

WDGB

Newsletter

Summer 2004

**"All I want is a room somewhere,
Far away from the cold night air"**

The inspiration behind the WDGB is the Christian belief that we should care for the helpless and rejected "for God's sake." Jesus said "I was a stranger and you took me in."

Have I got news for you? Have I got good news for you? The answer is yes to both, as the Woodspring Deposit Guarantee Board has continued to expand its good work in the last year. The only drawback is the grim name, which the grandson of our Patron said would be better as *We Does Good Beds*.

First the facts. The WDGB has arranged decent affordable accommodation for some 1500 homeless folk of all ages, by maintaining a network of landlords, other charities and the Local Authority. The key to success is "networking". Gary, the Manager, describes our work as one wedge of a cake, which with other wedges makes a whole cake, in the shape of housing and support for the most vulnerable in our community. Gary and Assistant Manager Maggie, pictured here, keep personal contact with other helping agencies.

Life behind the facts. The office is designed to make callers feel at ease, and so is comfy and relaxed. The room is light and airy on the top floor of the YMCA building overlooking Grove Park in Weston. There are two desks and assorted chairs. It is occupied by Gary who impresses as kind, competent, sympathetic and streetwise and Maggie who is petite, chic, resourceful and

(Continued on page 2)



WDGB LAUNCHES NEW INITIATIVE

Amongst the single homeless the position of under 25 year olds remains of great concern. They have many disadvantages, but a major problem is that the low level of Housing Benefit for this group makes many a landlord reluctant to give them a tenancy. The problem of the landlord is further compounded by the length of time it takes for the Housing Benefit to be processed and for the landlord to receive any rent. In order to alleviate this latter problem we have embarked on a new venture – the Rent Guarantee Scheme – in partnership with North Somerset Council and Liberata, the organisation that manages Housing Benefit. Under this scheme we pay the rent in advance to the landlord who accommodates an under 25 year old tenant. We are reimbursed later when the process has run its course. To administer the scheme, we are fortunate to have been able to employ Joy Palmer who has considerable knowledge and expertise in this field.

ON OTHER PAGES

FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE	2
HAVE FUN	3
WHY WE CAME TO SUPPORT THE WDGB	3
FROM THE CHAIRMAN	3
HOW YOU AND YOUR CHURCH CAN HELP	4

HOUSING THE HOMELESS

Tel: 01934-617617



For Better, For Worse

I have worked in a laundry, a café, the post office and a finishing school, amongst other diverse places, but Portishead Precinct was my first experience of begging in the street.

The day started damp and threatened to get wet. There were definite signs of butterflies in the tummy and “why on earth am I doing this?” was the predominant thought at breakfast. The promise “For better, FOR WORSE” leant heavily on the second half of the phrase as I accompanied the Honorary Treasurer, my husband Nasser, to Portishead for a street collection.

From the moment of our arrival at the Precinct the atmosphere changed to cheerful carnival. The other Beggars were positively radiant as they spread the word by distributing leaflets and charmed passers by into throwing their coins into the coffers of WDGB. Gary and Maggie had turned up in their free time with their contagious enthusiasm.

Thanks to Management Board Member Sue and Grandson a splendid key pattern was prepared on the pavement. So I spent the morning on my knees as Honorary Artistic Director of the key design; shining pound coins heaped in the hole in the middle, silver at the top and copper at the thin tail of the key.

Many of the generous contributors were friends of the Portishead collectors and no one known to Chairman Janet or Sue passed by in vain. We celebrated this generosity by taking coffee (with cream!) in the comfortable lounge above the card shop and felt glad at having spread blessing on our donors as well as the homeless. For “The Lord loveth a cheerful giver.”

There were further delights in store when, as a prize for most closely guessing the amount collected, Gary, came with his wife Jill to our home for a Persian meal and memories of our fun begging in the cause of WDGB.



The Treasurer featured as Cheese of the Week

O well, sometimes it turns out “FOR BETTER” after all!

Joy Madani

"All I want....."

