

Quiet first night for appreciated angels

Friday 10 July saw the first Street Pastor patrol in Eastleigh town centre. After a time of prayer with fellow Christians and a briefing from the local police, four volunteers from local churches went out at around 8.30pm.

Almost immediately the team chatted to a girl who had been spoken to the week previously when all 19 of the commissioned street pastors had gone out after the commissioning service. After chatting to her and her friends the team headed to Grantham Green where they chatted to some small groups of young people. Following on from the Fair Oak Street Pastors the team had some sweets with them and they proved popular in breaking the ice. The team spoke to a parent of one lad. She was enthusiastic about the scheme, even more so when she found out that Richard Kelly, the head of Quilley School of Engineering where she worked, had helped in training the team.

The Eastleigh music festival had begun that night. The team walked up to the festival via the Pirelli cable estate, stopping on the way to have conversations with those outside the Good Companion pub and those outside the Comrades Club. There the team spoke with two ladies (mother and daughter) who were very glad to hear of the Street Pastor initiative.

Some time was then spent going into the various restaurants and takeaways in the town centre introducing the team to the owners and workers.

After a break for a drink and writing brief notes on the events of the first half of the evening the team headed back into the town. Although the music festival was on the town was quiet, it was a rather damp evening. On meeting a couple the team found the girl had heard of the Southampton Street Pastors and her boyfriend seemed quite impressed with the idea.

At around 11.30pm the team went to the Litten Tree pub - the venue where Eastleigh Street Pastor's project had been launched in January - which was quite full and lively. One of the team spotted a girl who the team had spoken to earlier. This time a deeper conversation followed and it transpired that she had lost a baby recently. The encounter ended with hugs. On the street the team found a man who was quite drunk, but still able to walk, heading for a taxi. They talked to him for a short while ensuring he was OK. At midnight the team went to the railway station and spoke to some taxi drivers awaiting trains due in. The team ended their patrol just after 12.30am.

The team had been encouraged by the positive response they had received from so many people. One of the team said "The night went well but it was quiet. Everybody said so. The Lord was easing us in gently."

If you are a member of a local church and interested in becoming a Street Pastor a new training course will begin in Eastleigh on 24 October 2009. For more information about the training and Eastleigh Street Pastors please contact the co-ordinator Steve Smallwood on 07538 054483.