

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

**February
2021**

*Written by Express & Star
Community Reporter James Vukmirovic*

Brushstrokes Community Project has continued its work during lockdown to help refugee and migrant communities to adapt to life in the region. While it has been unable to run its regular drop-in services at its headquarters in Smethwick, Brushstrokes have run foodbanks and delivered essential items to families in need.

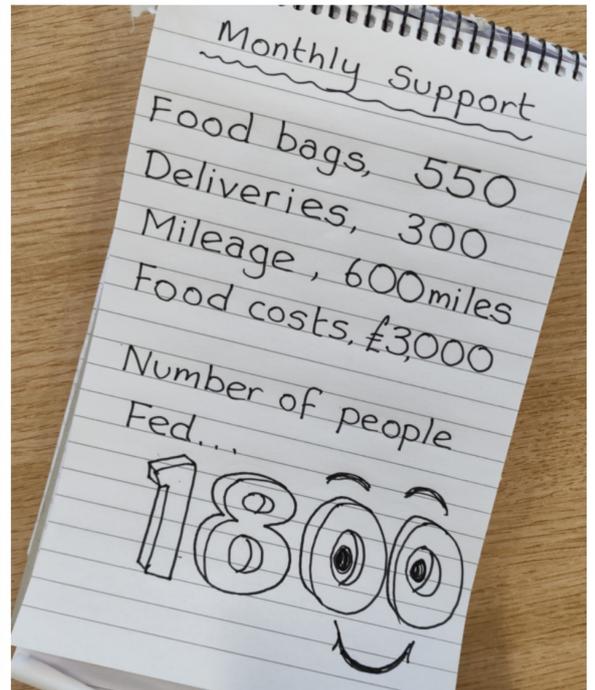
However, the project needs to raise £85,000 as the pandemic has had a severe impact on Brushstrokes' clients with many more people turning to the charity for advice and support.

Project manager, Dave Newall, said: 'Anyone in need in Sandwell shouldn't have to struggle alone, isolated at home and scared not knowing what to do. Our information, and advice and support are a lifeline to people in need, helping them with any issue that's affecting their life. During Covid, it's even more important that people can reach us to get the advice and support they need.'

But with cancelled events, reduced fundraising opportunities and an increased demand for their help, the project is struggling to raise enough money to fund its services to support more than 3,000 people. It has opened a public appeal for help with funding to ensure its services, which help people suffering with food poverty, homelessness and destitution, among a range of other issues.

Lucy Clark, Resources Coordinator, said: 'With the incidence of coronavirus and so many people struggling to put food on the table in normal times, we've seen our food and essential support operation more than double over the last year.'

'We're now feeding almost 400 people a week and making almost 100 deliveries a week to reach the most vulnerable. But it's not just food. We provide advice so people can stabilise their circumstances and not have to rely on food support long term. In these Covid times, our support is needed now more than ever.'

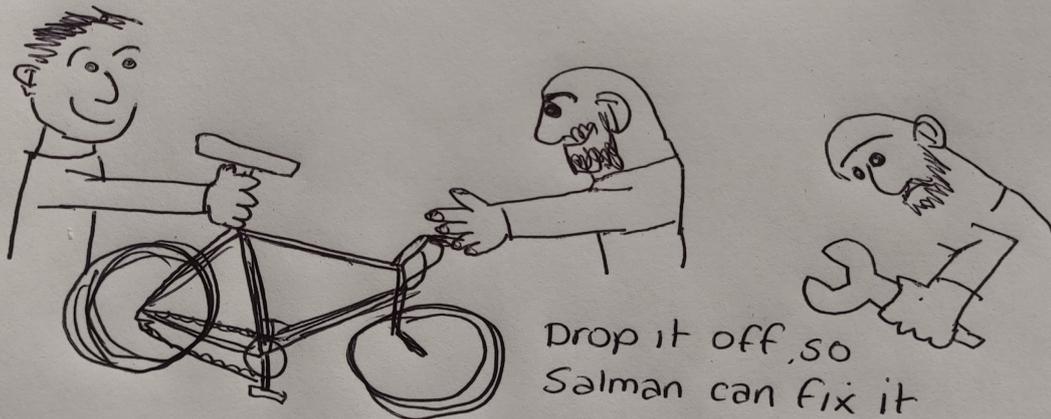


BRUSHSTROKES BIKE BANK

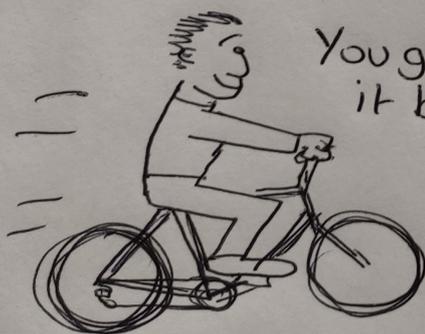
Bike bank



email pics of bike to
salman@brushstrokesandwell.org.uk



Then...



