

Welcome to newsletter number 3 - read on for information about Refugee Week, on-going discussions with the County Council (p2) the 2017 Art for Amnesty exhibition and People in Motion (p3).

**Refugee Week 2017 in Malvern** - part of a nation-wide programme of arts, cultural and educational events that celebrate the contribution of refugees and encourages a better understanding between different communities - was run by Malvern Welcomes, People in Motion and Malvern Hills Amnesty Group, who arranged a rich and varied programme of events and displays.

The Yambombers spread a non-verbal message of support for refugees and made the town look great!



The powerful 'I Welcome' exhibition of photos in Malvern Priory, displays in Just So and Iapetus shops as well as the Tourist Information Centre and Malvern Library were interesting and informative.

The week started with the event, 'Shattered Pasts, Shared Futures'. This included moving presentations from Baraa Ehssan Kouja, founder of the charity



From Syria With Love, and Krista Sojo of Project Hope 4 Kids, both of whom spoke about the realities for people who have been forced to leave their



homes, communities, and country. We were given much to reflect upon and the message that we must all continue to educate ourselves and others about the realities of being displaced.

A 'Knit and Natter' session at the Vintage Coffee Shop enabled people to get together to knit squares to be made into much-needed blankets.

Abbey Road Coffee hosted a poetry event dedicated to the refugee situation and an 'open mic' to raise funds. We have many very talented musicians in our area and they came together to sing and play their hearts out.



Karen Argent, from The Letterpress Project, gave a fascinating talk at the Malvern Book Co-operative, highlighting the wealth of literature which tells refugee stories from a variety of perspectives. We all went away from Karen's insightful and passionate presentation eager to read some of the books

which she had recommended.

We rounded off the week with 'A Taste of Syria', which was a lovely, joyous afternoon, hosted at the Vintage Coffee Shop in Malvern Link. We feasted on a variety of delicious dishes, produced by our busy team of cooks and inhaled the aroma of exotic spices to the gentle and atmospheric background music of Martin Thorne and Friends. What a wonderful community event!



It was a lovely, harmonious week and we were pleased to be able to raise awareness of the many issues facing refugees in the current crisis. We also raised over £1500 to help displaced people. We are always touched by the generosity of people in our community and by how much they care.

## The Worcestershire County Council 'not-so-merry-go-round'!

At Malvern Welcomes we've learned a lot about the need to work with other organisations to achieve our objectives, for example through a successful Refugee Week with People in Motion and Malvern Hills Amnesty Group, our hosting and development of Malvern Open Homes and our social and educational events with schools and churches. We're hoping that we're getting closer to welcoming refugees to Malvern.

But Worcestershire County Council (WCC) is a different prospect. Last year, after 2 years of campaigning, we persuaded WCC to become part of David Cameron's pledge to bring 20,000 Syrian refugees to the UK. There was an agreement to take 12 families, not a lot, but a start. They appointed Refugee Action to manage the scheme and the Home Office allocated 50 people now settled in Worcester, Bromsgrove and Redditch. We have worked hard to build links with all welcoming organisations and invited refugees from across the region to events in Malvern to experience our lovely town.

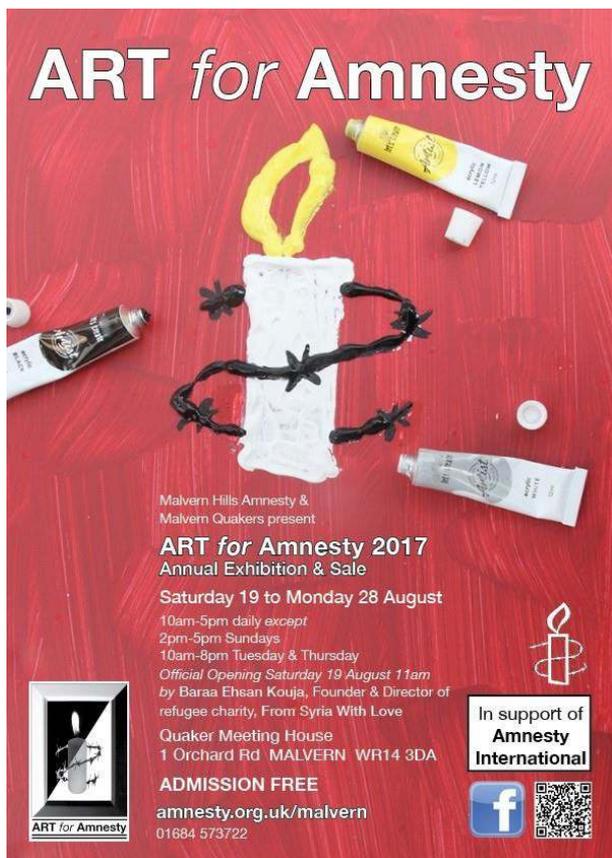
We realised that getting accommodation identified was crucial to our success, assuming more refugees would follow the first 50, and we are delighted that 3 landlords in Malvern are prepared to take refugee families.

