

# HAVEN FIRST

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2022

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Registered office: 6 Ditchmore Lane, Stevenage, SG1 3LJ

01438 354 884 [www.havenfirst.org.uk](http://www.havenfirst.org.uk)



John, a resident, painted this lovely picture of a cosy group of homes. It has found a permanent home for itself on a wall in Richard's office, dreamed up by one whose shelter for now is a room at Haven First – this is the current roof over his own head.

Is 'home' just a place, really – a matter of bricks and mortar, however temporary? The importance of pinning down what home really means crops up especially during the Christmas season, and it was magnified at Haven First this year by the challenges of the continuing pandemic.

Haven First's way is to provide the before, during and after of the matter in a hectic, never ending rhythm of coming and going, of moving in then moving on and - as you will see - to never fall short when it comes to building in real hope and joy to the whole process.

*Boy, was Haven First busy during these winter months ...*

Let's begin by going back to the day after the November issue of this newsletter was issued.

It was time for another adventure, this one funded by last year's fundraising and chosen by the residents, who decided they'd like to check out the Natural History Museum in London.

**RICHARD TAKES UP THE STORY ...**

*We took the train to Blackfriars, as we planned to walk along the riverside and admire the landmarks and scenery. Our platform overlooked the river to the east where we spotted Tower Bridge, St Paul's Cathedral, the Shard and the Walkie Talkie buildings:*



*The Natural History Museum is such a grand place, from the moment you walk into the amazing hall. Normally, Dippy the Diplodocus is here, but he's touring the UK, so instead you have the skeleton of a whale: Also, as you can see below, Vicky met someone who had the hump ...*



*On our way back to the tube after a busy day we stopped for a celebratory ice cream:*



#### **AND SO TO A MEMORABLE CHRISTMAS**

**There's nothing like a crisis** to galvanize people of goodwill. This year's last-minute-drama was the gas – quite simply, it failed, presenting staff with the thought of a raw turkey and very crunchy vegetables with only days to go.

Into the breach stepped both Nandos, who offered Haven First a generous discount, and Misya Turkish restaurant, who kindly donated meals. Here is Mark from Haven First thanking some of Misya's staff:



Kerry, Tammy and Carlie ensured that the bird would be cooked – whatever - and Becky provided a special trifle she had made, to boot.

On the day itself – panic over. Gas was restored, tables were decoratively laid by Jack and Andrew while Richard stood by to serve. ‘I was ably assisted by a former resident who had nothing to do so came to give a hand and we were able to offer Christmas dinner to another former resident who had no one to spend Christmas with,’ remembers Richard.



‘We were only ten minutes late serving,’ said a mightily relieved Richard. Phew

As winter approached and then set in, it was important to get out and about from time to time.

Here’s a memory of a spectacular skating excursion for residents from Haven First and Templars in Baldock - another residents’ request.



Wendy led on a **country walk through the Old Knebworth estate** ‘where we saw a variety of wild life and the monument that Edward Bulwer Lytoon created in memory of his mother’ (Wendy has a keen eye for such things and likes to share it with others):

## GETTING READY FOR LIFE

**Back at the ranch**, so to speak, residents were busy investing in their own futures.

Volunteer Arran runs a Wednesday afternoon **Art Club** with residents, whose work is on display in the dining room (a viewing is highly recommended). Some of the most recent work was inspired by a session on mental health when inspirational quotes were put up around the room from which residents could choose something that resonated with them. 'Yesterday it was great,' recalled Richard recently, 'as the residents had music playing and there was a lovely atmosphere.'

**A welcome hairdressing session** was provided by Danielle, another valued volunteer:



Connect Team :

Just before Christmas Lloyd and Ellie (Haven First's Connect Service Team) ran a five-week **Tenancy Training Course – 'It's Your Move'** – to help residents think about things to prepare for when getting their own place, covering issues like cooking on a budget, first aid, mental wellbeing, preparing for work and getting ready for the big move on. There was also a six-week **Money Management Course** led by Paul from 'Create Community' – something highlighted as a need by some of the residents. Here in the IT room you can see two residents keen to pursue their studies towards qualifications:



## **AND SO TO CHRISTMAS**

It seems a while ago now, but 'it was quite a whirlwind,' remembers Richard who, along with Haven First Staff, pulled out all the stops to make the hostel feel as much like a home as possible for those who were staying, beginning with several Christmas trees decorated as a joint venture between staff and residents. Some of the ingenious decorations on the premises were made by Vicky, Arran and the residents:



Thanks to generous firms and local individuals, cupboards overflowed with donations to make this Christmas special for those who are at the hostel.

Writing just two days before the day, Richard reported sweet treats, brand new coats, good gift sets, cheques and cash. A large cupboard overflowed with them.

‘People have been so generous, which is very touching to see,’ says Richard.

So during the week before Christmas, Vicky, Andrew and Richard took off for the Mecca Bingo Club in Stevenage town centre to sort out gift bags for the residents.

‘The staff and customers have been raising money for Haven First and buying many of the things we need for our residents, as well as the clients we help at the door and those who have moved on, who we continue supporting.

‘Thanks to this generosity our residents in Stevenage and North Herts will be getting a gift bag including a selection box, scarf, gloves, hat, socks, toiletries, gift set, pen and £15 gift card. For some of the residents this will be the only gift they receive:



Here's what those individual gift bags looked like:



## DONATIONS

So many kind people deserve a mention, including those who selflessly just leave stuff at the door.

Left: A magnificent £130 was raised by the **Kikiskitchen Bake Sale**:

Right: There was £100 from **Stevenage Police**, who raised money for Haven First in their tuck shop:



An amazing £1,700 was donated by **SJM, Hemel Hempstead**:



Right: **Heath Mount Lower School** did a brilliant ‘reverse **Advent Calendar**’ During December they brought things to put in day by day as opposed to taking things out. Fantastic. You can see from the smile on the face of Barbara Howard, CEO of Haven First what a lovely surprise this was:



And in a case of ‘before and after’, in order to make it more homely, six volunteers, employees of **Britvic, Hemel Hempstead** led by Martha Cook, the Customer Development Executive, descended on the rear of a Haven First move on property for a day of cleaning it up and making it more welcoming. It was, she said, an effort to support but also to ‘give something back’. They certainly did that.



*All - each and every one of them – are angels who help Haven First maintain its big heart.*

Including nine year old Grace, who simply sent a picture, below. It is now hanging up in reception. Thank you so much for being so thoughtful, Grace. We love you too:

