

Dates for your diary

Bethany Sportive – Cycle for Homelessness
Saturday 8th August
100 mile cycle challenge south of Edinburgh
(60 mile option available)

For more info visit our website or
call 0131 625 5319 or email sportive@bethanychristiantrust.com

Walk for Homelessness
Saturday 12 September
Loch Leven, Kinross
Come and join this beautiful day out

For more info visit our website
or call 0131 625 5320 or email events@bethanychristiantrust.com

For furniture uplifts in the Edinburgh area please call 0131 467 3993. For collections in Fife call 0845 062 2211. We would be delighted to accept all good quality donations, white goods and soft furnishings meeting 1988 fire regulations.

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News Update



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Home Improvements

As a nation we are totally captivated by them. From paint stripping, to entire remodelling, we love to watch someone transform an ugly and unappealing property into a chic, beautifully designed home. We share the emotional highs and lows of the rollercoaster ride as the homeowner surrenders their property into the hands of the experts to plan, reconstruct, redecorate and transform.

The final result often produces tears of joy and relief followed by exhilaration as the person realises the full and glorious potential of their recently made over home. Every year, millions of us tune into home improvement programmes, gaining tips on how to do up our own properties or simply sitting back and marvelling at what is achievable in the hands of the professionals.

From the new student who pins up their favourite posters and photos to make their room in halls of residence feel more personal, to the new home owner who spends hours trudging around DIY stores comparing fittings, arms laden with paint testers, rolls of wallpaper and fabric swatches, we have an inbuilt desire to create around us a place of comfort that we can call "home".

We all want to feel settled and contented at home, but the reality for many people who come to Bethany for help, is that with little or no income and without the necessary skills and support, the excitement of finally moving into their long awaited tenancy is quickly dampened by the frustration of their predicament.

Without resources and practical assistance, they can so easily find themselves reduced to gazing at nicotine-stained ceilings, peeling walls and unidentifiable stains on the floor. Sitting in drab, empty rooms soon extinguishes any hope they had of having a home and moving on in their lives. Instead, depression and apathy sets in; not exactly the fresh beginning they dreamt of as they waited for their new housing to become available.

Despite this gloomy picture there is a ray of hope, offered through the services of our Passing the Baton (PtB) DIY Hit Squads and Homemaker team. We are so grateful to our fantastic team of PtB volunteers who have been willing to roll up their sleeves and get their clothes paint-splattered as they get alongside people who need a little support, practical assistance and motivation to transform their house into a home they are proud of. Our PtB teams are very much in demand, especially as the launch of our Gateway service has increased the number of requests we are dealing with.



We all know what satisfaction there is in a job well done. So imagine the thrill for someone, unable to achieve it alone, to have personally had a hand in transforming their dingy unpleasant room into something refreshing, clean, and after their own taste. Suddenly the place starts to feel like home.

PtB services are a perfect companion to the work of our Homemaker team which sources the furniture essentials which many low-income families are lacking. One single mum with a two and a half year old daughter came to Homemaker for help just after she got her first tenancy. She had been shuttling between the homes of family and friends every couple of weeks since her daughter was born. The young mum had been working part-time for several years but was only able to provide the day-to-day essentials for her daughter and nothing more; furnishing a new house was out

of the question. Thanks to the advocacy of our Homemaker team, this mum and daughter were able to get enough funding to get their home carpeted and to get a washing machine, fridge/freezer and a bed for herself and daughter.

Many of the larger items our Homemaker team pass on come thanks to the generosity of supporters who donate beds, lounge suites and other items of furniture and white goods. When our Homemaker team directs these much-needed items to those who have nothing, we not only provide for their basic needs, but also in turn help reduce the risk of them losing their long-awaited tenancy. Homemaker helped 903 households last year. We know it is invaluable in giving people the proper start they need, yet the service made a loss last year; we really need your support.

There's a parallel between the TV home makeover candidates who rely on the experts to convert their homes, and the people who come to Bethany for help: both are seeking professional support so that their homes can be transformed.

We see so clearly what a difference simple changes to the home make in people's lives through the many enthusiastic thank you letters Bethany receives. So, next time you are watching a "Changing Rooms" type programme, remember Bethany's home improvement services, and please continue to help us transform the homes and lives of vulnerable people.

If you can help financially, by donating furniture or by volunteering DIY support, please give us a **call on 0131 467 3030**. For furniture donations, please **call 0131 467 3993**.

What's happening in Fife

We currently receive 4,870 visits per year to our Fife drop-ins; demand for these services is high. We want to see the people who come to our drop-ins move on positively and we know that learning plays a significant role in someone's ability to manage their own life, family and home. Although there are many formal learning opportunities in Fife, there is a gap in the provision of facilities that can introduce vulnerable people to education.

