

Neighbour Leigh

news

TOAST OF THE TOWN!

They're the local heroes who work tirelessly - week in, week out - to bring hope to thousands of people in crisis. And this Christmas, in recognition of their commitment to helping local families, Leigh Neighbours is making a donation to both of Leigh's foodbanks so they can give a little bit extra to the community they serve all year round with such dedication.



This year, **Compassion in Action** and **Atherton and Leigh Foodbank** have helped thousands of people in need - and it's a figure which is likely to continue to grow next year.

Warren Done of Atherton and Leigh Foodbank [pictured left with volunteer Anita Thorpe] says: "Families are referred to us by somebody who has identified an obvious need, such as a GP or welfare officer. They'll issue them with a voucher which can be redeemed at one of our drop-in sessions in return for 3 days supply of food. Our sessions are staffed by local volunteers who genuinely care. There's no judgement, only a friendly face, a brew and a bite to eat. And if we can signpost people to other services for specialist advice, all the better."

Atherton & Leigh Foodbank

Kingsleigh Methodist Church
Monday/Tuesday 10am - 12 noon

Leigh Baptist Church
Thursday 10am - 12 noon

www.athertonandleigh.foodbank.org.uk

Susan Gredecki, chair of Leigh Neighbours Partnership Board, says: "It is beyond tragic that so many families are struggling to survive through no fault of their own. For those on benefits or in low income households, the only choice this Christmas will be whether to put food on the table or money in the gas metre. Here in Leigh, we're fortunate to have two wonderful foodbanks. Our donation to their Christmas effort is a token of our great appreciation for the role they play in our community. They truly are local heroes."

Pam Gilligan of Compassion in Action adds: "Our accredited food distribution centre delivers enhanced hampers made up of groceries, cleaning products, nappies, toiletries and fresh food produce, as well as clothes and furniture, free of charge throughout the borough, giving hope at a time of despair."

Compassion in Action

Patrick House, Leigh Road
01942 262636
www.compassioninaction.info



Do your New Year's resolutions sound like hard work?

They don't have to be! Inject some fun into your life in 2015 by getting involved in your local community.

Leigh Neighbours is a community project with £1 million to spend in your area over the next 10 years.

There are so many ways you can get involved. If you've got an idea for an event, and you've got the time and energy to invest in it, we can help with the rest.

We can even help cover some of the costs. Our Residents Fund is only open to local people and can be used for any number of projects.

Fancy starting a kid's reading club or a craft circle? Are you seeking sponsorship for your existing group? Would you like to organise a community event? Or do you have an idea which might benefit the area but don't know where to start?

Contact us at info@lnpb.org.uk to find out how to apply for Residents Fund support. Or you can download an application form for the Residents Fund on our website by visiting www.lnpb.org.uk/projects.

Come on! What have you got to lose!?

2015

1. Give up smoking!
2. Lose weight!!
3. Sort out credit cards
4. Clean the car out every ~~week~~ month
5. Start saving money!
6. Train to complete a marathon.



Clockwise from above: In 2014, local residents took part in seasonal hanging basket workshops; pupils from Sacred Heart RC Primary School joined in the fun; young people hosted a barbecue in Town Hall square as part of The Big Lunch; local residents and children took part in the summer project, Our Art Neighbourhood; flying the flag for The Big Lunch; artists and residents created colourful yarn graffiti across Leigh town centre as part of Our Art Neighbourhood.



**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR
FROM ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE
LEIGH NEIGHBOURS PROJECT BOARD.**



Free home security scheme

Leigh Neighbours is working in partnership with Greater Manchester Police to improve home security for the most vulnerable in our neighbourhood.

Sponsored by Leigh Neighbours, *Stop & Lock* will signpost local residents to a free home assessment carried out by a former police officer, who will then install appropriate security features free of charge.

The pilot scheme - initially to be rolled out in 40 homes across the Leigh Neighbours project area - is aimed at those people who are most likely to benefit from greater peace of mind.

"During the course of a typical day, we may come across somebody who is particularly vulnerable, perhaps as a result of an attempted break-in or a distraction burglary, or simply because of their age or disability," says PCSO Gabrielle Fitsimons. "In these instances, we will now be able to refer people for a free home assessment aimed at reducing the risk of crime and the associated fear of crime."

