



Food bank donations go missing from front garden

By David Gritten

One late evening early in May, a suspected thief made off in the dark with bags full of food left outside a house in East Finchley. They had been brought there by neighbours, wishing to donate it in support of Finchley Foodbank, which distributes food to local people struggling to make ends meet.

The teenage son of the couple who own the house is one of many young people in N2 involved in collecting food from streets near where they live. He was distressed that he had inadvertently forgotten to bring in the food that particular night.

But there was a happy ending to the story when the family discovered the food had been collected by a local priest who thought it was a donation for his church. He returned it with his apologies.

Generous community

Anna Maughan, vice-chair of Finchley Foodbank, based at St Mary's church hall in the High Road, N2, expressed

her gratitude for the generous response of the locals who donated in the first place.

"Street collection has already been invaluable to the Foodbank," she says. But in this case, "the money coming in to help people has been phenomenal. It really is community help for those in need."

Each month Anna writes certificates of thanks to local residents or organisations who have contributed.

"This last month, we had 70 people or organisations to thank!" she said. "That included people who donated to us, gyms, schools, businesses—you name it. The truth is, every donation makes a difference."

Flower show and open gardens

For the second year running, the Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society's June Flower Show, scheduled for Saturday 12 June, will be a virtual one.

Competitors can send in photos of their flowers and produce, from roses and sweet peas to chocolate cake, and they will be viewed by a panel of judges. Full details of categories can be found at www.hortsoc.co.uk

All being well, the society's Autumn Flower Show will take place at the Free Church Hall, Northway, NW11, from 3pm to 5pm on Saturday 4 September, with live music in the garden from Grimsdyke Brass Band and home-made teas in the small hall.

Come into the garden

Meanwhile the following private gardens will be open for viewing to raise funds for the National Garden Scheme: 74 Wilfield Way, NW11, on Sunday 20 June; 18 Park Crescent, N3, on Sunday 20 June and Sunday 18 July; Oakwood Gardens, NW11, on Sunday 4 July (85 Northway, 92 & 94 Oakwood Rd); 86 Wilfield Way, NW11, on Sunday 25 July. Also, 79 Church Lane in East Finchley will be open for the RSPCA on Sunday 4 July and for Combat Stress on Sunday 1 August.



Coiffure on camera

There were some unusual customers in the chair when a TV production crew turned up to film a new show at Jo Sutherland's hair studio in East End Road, N2, last month. One was dressed in an animal costume as the crew got a few shots in the can for the drama called *Psyched*. Jo, a part-time professional actor, has a role of her own in it as a medical practitioner. The crew were on site for three hours, early on Thursday 6 May before normal appointments resumed.

An epic adventure into epilepsy

Tom Ryalls was diagnosed with epilepsy when he was eight. His first seizure happened while camping in Scarborough and then for 10 years he would have seizures in his sleep that could stop his heart. For those 10 years he was taught to talk about his medical health in order to avoid seizures, but nobody taught him and his family to deal with the emotional and psychological strain of the condition.

Now Tom, an East Finchley resident for the last six years, sets out to explore the effects of his epilepsy in a new show running at the Iris Theatre in Covent Garden later this month. Called *Can You See Into a Black Hole?*, the show follows astronaut Tom on a solo space odyssey using innovative soundscapes.

Tom said: "I had epilepsy for 10 years and the director has epilepsy, so it's really exciting to be leading from the front and to bring the show to Covent Garden, it's a huge platform for a show like this. I hope it shows kids who are living with the condition that there's an incredible future possible for them."

The production runs from Monday 28 June to Saturday 3 July. Find full details at iris-theatre.com/whats-on.



Star man: Tom Ryalls on stage in his one-man show.

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