You get it back

or...



We give it away!



If you know of an adult or child that genuinely needs, and will take care of a cycle, please let Salman know by email:

Salman@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk

Alternatively, if you are able to offer an unwanted bike to him to give to someone else please do make contact too. Many thanks.

Two Sisters

By Nigel Chandra

Brushstrokes Centre Coordinator

Last summer, after more than eight years of travelling on public transport, I invested in a little old car. It will never win prizes for technical ingenuity or style, but I absolutely love it! Five seats, four wheels, one solid roof. I can steer it in the direction I wish to go and it stops when I want it to. What else can one want in a vehicle? Well... a rapid responsiveness leading to some speed apparently. Her age and looks don't inspire confidence in others but to me she's beautiful, and, like any proud owner, just after purchase I began to consider a suitable name for the new lady in my life. I phoned my family for suggestions. 'Martha!' immediately quipped my far-too-clever-for-her-own-good youngest daughter. 'Just like the woman in the Bible — we want her to keep on working!'

If the Covid-19 lockdowns have taught us anything it has been to re-evaluate, prioritise and better appreciate what is important to us; to not take things for granted; to slow right down and to be aware of the simple things that make such a difference to our lives here.

In the New Testament we meet two sisters — Mary and Martha — whose approach to life couldn't have been more distinct. While Mary was contemplative, quiet and passive, her sister Martha was much more pro-active, industrious — and stressed.

Luke 10: 38 — 42

Now it happened as they went that He [Jesus] entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

We know from the context of the scripture that Martha wasn't being criticised. We read that Jesus was a close friend of both her and her sister, and also of their brother, Lazarus. But she was clearly being encouraged to reflect on the amount of 'doing' she was involved in and which was creating in her a sense of anxiety and possibly resentment as she compared her efforts with Mary's seemingly complacency about carrying a share of the domestic duties in preparing a meal for the guests. There is an underlying message that to stop, to sit down, to rest, to listen, to observe, and to simply *be*, are of equal (and sometimes more) importance as working hard and achieving.

However, I like the Biblical Martha and, as in much of life, a balanced approach perhaps is necessary. Can you imagine what the world would be like if everyone suddenly decided to be only like Mary? All the time?

'Hi Honey, I'm home! What's for dinner?'

'Dinner? Oh, I'm sorry, is that the time? I haven't made anything. But I have read twenty-two chapters of the Book of Isaiah.'

How about 'Mary' as an employee?: *'So, how is that report coming along? The deadline is today.'*

'Deadline? Report? Oh, sorry Boss, there's no report, but I have been listening to the birds singing for the past three hours.'

In 2021 I hope we can each decide to make time away from our busyness to choose 'that good part'. To pause from our stressful schedules and to reflect on the good things we do have, rather than furiously pursuing the things we don't have. At Brushstrokes I recently talked with a young man training for the Catholic priesthood. He described how twice daily he engages in a spiritual exercise to simply stop what he is doing for a few minutes to be grateful. His quiet words made a deep impression on me. This kind, beautiful and generous world, through the pandemic, may have unwittingly presented us with a valuable opportunity to move away from our perpetual 'Marthadom' (martyrdom?) and practise a Mary outlook. Let's try it.

Oh, and if you ever happen to be stuck in traffic behind a sedate 14 year old blue-grey Vauxhall Agila — just smile and gently go around. Her name is Martha but she moves like her sister :)



Charity is the act of giving help to those in need of it. It is a humanitarian act. It involves giving money, goods or time and effort to those who need it. It is done without expecting something in return. Giving money or food to poor people is an example of charity. Poor, sick or injured people are generally considered the proper people to whom charity should be given. Most charities are concerned with providing basic needs, such as food, water, clothing, health care and shelter.

Charitable givings can be a responsibility in many religions. I think that Brushstrokes is a charity that is saving our life.

I LOVE BRUSHSTROKES!

