

me news

Message from Chairman

Welcome to another edition of ME News. We have had a busy year with community engagement and working closely with our strategic partners. With the pressure of funding and budget cuts elsewhere we are very grateful for the support we receive which allows us to continue and flourish. The Forum is pleased to announce that we are assisting the launch of 'Polska Together', a West Berkshire based Polish community group.

In addition to existing Service Level Agreements, the Forum has signed a contract with PCT Berkshire West, to engage with our members on many health related initiatives. We continue to work on our Health & Wellbeing agenda through a Badminton Tournament held earlier in the

year, an Eat 4 Health course and the ongoing Bollywood dance and Hatha Yoga classes. There is also a wonderful community cookbook being published with recipes supplied by Forum friends and members.

The Forum has taken lead in West Berkshire on many new initiatives and programmes including celebrating Black History Month at West Berkshire Museum, and presenting the Anne Frank Exhibition at Newbury Central Library. Both these events were very well attended and we hope to offer something similar in the future.

The ME Forum is proud to be involved in establishing Empowering West Berkshire (EWB). It is setup to enable and empower community groups, charities and voluntary

bodies to achieve their objectives; assisting groups though support advice and guidance.

We now look forward to many more cultural events, but most importantly engaging with our stake holders while continuously making new friends.



Holocaust Memorial Events in West Berkshire

West Berkshire Minority Ethnic Forum hosted Holocaust Memorial Day 2011 in Newbury. This was a two part programme which began with the Anne Frank Exhibition at the Newbury Library in January 2011. This was the first event in the twentieth anniversary year of the Anne Frank Trust UK. Gillian Walnes, Executive Director of the Anne Frank Trust UK, opened the exhibition with a reminder of how and why this well known story is still so relevant to society today. Over 500 people, including students from several local schools, visited the exhibition. A team of trained Anne Frank guides, including two students from Newbury College were on hand to assist anyone.

The second part of this programme was on March 9th at Newbury Town Hall with an evening event to mark the "Untold Stories" theme for HMD 2011. Nadeem Soomro, Chair of West Berkshire Minority Ethnic Forum welcomed almost sixty guests to this event. Opening remarks were made by Ian Grose, Mayor of Newbury, Lady

Stevenson, High Sherriff of the Royal County of Berkshire and Graham Pask, Chairman of West Berkshire Council.

The main speaker was Ruth Barnett who came to England aged four, on the Kindertransport in 1939 from Berlin. Overcoming a difficult start to life in a foreign country, Ruth became a successful psychotherapist and now speaks to groups of all ages. She recently wrote her autobiography entitled "A Woman of No Nationality".

She spoke of the current prejudice shown to Gypsy communities and warned how we must all work to prevent such prejudice and discrimination from taking hold.

On the theme of "Untold Stories" Mr Mike Fuhr spoke movingly about his father's escape from Austria by train; where he was befriended by a senior Nazi officer.

Allan Mercado from Newbury spoke about an old boy from his school, St Bartholomew's. He was a medical student, and was sent to help at Belsen Concentration Camp.

Both events were project managed by Marcia Perkin; an Imperial War Museum Fellow in Holocaust Education. Marcia advises on the Holocaust to schools and organisations, frequently linking this with tackling prejudice and discrimination. She may be contacted at marcia.perkin@ntlworld.com



Chinese New Year Celebrating Year of the Rabbit



This event has become so big that we had to change our venue from Newbury College to St Bartholomew's School in Newbury! We had well over 700 guests attending the event which was full of dynamic and colourful dance, music and art. This Year we were delighted to have the involvement of other groups representing countries and cultures that celebrate Chinese New Year outside of China; this added another element to this vibrant and colourful event. The Forum with the support of West Berkshire Council and Falkland Primary School continues to offer Chinese and Mandarin classes, which are open to Primary School aged children; please contact the Forum for further information about these classes.



Other Community E

Black History Month

With the support of West Berkshire Museum at the Wharf in Newbury, we were able to host the first ever Black History Month event in West Berkshire.



The event spanned over two weeks with an exhibition featuring artefacts from around the

World, presentations, and thought-provoking discussion evenings looking at issues of intolerance around the World in recent history. Cllr Julian Swift-Hook, Shadow Executive Member for Equalities, Adult Social Care and ICT for West Berkshire Council states "I thoroughly enjoyed the Black History Month programme put on by the Forum – it wasn't just about black history, there were some fascinating presentations about many minority groups and cultures and the difficulties that they face even today in our apparently open multicultural society". Cllr Swift-Hook also adds "I was particularly interested to learn more about the different traveller communities, their way of life, and the prejudices they face". We hope that the Forum is able to have a similar event to celebrate Black History Month in 2011.



Diwali Festival of Light

The WBMEF, in partnership with the Corn Exchange and the West Berkshire Indian Society, presented a Diwali celebration to a full house; with dance and music performances and an Indian style disco. We were delighted to have the presence of so many dignitaries at the event, including Lady Stevenson, the High Sherriff of Berkshire. The event was very well attended attracting people from all walks of life, coming together to absorb Indian culture in this joyous festival of light.



Thank you to all our volunteers

The Forum is grateful to the many volunteers who support our events and projects. Many of our bigger events like Culture Fest and Chinese New Year celebrations could not happen without the support of volunteers and helpers. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer and helping out at cultural events please contact the Forum.

Engagement & Updates

Engaging with the local Mosque

The Forum, along with the local Muslim community have held a number of Iftar evenings at the Mosque, during the month of Ramadan over the past few years. The Iftar evening is an opportunity for everyone to break the fast together, and gain a better understanding of Islam and Ramadan. These have been very well attended, attracting people from many different faiths and backgrounds.

A number of local scout & beaver groups have also visited Newbury Mosque in order to gain their badge. Rachel Fisher, Assistant District Commissioner for Kennet Beaver Scouts & Beaver Scout Leader at 1st Wash Common Scout Group commented on the importance of their visit. "The Beaver Scouts thoroughly enjoyed their visit to Newbury mosque back in March. This was a great opportunity for them to learn about another faith within their community, and part of the badge work that the youngsters work towards, is to visit a place of worship other than their own; taking part in this visit allowed them to achieve this. The evening was very informative and perfectly delivered



taking into consideration the young age range".

This is an enlightening experience for the young people and also for their adult leaders, many of whom have never entered a Mosque before. This is a great opportunity to learn something about another faith and gain an understanding of others that live in the local community. Joanne Bassett, Assistant Cub Scout Leader at 3rd Newbury Cubs said "What a fantastic evening we had at the mosque. It was very enlightening to learn about the similarities between the Christian and Islamic faith. I was amazed at how well the Cubs listened and the amount of questions they asked afterwards". Both groups enjoyed the experience and in particular, trying the different foods offered by a local restaurant.

If you would like to arrange a group visit to the Mosque, please contact the Forum.



Polska Together



We are pleased to support the launch of a newly formed Polish community group "Polksa Together". We have been working with them to organise their first event "Children's Day", which hopes to attract many families from West Berkshire. The aim of the group is to offer support to new families in the area and to provide an opportunity for families to network and establish contacts. If you are interested in being part of Polska Together then please contact us.

Health & Wellbeing

We are working very closely with NHS Berkshire West and the Eat 4 Health team on a number of projects and events. The Forum offer

Hatha Yoga classes in Newbury and continue to run Bollywood dance classes at Trinity School. We have been running a 10 week Eat 4 Health weight management course and also organised a very successful badminton tournament. The Forum with the support of NHS Berkshire West have compiled a latest edition of our community cookbook "East to West", which contains a diverse selection of recipes supplied by WBMEF members and friends.



We are planning a community cricket match and leader training for Walk 4 Health in the coming months. We hope to continue with the health & well being agenda offering a variety of initiatives to West Berkshire communities.

Community Learning

We are continuing to offer Basic skills in computing and English classes for speakers of other languages. In partnership with Newbury College we are looking into supporting some classes and workshops for the Traveller Communities in West Berkshire. If you would like to find out more about any learning opportunities please contact us.

Local Elections...

Four members of West Berkshire's visible minority ethnic communities were recently successful when they stood as candidates in local elections (5 May 2011). In the next issue we will be interviewing the local Councillors and getting their views on why it's important to get involved in democracy.



Mukesh Bansal,
Newbury Town Councillor



Marvellous Ford,
Thatcham Town
Councillor



Manohar Gopal,
West Berkshire
Councillor



Carol Jackson-Doerge,
West Berkshire
Councillor

mission statement

THE FORUM SEEKS TO:

- Celebrate the ethnic/cultural and spiritual diversity in West Berkshire
 - Build trust and understanding between community groups and statutory service providers by working together and utilising joint resources
 - Influence and support community safety initiatives
- If you share this vision to create a more equitable society within West Berkshire then please come and join us for:

SOCIAL EVENTS

Community Dialogue, Festivals, Parents & Children Clubs...

SPORTING EVENTS

Badminton, Football, Cricket...

EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Classes in English, Mandarin, Bangla, Arabic...

DIALOGUE AND DISCUSSION

Faith, Diversity and Community Cohesion...

*YOUR INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY IS THE ONLY
CRITERION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE WBMEF.*



west berkshire
me forum

www.all2gether.org.uk

Executive Committee

Chairperson

Nadeem Soomro

Vice Chair

Mukesh Bansal • Marveta Hinds
Raveesh John

General Secretary

Ruwan Uduwera-Perera

Treasurer

Shamim Ahmed

Community Project Manager

Waheeda Soomro (non-exec)

We hope you have found our third issue of *me* News informative.
We will be keeping you updated with our work in the next edition of this twice yearly newsletter.
If you would like details on specific projects and events please email: waheeda@all2gether.org.uk
For general information and enquiries about the WBMEF please contact General Secretary:
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west berkshire *me* forum

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