

# David Cameron won't let Kingston be forgotten

David Cameron put Kingston's crime and anti-social behaviour on his agenda when he visited the borough in April.

Mr Cameron said he came here because "the outer London boroughs can feel quite forgotten".

Meeting with Kingston Borough Police, Helen Whately and David Cameron also praised the Street Pastors:

Street Pastors are a voluntary organisation, supported by Kingstonfirst, that help to make Kingston a safer place at night.

## A night in the life of a Street Pastor

It's 9.30pm on a cool Friday night. The team gathers and chats, some of them haven't met since training. At 10pm the leader briefs the volunteers, goes over last week's notes and the police briefing is passed on. "Keep together as a group" explains the team leader. "We don't engage in violent disputes. Remember, safety first." Now we pray for 15 minutes to ask God for protection and peace in the town centre and to guide us. Then we pack up our backpack with first aid and resuscitation kit, wet wipes, tissues, alcohol rub, space blankets, cards, gloves and the now-famous flip-flops. It's 10.15pm and we, the Kingston Street Pastors, are ready to set out. Our usual route takes us down to the river by The Ram. People greet us with the familiar question: "Hey mate, what's a street pastor? Do you sell pasta or pasties?" We don't take offence to these questions and find it all good banter.

So, let me answer the question. We are members of the local churches, caring for the vulnerable in Kingston town centre from 10pm until 4am on Fridays and Saturdays. As we go, we clear bottles off the streets which could become weapons in the wrong hands. We work our way up the river to McCluskys, greet the door staff, and then move on to Essence, where we meet more staff. They work hard and we have succeeded in building a good relationship.

We travel through All Saints, greeting homeless people, and pass down Clarence Street and round to the High Street, where we will clear more bottles. After walking past the Kings Tun, Oceana, Wilkinson and down Eden Street, we arrive at the Works and then head back to base for a cup of tea.

### The late shifts

The mood changes on the next shift, as people appear intoxicated outside clubs. We pass on directions and hand out flip-flops, since high heels are a hindrance for them at this time of the night. We also lend phones to help people who have become separated. Our presence often deters people from getting silly or fighting.

At 1.45am we guide people to the night buses and taxi booths and as 2am comes it's time for the last shift.

We concentrate on the three main clubs and come across upset young ladies, often in tears, and we comfort them.

And then at 4am, we have a last look round and go back to base, where peace reigns at last.

Paul Jacobs



www.kingstonfirst.co.uk



(above) PC John Eams, Met Police, Rev Les Isaacs, Ascension Trust, Ed Davey MP, Ch Supt Angela List and 150 local residents at the launch, where Ed Davey, MP for Kingston and Surbiton, said how delighted he was to see how the local authority, the police and the churches could work together to make Kingston Town Centre a good and safer place to go to in the evening. Anyone wishing to receive more information on Street Pastors should contact the team via Oxygen office at St Peter's Church on 020 8547 0566 or via splk@oxygen-online.org

## Street Pastors launched in Kingston

STREET PASTORS Kingston - a new church based initiative - was launched on Thursday 1 December.

Volunteer 'street pastors' from the local churches will be on the streets of Kingston Town Centre into the 'wee small hours' to help and listen to the most vulnerable of the 15,000+ people who use the town at night. The scheme is being coordinated by local Christian youthwork charity Oxygen and Kingston URC.

Bishop Richard joined the Mayor of Kingston, Ed Davey MP, Ch Supt Angela List and 150 local residents at the launch, where Ed Davey, MP for Kingston and Surbiton, said how delighted he was to see how the local authority, the police and the churches could work together to make Kingston Town Centre a good and safer place to go to in the evening.