In addition to the classic three symptoms, you can also book a COVID-19 'PCR' test if you have any of the following:

- ▶ headaches
- ▶ aches and pains
- ▶ feeling very tired for no good reason
- ▶ sore throat
- ▶ runny nose
- ▶ sneezing
- ▶ tummy ache in children

Don't leave it to chance,
book your test today

WWW.SANDWELL.GOV.UK/TESTSANDWELL

COVID-19 Vaccines

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS

VACCINE MYTH

VACCINE FACT



It was rushed and isn't safe

Researchers took no safety shortcuts. Large studies show the vaccine is safe.



It changes your DNA

It's impossible for the vaccine to change your DNA



It can give you COVID-19

The vaccine doesn't contain a live virus strain



It contains egg protein

It doesn't have egg proteins and can be given to people with egg allergies



It causes severe side effects

For most, the vaccine causes mild side effects that resolve in a few days



It makes women infertile

There is no evidence that the vaccine causes infertility



Brushstrokes English Language Provision during Lockdown

By Jane Alsop, ESOL/IELTS/OET Coordinator



The first half of the Spring Term has been very busy. The demand for OET (Occupational English Test) has increased dramatically so we now have 2 OET courses and 2 IELTS courses. We did online OET assessments in January and took on 13 new students.

We've managed to secure funding to provide 8 students with a tablet and Mifi unit each. One of our Pre entry students who now attends twice a week on Zoom is making great progress and says she is 'very happy' now she can come to class and 'talk to my teacher and class friends'.

ESOL volunteers are the backbone of our online classes so a huge thank you to all our volunteers who have learnt new skills and new ways of teaching and are keeping our ESOL provision going.

Left: The ESOL nerve centre (or should that be nervous!)

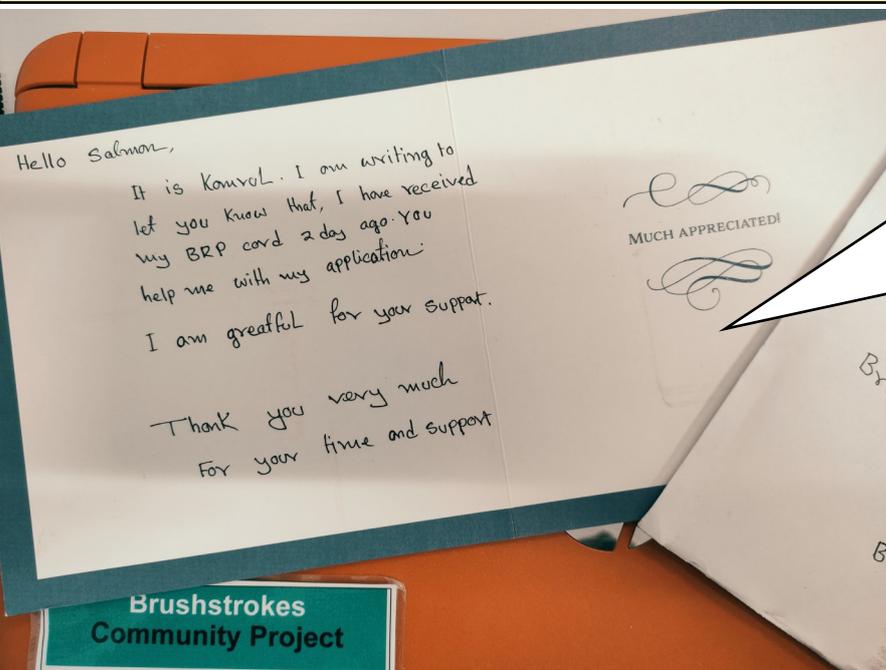
Assayed (*right*) passed his OET in November 2020. He wanted to "... share with you my brilliant experience about the support I got from Brushstrokes to achieve the cornerstone of my medical career ambition," and wrote the following:

" I am a refugee Sudanese doctor living in Birmingham. I started my journey of getting my medical qualification accepted registration with the General Medical Council by the support of the Use-It project in Birmingham. The project collaborated with Brushstrokes to provide English classes. Initially the classes started with IELTS, but since 2019 OET has been included. I got the maximum benefit of taking care of my family, doing a full time care job and attending the classes. During COVID-19 lockdowns, Brushstrokes changed the teaching to virtual classes, which was very helpful to carry on studying without postponing. With such well tailored and organised support, I was enabled to pass my Occupational English Test (OET)."