(Continued from page 1)

reassuring. Another homely occupant is Megan, Maggie's friendly sheepdog. Last week on one day 16 folk climbed the stairs to seek help with finding somewhere to live. They all had tragic backgrounds of rejection and disaster behind them. Some of their own making, others such as threats from mother's new boyfriend, quite beyond their control. The hurdles in the way of solving their problems are many, but high among them is the filling in of massive forms to claim, for instance, housing benefit; this is 37 pages long. This for a tenant who may not be able to read. For the landlord the WDGB has prepared the Legal Tenancy Agreement, which has been vetted by the Local Authority Legal Department.

The skill Maggie and Gary bring to their task is in matching landlord and tenant. One satisfied landlord recently came to them and reported that his brother had bought a three-bedroom house which he wished to let. Two young folk and one man in his 50's were able to move in. All rooms have a fridge and fitted furniture. The older tenant was speedily able to find good employment as he now has “an address”, for the first time after successfully

completing alcohol rehabilitation.

Problems. The £50 limit on housing benefit for under 25's does not apply if pregnant. This encourages irresponsible behaviour. Gary has therefore talked to school groups to describe likely consequences in the ruin of the future of both mother and babe, prematurely ending the mother's youth and prospects.

Rejoicing. We have recently been able to add Joy to the staff. She will spend 10 hours a week on the Rent Guarantee Scheme to increase the offers of accommodation for the young.

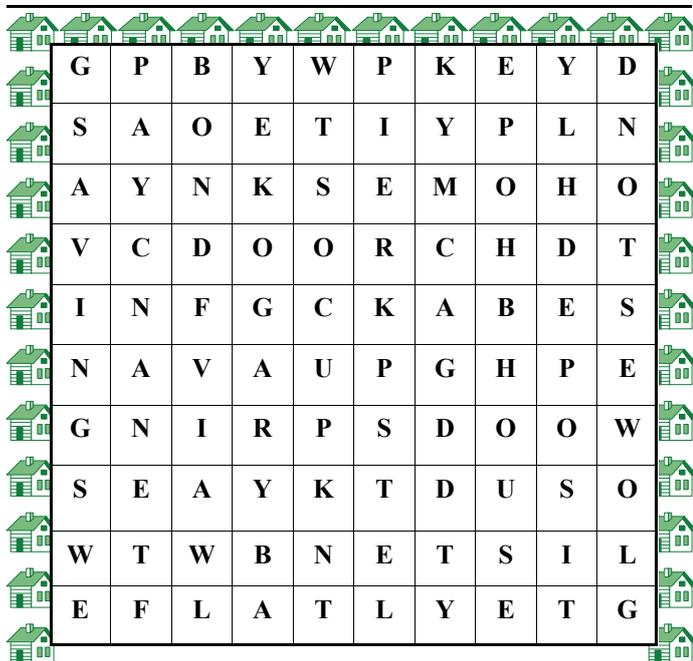
“All I want is a room somewhere,
Far away from the cold night air”

A basic need ever since our ancestors sought shelter in the caves of Cheddar.

Providing this room WITH YOUR HELP becomes “a piece of cake”



HAVE FUN



To complete the word search first find the following words in the grid - some letters are used in more than one word.

BOND, COST, CUP, DEPOSIT, DOOR, FLAT, GARY, GLOW, HAPPY, HOME, HOPE, HOUSE, KEY, LETS, LISTEN, LOCK, NEW, PAY, PIER, RATE, SAVINGS, SOFA, TENANCY, VAN, WESTON, WOODSPRING, YMCA,

One key word is mentioned three times!! When all the words have been found some unchecked letters will be left. These spell out something very important twice.

For your diary

The next Homelessness Sunday Service at Emmanuel Church, WsM (behind Town Hall) is on
January 30th 2005 at 3 pm

Why we came to support the

Inspired by God, Corinne and I came to England from the USA in 1986 to care for my ailing parents. Visiting Bristol, we were horrified to see large numbers of homeless people sleeping rough on the streets. We soon involved ourselves with some of them, targeting the forgotten group of the middle-aged. Inheriting my parent's house by 1992 gave us the opportunity to invite two of these needy souls to live with us - this proved more daunting than our enthusiasm ever could have foreseen!

By 1996 we had to sell the big house, and we feared for our two friends. It was just at this time when a representative from a homelessness organisation came to a meeting of Churches Together in Portishead to talk about a successfully proven scheme for homeless people. Immediately it dawned on us that this was indeed the way forward. We decided that the proceeds we received from busking would, from time to time, be given to this local organisation which came to be known as the WDGB.