Recently we've discovered that WCC has no rolling programme to bring more refugees from Syria or Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children from anywhere else - in spite of the well-documented needs and continually growing numbers at risk. Instead, the council states that it first needs a further year to carefully evaluate the existing programme.

We are so disappointed at this lack of commitment – not for ourselves but for those who so desperately need our help. For us it probably means we will lose our 3 landlords, (who will have to let their properties), and our precious volunteer group may dwindle away.

David Haslam, chair of the newly formed Worcestershire Welcomes Refugees group has written to Councillor Lucy Hodgson, Cabinet Member for Communities and member of the Corporate Parenting Board, and she has agreed to meet members of this group on 22nd September. Whilst we cannot be optimistic given the WCC line, we will obviously continue to promote the needs of refugees and asylum seekers with WCC whenever and however possible.

## ART FOR AMNESTY



**ART for Amnesty**

Malvern Hills Amnesty & Malvern Quakers present

**ART for Amnesty 2017**  
Annual Exhibition & Sale

**Saturday 19 to Monday 28 August**  
10am-5pm daily *except*  
2pm-5pm Sundays  
10am-8pm Tuesday & Thursday  
Official Opening Saturday 19 August 11am  
by Baraa Ehsan Kouja, Founder & Director of  
refugee charity, From Syria With Love

Quaker Meeting House  
1 Orchard Rd MALVERN WR14 3DA

**ADMISSION FREE**  
amnesty.org.uk/malvern  
01684 573722

In support of  
**Amnesty International**

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ART for Amnesty

Malvern Hills Amnesty International and Malvern Quakers present ART FOR AMNESTY 2017, the annual Exhibition and Sale in support of Amnesty International. This year's exhibition is to be opened by Baraa Ehsan Kouja - whose charity From Syria with Love raises funds and more importantly awareness about the refugee crisis, helping people in most need where there is a lack of NGOs. <http://fromsyriawithlove.org/>

Art for Amnesty is Malvern's annual exhibition for the best of local artists, professional and amateur - around a hundred - to show their work. They contribute works for sale, 70% going to the artist, 30% to Amnesty International. 2017 sees our 16th exhibition and also marks 56 years of Amnesty International.

Works on display range from paintings and prints to woodcarving, ceramics and textiles. Artists' greeting cards are on sale, as well as art books from Books for Amnesty, Malvern. We accept payment by cash or cheque - sorry, no credit or debit cards.

## NEWS FROM PEOPLE IN MOTION

Over the last couple of years People In Motion has been helping people and organisations across Worcestershire and Herefordshire respond to the European and Middle East refugee crisis.

We've collected over £100,000 of donated aid items and delivered them to refugee camps in France, Greece and Syria. We've supported volunteers working in Greece, Serbia and France to distribute aid, feed people and build infrastructure. We've raised money that's been spent on Phone Credit, Firewood, Transport and Equipment, and recently we've funded the development of an aid distribution facility in Šid, Serbia and a spotting telescope for one of the Greek Islands.

The situation in camps across Europe from Calais to Greece is grim with massive shortage of food and clothing, so every little thing can make a big difference.

You can join us by:

- Collecting aid items needed in refugee camps such as Sleeping Bags, Blankets, Socks, Shoes\*
- Joining one of our sorting sessions at our warehouse between Malvern and Bromyard\*
- Exploring the options for volunteering
- Being part of our one-day festival "Under One Sky" on September 23<sup>rd</sup> in Hereford.\*

Under One Sky will be our major fundraiser for the year – A One Day Festival at the Left Bank in Hereford. There will be music, food and activities – why not get involved as a performer, helper, face painter...

\* Details of all our activities including a list of items we need and time of sorting sessions can be found on our website [www.people-in-motion.co.uk](http://www.people-in-motion.co.uk) or on [facebook.com/peopleinmotion15](https://www.facebook.com/peopleinmotion15)

*Don't forget to get in touch - website : [malvernwelcomes.org](http://malvernwelcomes.org), facebook or e mail - [info@malvernwelcomes.org](mailto:info@malvernwelcomes.org)*