Assayed Dawood

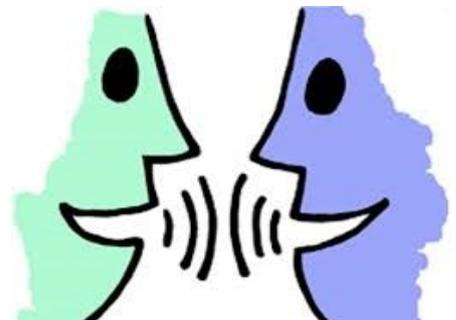
We have been in awe at the way all ESOL teachers and volunteers have happily and rapidly adapted their teaching strategies in order to ensure the consistency of their learners' language learning. Rarely will one encounter such dedicated teaching staff whose relationship with their students goes above and beyond the simple transference of knowledge. Well done to all — Jane, teachers, volunteers, and students, and a special congratulations to Assayed! NC



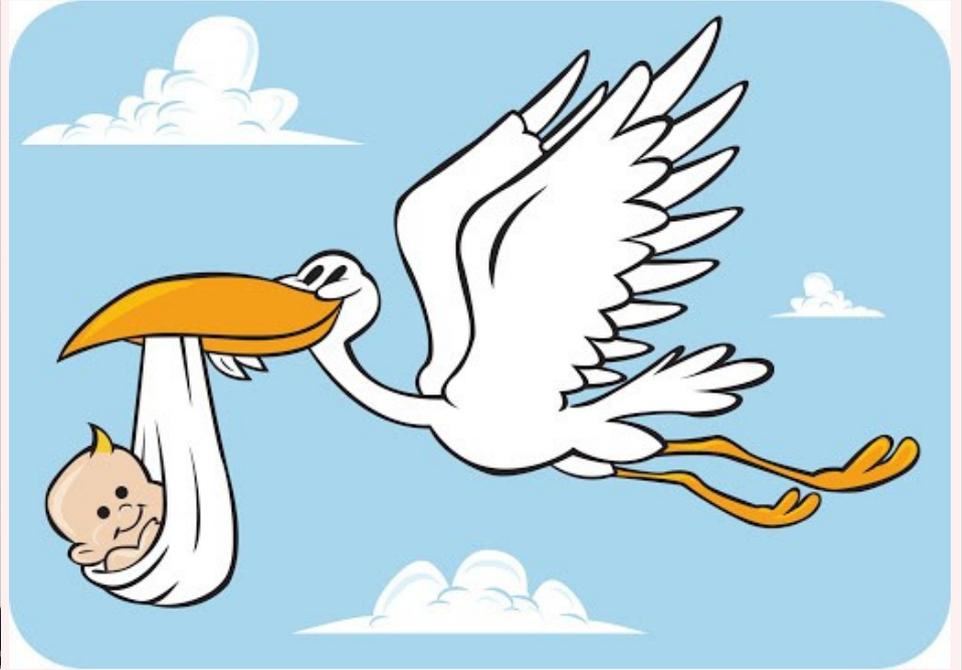
Received from an appreciative Brushstrokes' immigration services client. For all immigration/Home Office enquiries please contact:

Salman@brushstrokesandwell.org.uk

Or telephone: 0121 565 2234



Brushstrokes would like to express very best wishes to Senior EUSS Adviser, Karolina, who departs from us on maternity leave. Karolina is a very popular and committed member of the team and we look forward to sharing her specific good news soon! (Written 19.02.2021)



**BREAKING
NEWS**

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(Written 22.02.2021) Wow! Karolina clearly couldn't wait until the next issue of The Messenger and wants to return to work as quickly as possible, so decided to give birth to a beautiful and perfect little girl late on Monday night! Welcome to the world, little Jasmine — may your life be safe, healthy, and happy. Well done Karolina. Many sincere congratulations to you and your lovely family from all at Brushstrokes.

A Rainbow Palette of Scarves



Many thanks to friend of Brushstrokes, Rachel, for delivering these gorgeous scarves in a plethora of cheerful colours. Each one has been thoughtfully hand knitted by Rachel's mum and will be given out to people we serve. We are very thankful for this fabulous act of kindness.

Volunteers Wanted

Food Delivery Drivers

Brushstrokes Community Project is now looking for reliable and responsible volunteer food delivery drivers willing to assist us to take bags of food to individuals and families in the B70/B71 (West Bromwich) areas on either Thursday afternoons or Friday mornings.

All volunteers receive reimbursement of travel costs and can expect to be part of a happy and hardworking team carrying out vital service to vulnerable people in need.

If this sounds like you please contact Lucy or Martin on
0121 565 2234

or email us: Info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk



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:



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CHARITABLE FOUNDATION



Parish of St Philip Neri

Charity no. 512992



Charity no.
234216



Sisters of the Good Shepherd



LOTTERY FUNDED

Housing Options
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