



YOUNG ARCHER



Could you be a star this summer? Photo by Kris Rich

Pop Circus is coming to town

Talent Time Performing Arts, based at The Bull Theatre in Barnet, is looking for performers of all ages to take part in a spectacular production featuring iconic pop hits set under the big top!

The entire show will be sung live with hits from Britney Spears, Miley Cyrus, Lily Allen, Little Mix, Emeli Sande, Take That and Queen. It will feature a variety of dance styles, giving a chance to work with expert choreographers working in jazz, commercial and

contemporary.

Do you sing, dance or play an instrument and want to take part? Call Talent Time on 07904 771980 or email info@talenttimetheatre.com. You can also find Talent Time on Facebook and Twitter and at www.talenttimetheatre.com

A pair of Valentines

By Diana Cormack

My grandmother used to say that birds chose their mates on St Valentine's Day and flew away to build a nest together. Apparently some birds do pair off around the middle of February, so this coupling has become linked with St Valentine. According to legend, a man called Valentine was martyred by the Romans around 14th February sometime during the third century AD.

It is so long ago that no one really knows the truth, but there are two stories about Valentine. One has him as a priest who was jailed for disobeying the emperor's orders not to marry Roman soldiers to their girl friends. The emperor thought unmarried men made better soldiers, but Valentine disagreed with this rule and continued to marry couples in secret. When he was discovered, Valentine would not admit he was wrong and was thrown into prison, where he died.

Another story tells of a Valentine who was imprisoned because he refused to give up his Christian beliefs. The jailer's daughter was very kind to Valentine and, the night before he was put to death, he wrote her a letter of thanks which he signed simply as "Your Valentine".

Valentine was made a saint and, when the Christians came to Britain, they found a Roman fertility feast was celebrated around the time of St Valentine's Day. The festivities included young men and women drawing lots to find a partner, so the Christians merged the two events. This produced a special day when people could show their feelings for each other.

THE ARCHER needs volunteer distributors for: Strawberry Vale (3 rounds)

Distribution takes place once a month. A typical round takes 30-45 mins to deliver. Please contact 020 8883 0433 or the-archer@lineone.net for details

Archer deliverer for the high jump

By Daphne Chamberlain

Readers of Neale Close and Denison Close, your Archer deliverer is taking to the sky. Stroma Leith, who lives in Neale Close, has booked a parachute jump for North London Hospice. The sky won't be a new experience for her. She has held a private pilot's licence for 25 years, but this will be her first jump.

The big day will be 4 May, when she gets her first training, meets her tandem partner for the first time, and then takes off.

With a history of horse-riding and jumping, skiing and judo to blue belt standard, Stroma has always been active, but says that the last really scary thing she did was to Go Ape in Windsor Great Park with members of her family a month after her 70th birthday.

She said: "It meant climbing ladders up tall pine trees and performing various tasks such as scrambling over scrambling nets and walking over wobbly swinging logs 50 feet up in the air, with the most scary bit

being the zip-wire to the ground in between each set of tasks! I couldn't chicken out with young family members at my tail!"

Stroma has always wanted to try a parachute jump, and sees it as a good way to raise funds for the hospice. She said: "I think that the hospice movement does such a fabulous job and I want to help support my local one. Also, my mum died in a hospice in Scotland."

She needs to raise £395. Her website for online donations is www.doitforcharity.com/stroma or cheques can be made out to the North London Hospice, and if people are happy to say if they are taxpayers and

supply their address this adds 25% to any donation.



Stroma Leith



Make friends with a book.

A reading group with a difference

By Daphne Chamberlain

Do you fancy trying a Get into Reading Group? You wouldn't have to buy or borrow the book being discussed. You wouldn't read it beforehand. You wouldn't even have to read it when you're there. You could just listen if you like.

As a bookworm member of a traditional reading group elsewhere, I was keen to investigate. We were each given a printout of a short story, which the group leader started to read aloud. Then he stopped, inviting us to discuss what we'd heard so far. After which, someone else volunteered to read the next bit. We discussed that, and then another person carried on with the reading. And so on.

Nobody had to say anything unless they wanted to, but in fact everyone did. It wasn't heavy. It wasn't literary analysis or like being back at school. It was a group of us enjoying the story and appreciating what we each had to say. Actually, there was more attention to the story than in many traditional reading group sessions, and nobody who hadn't finished it!

Sharing the pleasure

The idea originated in the English Literature department of Liverpool University. The founder had found "salvation through books", and wanted to share that pleasure. Group leader Paul Higgins outlined the

situation in Barnet. Four groups meet in community centres and six in Jewish care settings, and there are one-to-one sessions in some care homes. An initial grant from Barnet in 2011 lasted for one year, and financial support has since come from a private donor, though Barnet have awarded a grant to work with people with dementia.

Volunteers (19 at present) are

trained to select reading material and to lead discussions. The East Finchley group meets in the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, from 11am to 12.30pm on Fridays, from 10 January. Meetings are drop-in and open to everyone in the community, of all ages and backgrounds. I will certainly be going again. It was fun. For more information, call Paul Higgins on 07985 718744.

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