



Untimely death for social forum Streetlife

By Ann Bronkhorst

There has been a death in the online community, mourned by many social media followers. Popular UK-based neighbourhood forum/noticeboard Streetlife, founded in 2011, closed in February after being sold to Nextdoor, a US-based site.

There was confusion during the few weeks before the closure as Streetlifers debated their options: should they transfer to Nextdoor or not? Could it too become a quirky, beloved local forum in time?

Privacy

A week before its closure the founder of Streetlife, Matt Boyes, reassured members that Nextdoor had addressed their concerns over unwanted changes, such as the compulsory display of members' full names and streets even if house numbers were removed. One Streetlifer noted that postings often referred to "going on holiday, wanting pet sitters, neighbour disputes or wanting divorce lawyers," potentially yielding information for gossip at best, burglary at worst.

Another concern was the restricted size of the Nextdoor neighbourhoods and the role created for neighbourhood 'leads' who monitor the postings and are given other powers

as well. Would this create the narrow feel of a gated community or bring immediate neighbours together even more closely and safely?

Alternatives

In late February a few determined Streetlifers set up a holding operation called North London Streets. The small group of volunteers worked hard to gather enough support to create a viable replacement for Streetlife but had to admit defeat, closing North London Streets on 31 March.

Many Streetlifers have joined Nextdoor; others have found online homes elsewhere. Fairly similar neighbourhood forums include (in no particular order) Kahuti, Streetbank and Harringayonline. And then there are many local Facebook groups such as www.facebook.com/groups/eastfinchleynlondon. Spoiled for choice? Maybe, but some feel that Streetlife's structure, mix and flavour cannot be replicated.



Autograph hunters: East Finchley Brownies meet Dame Jessica.

A day of delights

Olympic gold medallist Dame Jessica Ennis-Hill was among a wealth of famous faces and dignitaries encountered by girls from the 4th East Finchley Brownies when they celebrated Commonwealth Day at Westminster Abbey.

Her Majesty the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, attended, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, the Prince of Wales, the Duchess of Cornwall, Prince Harry, Prince Andrew and Prince Edward. High Commissioners and faith leaders from across the Commonwealth were also there.

The East Finchley Brownies were among 800 young people invited to join the celebrations with a theme of peace-building. Brown Owl said: "The service was wonderful and inspiring and it was a privilege to be there." One of the Brownies, Alice, said: "I loved getting Jessica Ennis's signature."



The neonatal team at the Whittington Hospital. Photo Mike Coles

Smiles at life-saving baby unit

By Diana Stoker

East Finchley Open Artists, besides producing creative and beautiful art, also choose a charity to support each year with money raised from their activities.

This year they raised £1,000 for the Whittington Babies neonatal unit at the Whittington Hospital in Archway and handed over a cheque to staff there last month.

It was a particularly appropriate cause as one of the members of the artists' group has a grandchild who was cared for by the unit after she was born nearly 11 weeks premature and weighed only 1 kilo. Thanks to the wonderful treatment she received, she is now a healthy four-year-old.

The neonatal unit, led by Dr Wynne Leith, cares for over 400 sick and premature babies every year and Whittington Babies aims to support the families of these sick children and also the doctors and nurses who care

for them.

One night's stay at the unit costs between £400-£1,200. The Whittington staff desperately needs extra funds and donations like this allow them to continue their life-saving work.

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