The Bridge Project was set up in January 2009 thanks to funding from the Novum Trust and Reliance Security Group who sponsored the Centre for Social Justice Award which Bethany won.

The project was designed to create informal learning opportunities to bridge the gap between a chaotic lifestyle and more structured educational possibilities. We invite potential service users to the Bridge Project through our Fife street work, existing drop-ins and word of mouth.

People who come along have been getting involved in a storytelling project giving them the opportunity to share their life experiences. The stories are either retold orally or written by the individual or transcribed by another person, encouraging creativity, teamwork and positive interaction. Group writing is encouraged and we've already seen one group produce a play which will be performed by some of the service users on Leith FM later this year.

The stories are then published on a blog and in a newsletter and are constructively critiqued which increases confidence, writing skills, advocacy and teamwork and helps people to engage positively.

The Bridge Project now accommodates 11 students; 3 of whom had already started doing mini projects at the Leven drop-in before they joined the project. There are also many others on the fringe of the learning activity, whose chaotic lifestyle and addiction issues make them particularly hard to engage, but who will hopefully also become part of the project as it develops.

Tim, who runs the group, explains that Gerry has been transformed through coming to the group. "I can see it in the way he communicates with people. When he came to us at first, he was often depressed and lacking in confidence. Now he's very confident, and intellectually he's more agile and he says his memory has improved. He appears on the radio and he's written his own play. He's writing all the time. He's also started encouraging others. Gerry puts it simply: "Education has put me on a mission."

Awards

It's been an exciting time for Bethany over the past couple of months. The adjudicators have been busy scrutinising and assessing and we're delighted to announce that Bethany has come through with flying colours!

We are delighted to announce that in June, Bethany won the SCVO TFN "Scottish Charity of the Year" Award 2009. This news came as a wonderful surprise when our name was announced at the awards dinner being up against stiff competition from other excellent charities. Needless to say, we are thrilled!

In the Spring, Bethany was visited by the Investors in People adjudicator to assess our strengths and areas of good practice as an organisation. Below is one of the many enthusiastic comments made in his report: "The IIP Specialist has only observed two other organisations that he would put into the world class status. Bethany Christian Trust sits on the shoulders of these two organisations in terms of the way it is totally committed to delivering the highest levels of service to the people and communities it serves through a skilled and totally dedicated workforce." We are very pleased, and honoured to be so highly commended.

Tim says there are others in whom he has noticed changes in. "When I first met Donna she constantly put up barriers; only communicating in "street talk" and dismissing the learning tasks. However recently when I asked if she wanted to take part in the weekly task, although she initially acted indifferently and appeared disinterested, within 5 minutes she had asked for a pen and went on to complete the task with some enthusiasm. Donna's lifestyle remains chaotic, yet she is moving on from this, helping out in Cornerstone Café where the project is based, and is now slowly becoming an advocate for learning. She has even gone on to win the weekly storytelling competition I set. It has a small prize incentive each week. At first I had to bribe everyone with chocolate to get them to do the tasks, but now they are keen to aim for winning the single prize and get quite into it."

Tim explains that the Bridge Project is incredible at motivating people to focus on tasks and get creative and prove what they can achieve.

He uses his storytelling background and skills to engage those who would perhaps never otherwise engage in learning activities. For him, the greatest achievement is seeing people with chaotic lifestyles become calm and reflective. It's a real sign of progress. "Nobody is impossible to reach, although some may seem so. It takes patience, and won't happen overnight, but this project shows the transforming power of learning and self-reflection".

"This project shows the transforming power of learning and self-reflection".



Bethany at work



Day in the life of Gavin Lawson

In this News Update we speak to Gavin Lawson who is Lead Facilitator for Passing the Baton and Development Manager for Aberdeen. Gavin has worked for Bethany since 2004.

Could you tell us a little about the projects you are involved with?

PtB is a 'Community Integration' project that works with people who have survived homelessness and want to resettle in new areas; also people who are vulnerable and at risk of first time homelessness. We have learned that the key to successful community integration is enabling individuals to build up meaningful and healthy relationships in the immediate vicinity of where they stay and we do this through befriending, social activities, painting and decorating teams and community awareness talks.

In my other role, I'm helping manage the transition process following the merger of Aberdeen City Mission and Bethany. I am involved in helping to sustain and develop the existing Aberdeen services and to create new ones. Part of my role is to build strong relationships with key individuals, churches, agencies and the local authority. I also seek to identify needs in the city and the gaps in service provision to meet those needs. Where I identify this, I then explore the potential for Bethany to play a part in meeting those needs and filling these gaps. So far we've started up the Quay Toastie Club and the Winter Care Shelter in Aberdeen.