We praise God for his perfect timing - for his mercy enduring for ever.

Paula

From the Chairman's report to the AGM 2004

"...Many new initiatives have been started during the past year and my thanks go to them [The Management Team] for all the hard work they continue to do.

"Our Charity continues to grow and provide homes for our clients and the work being done for families and care-leavers is particularly relevant.

"I see our ongoing challenge once again as Awareness Raising - since the problems we deal with are not going away and it is vital that we continue our work to help those less fortunate than ourselves."

Janet Turner



WDGB IS A CHARITY FOR HOUSING HOMELESS PEOPLE IN NORTH SOMERSET BY GUARANTEEING A DEPOSIT TO ENABLE THEM TO RENT ACCOMMODATION. SINCE ITS BEGINNING IN 1996, IT HAS SUPPORTED SOME 1500 PEOPLE TO FIND A HOME, HALF OF THEM YOUNG PEOPLE WHO FELL OUTSIDE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF STATUTORY BODIES. IT OPERATES THROUGHOUT NORTH SOMERSET AND SO IS ABLE TO HELP LOCAL PEOPLE. IT RUNS TWICE WEEKLY DROP-IN SURGERIES FOR ADVICE ON HOUSING AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS AND GIVES SUPPORT TO LANDLORDS. IT PAYS PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE PLIGHT OF UNDER 25 YEAR OLDS AND THOSE WHO LEAVE CARE. THE CHARITY EMPLOYS 3 STAFF MEMBERS AND IS SUPPORTED BY INDIVIDUALS AND CHURCHES IN THE AREA AND BY NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL.

How you and your church can help

- Keep WDGB, its staff, tenants and landlords in your prayers.
- Contribute to the "start-up boxes" for the new tenants. These include items such as tea, sugar, coffee, biscuits and toiletries. Contact the WDGB Office for details.
- Consider joining the Board of WDGB and oversee its work. It has usually four meetings a year. You can sample the next Board Meeting on Tuesday 12th October 2004 at 7:30 pm at the YMCA, Weston super Mare.
- If you are in a position to offer accommodation for letting, ring our staff who will explain the safeguards and support WDGB is able to offer.
- If you can make regular giving please complete the **Banker's Order**. Your Gift can be worth even more if you are a taxpayer. Please sign the **Gift Aid Declaration**, so that we can claim an extra 28% from the Inland Revenue at no cost to you. Please fill in your name and

Please complete and return to WDGB, at the address below.

I/We would like to support the work of WDGB in housing the homeless. I enclose cheque
 Banker's Order
 Please accept my/our donation of: £250 £100
 £50 £25 £10 Other £.....(Please make cheque payable to WDGB)

BANKER'S ORDER

To: **The Manager** (Please write full name & address of your bank or building Society).....

Postcode:.....

Please pay the NatWest Bank, Portishead Branch,
 PO Box 222, 25, High Street Portishead. BS99 5AN
 Sort Code: **54-30-06** for the credit of Woodspring
 Deposit Guarantee Board, a registered charity;
 Account Number: **99640562**

The sum of: £.....(figures)(words)
 commencing on:.....(date) and continuing thereafter
 Monthly Quarterly Annually until I give
 you notice in writing. (please enter below your address &
 account details)

Account Holder's Name:.....

Account Number:.....Sort Code:.....

Address:.....

Postcode:.....

Signature:.....Date:.....

GIFT AID DECLARATION

I want Woodspring Deposit Guarantee Board to treat:

- *The enclosed donation of £.....and
- *all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise as Gift Aid donation. (* delete as appropriate)

Signature:.....Date:.....

Please note that in order for us to reclaim tax, you must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to that we claim on your donation in the tax year.

WDGB

Charity No: 1045354

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Email: wdgb@aol.com

Patron: Tony Targett President: The Rev Alan Taylor

Management Committee: Sue Betts, Isabel Cummings (Secretary), Xavier-Michel Duverger MBE (Vice Chairman), Chris Hibbs, Nasser Madani (Treasurer), Ian Peddlesden, Gaynor Targett and Janet Turner (Chairman).

Staff: Gary Twinn (Manager), Maggie Lyons (Assistant Manager), Joy Palmer (Rent Guarantee Scheme Officer)