Anyone wishing to receive more information on Street Pastors should contact the team via Oxygen office at St Peter's Church on 020 8547 0566 or via splk@oxygen-online.org

## Volunteers honoured with awards

by Alita Hown

Volunteers from across Kingston were honoured at a special ceremony last week. Kingston Volunteer Centre (KVC) organised the event, held at the Hawker Centre, Kingston, on December 6, to thank people from the borough who have contributed to more than 300 hours in the community in the last year. KVC works with more than 20 organisations and acts as a central point for people who wish to volunteer. Organisations such as Action Menap, Kingston URC Network and Rejuvenate Kingston have asked to create volunteers to attend ceremonies and collect a certificate from Kingston's mayor, Councillor Svitlana Mirza.

couldn't afford to buy these people but they came and work for us for nothing." Maria Jarvis, manager of KVC, also received an Invectors in Volunteers award from Councillor Mirza. She told the audience: "This recognition is about recognising and rewarding all the volunteers. It is just brilliant how many groups have nominated their volunteers who want to make the world a better place to live in." Councillor Mirza said his experience volunteering at the Millers Centre after he was paralysed in 1993 stood him in good stead to be a councillor. "From being a volunteer I managed to excel in the role of councillor and then mayor," he said. "Volunteering gave me an insight into local government and now I am in local government I have an appreciation of the voluntary sector so I have developed a global view of how the borough is managed. Volunteers are special people that money can't buy - they have to be saluted."



Good work: Tracy O'Shea and Paul Jacobs from Kingston's street pastors. Credit: KT 1610

## Gotta lotta lotta bottle

Kingston's Street Pastors have picked up about 4,000 bottles from the streets on their Friday and Saturday night patrols, helping prevent broken glass injuries. On May 26 a 22-year-old man was blinded in one eye after a stranger threw a broken bottle at his face in Eden Street. The Street Pastors team, made up of about 40 volunteers from Kingston's churches, has been making Friday and Saturday night patrols for nearly a year offering



## THE NEW BOYS IN BLUE HELPING REVELLERS

Street pastors celebrate second anniversary of helping drinkers

By Helen Clark

IF YOU have hit the town on a Friday or Saturday night over the past couple of years, the chances are you will have spotted their blue sweaters making their way past Kingston's busy pubs and clubs. Since they first took to the town centre's streets, Kingston's street pastors have spent nearly 4,500 hours keeping an eye on revellers and making sure they get home safely.

This week they celebrated their second birthday, and the team is thriving, training more and more volunteers.

There are now 40 volunteers, from churches across Kingston, who come together every Friday and Saturday between 10pm and 4am. A further eight people are currently in training.

They are supported by 22 prayer pastors, who pray in church and prepare tea and coffee for when the street pastors are on breaks. Another 100 'home prayer' pastors pray for their safety from home.

"You see all sorts of things and every night's different," said street pastor Paul Jacobs.

"It's an eye opener, but a good eye opener. Over the two years people have begun to recognise us and understand what we do to begin with they thought we were there to

disturb them but now appear to fill town centres across the country.

"People from outside Kingston often say to us that they wish their towns had street pastors," said Paul.

"We deal with everything from people looking for somewhere to get some food or a taxi to trying to calm down arguments or looking after people who've had a bit too much to drink.

"People appreciate our help and we sometimes get emails or people coming up to us to say thank you.

Volunteers undertake a packed training schedule. The course takes place on 12 Saturdays over five months and covers skills to see them through every eventuality.

"We get trained in drugs awareness, mentoring, first aid, knowing our community, counselling and sociology," said Paul.

"There's a great interaction between the

pastors and the people we meet. There's enormous job satisfaction, knowing that you're helping these people. It's also good to know that we're forcing up the police. All they can do with drunk people is arrest them or let them go but we're able to sit down with them, talk to them and make sure they get home safely.

The scheme costs about £25,000 a year to run and is funded by local churches, Kingston First, Kingston Council, pubs and clubs and donors. To donate £10 a month contact Paul on 020 8547 0566.

Inspector Julian Hagley, of Kingston Police, said: "They have no doubt saved many police hours by dealing with minor incidents where officers may have been called in the past, such as welfare checks which the Pastors are now able to resolve, contributing to the reduction in violence in the town centre during the past few years."



- ### THE WORD ON THE STREET
- Since Kingston's street pastors formed on June 16 2006 they have:
- Removed 10,877 bottles or glasses from the streets
  - Spoken to 7,248 people
  - Arrested 250 incidents
  - Returned two knives from the streets
  - Handed out 200 pairs of flip flops to women with aching feet
  - Handed out 150 space blankets during cold weather
  - Given six electric fans to the streets

PHOTO: GUY LAWRENCE