Could you talk us through a day in your life at Bethany?

No two days are the same for me. I can be working face-to-face with a service user one day and the next working as part of a National Advisory Group to the Scottish Government. Often it might start at 4am so I can travel up to Aberdeen in time to start at 9am and work right through giving evening presentations or having evening meetings with volunteers. This could see me getting home at midnight or staying over for a couple of days. As Passing the Baton is in demand in so many areas in Scotland, there's a lot of travelling involved in my job. There are extremes; from the long 'caffeine dependent' days of travel, meetings, presentations, training of volunteers and Steering Groups to the quieter days of emails and office work.

What does Bethany give to the service users?

I believe it brings compassion, care and companionship that destroys the feeling that "no-one cares and I'm alone in this". It brings people (staff and volunteers) into their lives that have a real interest in them as an individual and a strong desire to see them become the person they can become. This creates a sense of belonging, which in turn brings emotional security. Bethany also brings with it, professionally trained staff and volunteers who can support people to address their practical, emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual needs.

Our staff and volunteers know how to create safe structures, healthy relational environments, practical focus and drive. This kind of 'presence' in someone's life affords them the opportunity to radically change their life forever; Bethany gave this to me and not many organisations can offer that!

What is your favourite part of the job?

Walking with people through life, seeing them overcome adversity, against all the odds and come through extreme difficulties. To see them not only successfully settle and become valued members of their community, but to then go on to support others to do exactly the same. I love working with such people and I love working with all the volunteers who are just so incredibly passionate, committed and sacrificial. They lay aside other easier things they could be doing and enjoying, to take on the hard and sometimes difficult road of striving to make a significant and lasting contribution to the lives of others.

What is your least favourite part of the job?

Paperwork and interviews for Newsletters!

Why do you do this job?

I feel God's calling me to do this. I believe PtB is His vision and His project to fulfil His purpose and along with all the PtB volunteers we have the privilege of facilitating it.

What does Bethany mean to you?

Over time it has changed from being an organisation that helped me personally to come out of homelessness, addiction and mental health issues to being an organisation that God is using to bring about change across the whole country.

How can our readers help?

This is a time like no other in Scotland. PtB is now in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, West Lothian and Fife and there is a national cry for this service. Demand is such that we don't have enough volunteers to meet the needs. PtB provides a great opportunity for the church to become very visual, influential and effective in bringing about change in our communities. Helping isolated and marginalised individuals to settle to become part of the community. We desperately need volunteers. In Aberdeen, there are lots of needs and gaps in the provision of services. I believe that with more volunteers and finance the church can transform Aberdeen. At this time, there is an amazing window of opportunity and we need to seize it before it's too late - 'Now is the Time'.

What's happening at Martha House

Martha House provides residential support for previously homeless young women and young mothers with babies. We offer women aged 16-21 a chance to start a new life, to live in a settled environment, learn important life-skills and understand that they are valued.

We are delighted to report that over the past year, 9 young women have received a certificate to mark their successful completion of the Resettlement Programme after 12 weeks and one young woman also received a 24 week certificate; we are very proud of each one of them. The programme helps young women gain skills which they will need for independent living. The ceremonies we hold to celebrate their progress and success help to give these young women the encouragement they need to make the most of their lives and realise their potential.

The continuous support, familiar faces, consistent attitudes, rules and expectations all contribute to the young women feeling safe, secure, loved and accepted. It gives them the strength and security to face and tackle the issues they struggle with. One girl who has moved on into her own tenancy said of her time at Martha House:

“Martha House is what made the difference in my life and gave me the confidence to go forward and move on.”

My Pink Sofa

Amy was preparing to move out of Martha House into her own tenancy and had made arrangements to receive a furniture pack for her new home. The night before she was due to leave, she approached one of the project workers and asked if the staff at Martha House could pray that she would be given a pink leather lounge suite for her new tenancy. This request caught the project worker by surprise, and filled her with some trepidation. What chance did this girl have of being given a pink leather lounge suite? Nevertheless, the next morning the staff team gathered for devotions and asked God to provide Amy with a pink sofa for her flat as she had asked.

When the van arrived at her new home Amy was stunned by what she saw. There, waiting for her was a pink leather lounge suite! Amy is a bright, talkative young woman and always

has an answer for everything. However on this occasion she was lost for words. We told her that every time she looks at the sofa she would be able to remember that God loves her. “Yes”, she responded, “I already thought of that.”



