

Email: jonathank@refugee-action.org.uk

Telephone: 0161 441 4040



Early Action Expert Panel Meeting in London

I had been chosen by Lukano Omunson, Brushstrokes' Early Action Adviser, to help represent three service users and I was really happy to have been given that amazing opportunity. The three clients, who were of different nationalities, were: Gulan, a Kurdish female, Rafaad, an Iraqi male, and Ahmed, a Sudanese male. We caught the train from Rolfe Street in Smethwick. Everything went very well and we arrived early. We all spent some free time and had some food until we met other groups, then we all had lunch together.

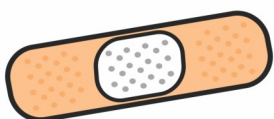
When the meeting started we had a discussion about the issues that affect the life of asylum seekers. Everyone had their opinions about finding some ways to help them. Other groups had their opinions too and mostly their points of views were about Participatory Service Design — the concept that services for asylum seekers are most effective when actual participants are involved. Everyone was happy and there were great discussions and so much input from everyone. We hoped that together we will improve the lives of people like us.

At the end we went to the train station but most of the trains were delayed or cancelled so we had to catch a Virgin train to get back to Birmingham New Street. I would like to thank my manager, Dave, and Lora and Jonathan for keeping in contact with me while we waited to get a train and also to Lora and Jonathon for hosting the panel.

Overall everything went well and everyone was happy, especially our service users who told me it was their first time of being in London and that they took as many as pictures as they could of the front gates of Buckingham palace!

Thank you Hawar for your wonderful contribution in the struggle to ensure people in need of asylum are heard and protected.

Hawar Amin
Brushstrokes Advice Worker



Congratulations to Harriet and Nigel for recently undergoing
Emergency First Aid training.
They join Lucy as First Aiders at Brushstrokes.



@PeacefulMindPeacefulLife

Your journey is
not the same as mine, and
my journey is not yours,
but if you meet me on a
certain path, may we
encourage each other.

—UNKNOWN



WHEN THE
WORLD SAYS,
'GIVE UP,'
HOPE WHISPERS,
'TRY IT ONE MORE TIME.'

UNKNOWN

What's on at Brushstrokes 2019

Monday

Advice and Information: 0900 — 1100 drop-in

Resources distribution

ESOL/IELTS classes

Tuesday

Food distribution (1200 — 1500)

Resources distribution

ESOL classes

Beginners IT class (1300 — 1430)

Wednesday

Advice and Information: 0900 — 1100 drop-in

Work Club 1430 — 1630

Resources distribution

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 (0900 — 1130)

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



FareShare FoodCloud



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