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Nalaga'at

By Daphne Chamberlain

The actors stood in a line, kneading bread. The stage went dark, and when we could see again they were seated at the long table, each wearing a mask. One by one, responding to the beat of a drum or a touch on the shoulder, they removed their masks and spoke to us.

Among the things they said were: "It is important that people meeting me shake my hand. Then I know they exist", and "When someone touches my hand, life is more beautiful, and loneliness disappears."

All 11 members of the Nalaga'at theatre are deafblind. They communicated with us through a signer, interpreters and projected text on an overhead screen, but immediately introduced themselves as individual personalities, with their own hopes and dreams. They knew each other very well, and there was plenty of humour and leg-pulling in this show, as the actors joked, shared their thoughts, mimed sketches and danced to music.

The smell of baking bread drifted over the audience, and when the loaves were ready the performance ended with a joyful wedding breakfast, shared with anyone who wanted to go onstage.

"Not by Bread Alone" is the latest production by the Nalaga'at Theatre, the world's only deafblind acting ensemble, established in Israel in 2002. When their founder, president and director, Adina Tal, started working with them, she had no experience of deafblind people, and thought she would only be with them for two months. She says, "Touching a wall sometimes just means having to open a new door".

In Jaffa, the Nalaga'at Centre is a home for over 70 deaf, blind and deafblind people, staff and translators, where Jews, Muslims and Christians work together. It includes the Café Kapish, staffed by deaf waiters, and the darkened Blackout Bar, where the waiters are blind.

These were both replicated in the artsdepot at North Finchley, where "Not by Bread Alone" was staged to packed houses last month. Find out more about artsdepot activities at www.artsdepot.co.uk or 020 8369 5454, and about Nalaga'at

Good memories of good friends

Allotment holder and actor Sophie Thompson was one of the first to try out a new memorial bench in a prominent position at the front of the East Finchley Allotments, off Plane Tree Walk. The site committee decided to install the wooden bench in memory of their many good friends and hard-working plot holders who have passed away in recent years.



Allotment holder Sophie Thompson on the new memorial bench.
Photo by Dawn Painter

Every little helps

By Adam Justice-Mills

One thing I've done about our family's carbon footprint is measure it, using an assessment form from the Muswell Hill Sustainability Group. It showed the amount of carbon equivalent our household uses in a year and it's about three times the national average (gulp).

At home we try to pass on what we're no longer using to charity shops and FreeCycle. When we're abroad we're contributing to some other country's carbon footprint, but keeping it to a minimum won't hurt. One thing we can do on holiday is opportunist carbon reduction: reduce, re-use, recycle!

Here are some ideas for that

When it's hot, it's tempting to have a lot of showers. Apparently hot places use loads more energy getting drinkable water to their taps than in the UK, so we try to keep showers to a minimum and cut all baths.

We were delighted when the holiday cottage we rented had lots of toys and beach stuff for us to use. Previous renters had donated them

for the next people, so as well as using these second-hand items we donated some of our own beach things (and unopened long-life food) when we left.

As for re-cycling, some places make it really easy but others (particularly hotels) haven't caught on yet. We decided to keep up with our normal practices, collecting and washing cans and bottles, bagging paper, cardboard and recyclable plastic, and made a single journey to a local recycling place at the end of our holiday.

For more information on FreeCycle visit www.freecycle.org. The Every Little Helps blog is at: mememoryman.wordpress.com/every-little-helps/

Who's your sporting champion?

Barnet residents are being given the opportunity to name their local sporting heroes in a borough-wide competition. Nominations for the 2010 Celebrating Sports Awards are now underway and anyone who lives or plays sport in Barnet can put forward the person or team they think is most deserving of a Celebrating Sports Award.

There are a total of 16 categories including coach, player and team of the year as well as a service to sport award. Nominations must be received by Friday 10 September 2010. The winners will be unveiled at the Barnet Celebrating Sports Awards on 10 November.

If you want to make a nomination, contact Gemma Thompson on 020 8359 7817 or email sport@barnet.gov.uk. Nomination forms are also available online at www.barnet.gov.uk/celebrating-sport-awards-2010



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