Bethany and You

We are extremely grateful for the church gifts we have received in support of our services, and also to the many individuals who give regularly to help homeless people.

It was wonderful to welcome around 150 people to our Care Shelter Thank You event and to have the opportunity to see the faces of those who had so kindly prepared and served hundreds of meals at the Care Shelter this winter. We hope you all enjoyed the event and we'll see you again next year!

We were pleased to recently welcome a party of young ladies from St George's School for Girls to Bethany to hear about our work and to give them a brief tour of our services. If your school or company would like to find out more about Bethany or arrange a visit, please contact Chris McNeil on **0131 625 5323**.

Bethany Sportive

On 8 August Bethany is hosting its first ever Cycle-sportive; that is a cycling challenge event. We were delighted when a keen cycling enthusiast and Bethany supporter offered to organise this event to help us raise money. The event is a 100 mile cycle starting in Lasswade following a route down to Hawick and back and covers an 8,000ft ascent; not for the faint-hearted! There is also a 60 mile route option for the slightly less ambitious entrants. We can take up to 300 riders, so anyone interested in registering should visit our website or call **0131 625 5319** or email sportive@bethanychristiantrust.com

Bethany Walk for Homelessness

Our sponsored walk this year takes place on Saturday 12 September and we are really excited it's at the beautiful location of Loch Leven at Kinross. The route is approximately 11/12 miles, although there are shorter options available. It is almost entirely flat, (except for an optional diversion uphill towards Loch Leven's Café. It's just off the route, but well worth the visit!) Loch Leven is a Scottish National Heritage Site and as well as the rich historic setting with Loch Leven Castle just within a boat trip's reach, the surrounding scenery is absolutely stunning. There is an abundance of wildlife to be seen in the fields and wooded paths around the Loch with various bird hides along the route. Children are welcome. Dogs are permitted at the site, if kept on a lead. A coach will be available to transport walkers from Edinburgh to Kinross and back.

To take part, please visit our website, or call **0131 625 5320** or email events@bethanychristiantrust.com



Bethany and Me – Ronnie's Story

I was brought up in Aberdeen with my two brothers and my parents who were both hard working. I loved school, but when I was entering secondary school, to keep in with the crowd, I felt I had to take cannabis. You just go with the flow at that age, and I never thought it would lead anywhere. However it did. It wasn't long before I was taking LSD, amphetamines, ecstasy, 'vallies & jellies'.



When I was 16 years of age I went to my first all-night rave. Before long I was going to raves in Dundee and Glasgow almost every weekend, funded by my part-time job. This was when I discovered heroin because when the effect of the ecstasy wears off you take heroin to mellow you out and fall asleep.

By 18 years of age I was taking heroin every day and staying with my girlfriend. It may sound odd, but life felt good at the time.

Suddenly, a few years later my girlfriend finished with me and my life fell apart. I started taking anti-depressants.

I was unemployed and unemployable and got into drug dealing. I saw many of my friends who used heroin die, but I couldn't see a way out. Then I met my current partner and we had a son. One day I got busted for drug dealing.

"The thought of going to jail and being away from my partner and son was too much. I knew I had to do something."

At that time I was introduced to the Lighthouse drop-in. John Merson, who heads up the men's group, and the volunteers there were great. They helped me to clean up my act and through them I got offered a job with the Straight Ways Project which gives jobs to ex-offenders, ex-drug users, and other guys who can't get jobs through the Job Centre.

"Straight Ways was good for me and gave me a good structure and routine from Monday to Friday."

I still wanted to do more though, and I met with Gavin Lawson and Douglas Hutcheon to join Passing the Baton.

I met up with Douglas regularly, and he helped me talk through stuff I was struggling with. He helped me to get my driver's licence and now I drive for Straight Ways. Passing the Baton was great. It introduced me to new people and this in turn led to new opportunities. It helped me see and begin to believe that some of my aspirations and hopes for the future could actually happen.

"Through this experience I have changed and grown in confidence."

Over the last few months I have been involved with Passing the Baton in delivering presentations to schools, churches and other groups. Recently we did an Awareness and Information presentation to 220 third year pupils at an Academy in Aberdeen. Helping young people not to make the same mistakes I made has been my passion since I got clean and by becoming a Passing the Baton volunteer, I have been able to fulfill my passion.

"It also allows me the opportunity to work as part of a team in helping other people."

If I can help the people and communities of Aberdeen by talking to them about the dangers of drugs and help people make changes in their lives like I did, then for me I will be doing the things that really matter to me.

"For the first time in a long time I can not only see a future, but I'm excited about my future."