If you, or somebody you know who lives in the Leigh Neighbours area, would benefit from this, please contact Leigh Neighbourhood Policing Team on 0161 856 7225 or wiganeast@gmp.police.uk

Alternatively come along to *Cuppa with a Copper* every fourth Wednesday at ASDA in Leigh or to any of the regular police surgeries.

Visit www.gmp.police.uk for more information.

New year. New skills.

The New Year is often a catalyst for change. So, if your resolution for 2015 is to take on a fresh start in a new career, get in touch with us because we might just be able to help!

You may have read in the last issue of Neighbour-Leigh news about an apprenticeship we funded. You can read about Aaron's progress at www.lnpb.org.uk/newsletters



Well, we're now looking to arrange another scheme in partnership with Groundwork, so if you're interested in finding out more, get in touch.

And if landscaping isn't your thing... what is? We may be able to help with other apprenticeship opportunities in the future, too! Email us at: apprenticeships@lnpb.org.uk

He's one in a million!

Members of the Leigh Neighbours Board have expressed their thanks to Wigan Council's Andrew Sharrock for all his help after hearing that the long-serving officer is off to pastures new in public health. Susan says: "Andrew was instrumental in spearheading the Leigh Neighbours project right at the start and he's been an invaluable advisor to the Board ever since. Andrew has always shown great personal commitment to the project, working hard behind the scenes often in his own time. We've all benefitted from his experience, wisdom and professionalism and we'll really miss him. Best of luck, Andrew!" Andrew adds: "It's been an absolute pleasure working in Leigh over the years, on the Leigh Neighbours project and for many years prior to that in the wider community. I'm grateful that people have put their trust in me and I'm incredibly proud of the town. I still work and live locally, so I definitely won't be a stranger and I wish Leigh Neighbours all the best going forward."



Home is where the hurt is

For most of us, Christmas conjures up happy images of loving families enjoying quality time in each other's company. Sadly, that isn't the reality for everybody. Mother of seven, Melanie,* remembers what Christmas was like for her and her children before she found the courage to finally leave an abusive husband after twenty years of marriage. Here, she tells her story...

"Christmas was no different to any other day of the year. We were all used to walking on eggshells around him. His moods could turn in an instant and he particularly used to resent not being the centre of attention. Can you believe a grown man being jealous of his own children? I can honestly say that my kids hate their father. And it's little surprise given how he's behaved in front of them. He refused to let them have birthday parties or allow friends to stay over. To just be kids.

"I remember one Christmas he smashed up all their presents. Totally out of spite. He used to regularly ransack the house to the point of ripping up floorboards, smashing windows and pulling down walls. So much so, the place is now totally uninhabitable and needs thousands spending on it in repairs.

"Alcohol definitely played a part, although it was by no means the reason he was the way he was. He was abusive when he was sober. But when he was drunk, it was terrifying. As time went on, it got worse and worse. It was one thing the way he treated me, but when he turned on the children, that was the final straw.

"I'm heartbroken that the memories my children have of Christmas and other special occasions are marred by pain and distress when all I ever wanted was for them to feel loved, nurtured and cherished." It was this wish which finally led Melanie to call time on her abusive relationship. And for both herself and her kids it was a huge turning point.

"I feel like I've got my life back. My kids can at last enjoy their childhood. We now have a home where we all feel safe, where we can talk openly and share our problems. It's the kind of life which I used to see others living and which I now understand is just normal. My message to anybody who is suffering abuse is that there is hope. Moving on from that relationship was the best thing I ever did, for me and my kids.

"Help is out there. As hard as it may be to believe, life can change. You just have to pick the phone up and put your faith in people who are on your side and will fight your corner. IDAC – formerly WAVE – offers hope to victims of domestic abuse in Leigh. They run the Freedom Programme, an educational tool which is a total eye-opener. I'm so grateful to them for their support. Without them, I don't know where I'd be today."

You can contact IDAC on the 24-hour helpline 01942 262270. Find out more about the Freedom Programme at www.freedomprogramme.co.uk

Leigh Neighbours is committed to supporting local organisations that can make a real difference to the lives of local people.

* not her real name