

# Kairos News

Issue 4

December 2012

Posi  
FaNtastic  
To Shine  
HaPpy  
AchLevable  
PRide  
FeElings  
SucceeD

Find out more about our creative writing workshops on pages 2 and 3

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## Measuring Success

Sitting in Coventry Cathedral on a crisp October afternoon, I am eagerly awaiting the graduation ceremony to begin and to catch a glimpse of Shelley in her cap and gown.

As I wait, I find myself thinking about success, what it means and how it is measured. No doubt a graduation ceremony is the pinnacle of a learner's success, proof that they



have conquered their education and gained recognition in the field of their studies. As I sat looking out to the students, I can't see Shelley; the donning of the cap and gown has made it impossible to spot her in a sea of other graduates, all there to celebrate this precious moment in their journey. I feel conflicted by this inability to identify the woman I am there to support. On the one hand, I feel enormously proud of her, that she is there (somewhere!) as a peer and an equal, in her rightful place. On the other hand, I feel an injustice that Shelley has blurred in with the graduate crowd because, surely, she is not 'just



another graduate'. She's the woman who has overcome the hardest obstacles, climbed the steepest mountains, crossed the deepest abysses, fought the toughest battles...and that's how I measure success.

I am proud of Shelley, because I know her story. It's in the knowledge of the battles that the victory is truly understood.

*Lucia* (Project Manager)

## Jen Gets Cold, Wet and Muddy for Kairos

This autumn I took part in 2 events to raise money for Kairos - the Birmingham Half Marathon and the Midlands Major.

I had a great time at both, this was my third half marathon so I knew what to expect and thoroughly enjoyed running with hundreds of people who were also raising money for charity and being cheered on by the crowds.

It was a lovely atmosphere and a glorious sunny day and I'm sure both of these things contributed to me

doing my best ever time - 2 hours and 9 minutes.

The Midlands Major was completely different and I wasn't quite sure what to expect. It was described as a 10k run with an obstacle every kilometre, planned by the ex-soldiers who run British Military Fitness clubs. We waded through rivers and muddy bogs, climbed up ropes and over fallen trees, crawled under barbed wire and through tunnels (some flooded!) and, the best bit, slid down a massive bubble slide! The biggest challenge was to run after the water obstacles, I

was so numb from the cold that I had to look to check what my feet were doing. I really enjoyed it and am planning to do it again in March - if any other volunteers are up for it then let me know!

You can still sponsor me at <http://new.thebiggive.org.uk/projects/view/18627>

*Jen* (Volunteer)



## Write the Wrongs



*"History,  
despite its  
wrenching  
pain,  
cannot be  
unlived, but  
if faced with  
courage,  
need not be  
lived again."*

*(Mary  
Angelou)*

During November Kairos invited its service users to take part in a Creative Writing Workshop. It was created with a view to publish a booklet for young girls vulnerable to sexual exploitation containing advice that promotes protective behaviours to help safeguard young people from abuse.

We asked our women to write their personal life stories for the booklet, sharing their journeys to provide a source of strength and inspiration to young people.

The workshop was

open to all women with a passion for writing, who wanted to improve their skills and share their own stories.

The sessions were developed and presented by one of Kairos' volunteers, the brilliant Jen B, who led a group of hesitant women on a journey through poetry and prose.

Our sessions proceeded thusly...

Jen kick started with an exercise to compose our own poetry, which was met with a few dour expressions. The perspective seemed to be that poetry was confusing and nonsensical. 'It doesn't make any sense and some of it doesn't even rhyme!'

But with Jen's encouragement soon enough scribbling

ensued and here are a couple of the results. The following is an example of a mesostic poem written by Val Evans. The word down the middle describes what she wanted to achieve from the workshops and the words that fit around it were inspired by the central concept.

Posi**I**ve  
Fa**N**tastic  
To **S**hine  
Ha**P**py  
Ach**I**evable  
**P**ride  
Fe**E**lings  
Succee**D**



We would like to say a big thank you and a sad farewell to the following volunteers; Katie Andrews, Linzi Gibbs, Jo Clegg, Nicola James, Sarah Muttit, Carla Tranter. We have really enjoyed having you all as part of our team and wish you well for the future.

## Sad Farewells and a Warm Welcome

We would also like to welcome our new volunteers to Kairos: Sophia Morgan Swinhoe, Danielle Van Weenen, Lisa Turner, Daksha Mistry, Claire Fursessedonn and Katie McGrane. These volunteers will be taking on roles at WINGS, at our drop-in, as befrienders and as sup-

port for our current research project.



## Write the Wrongs (cont...)

This next poem was a collaborative work. We each wrote a couple of lines before the sentences were arranged in pantoum style (a Malay style of poem formed from couplets). The subject was inspired by us all having had a bad day, so the tone is a little disheartened. We wrote some optimistic ones too, you can view them on our website, so please have a browse. We think they're pretty great... even though none of them rhyme!

The path is long, never ending, ever expanding, I'm stuck screaming, 'let me out.'

When will I be at peace?

The finish point is ever shifting, always just over the horizon.

I'm stuck screaming, 'let me out.'

It would be nice not to have to think,

The finish point is ever shifting, always just over the horizon,

We need to experience the bad times to enjoy the good times.

It would be nice not to have to think.

Why worry about

mistakes being made?  
We need to experience the bad times to enjoy the good times,  
Relentlessly moving forwards, pushing, pulling, breaking, learning.

Why worry about mistakes being made?  
There is no destination.  
Enjoy the journey, Relentlessly moving forwards, pushing, pulling, breaking learning,  
Don't feel like I can stop and catch a breath.

There is no destination.  
Enjoy the journey, When will I be at peace?  
Don't feel like I can stop and catch a breath,  
The path is long, never ending, ever expanding.

After some exercises that inspired imaginative thinking we began to consider what messages we could send to young women to alert them to the signs of sexual exploitation and advice to help them protect themselves. We thought about the clever and subtle tricks abusers use to lure and groom their victims: young girls being presented with gifts in the form of money,

food, clothing etc. in exchange for sexual favours. We wanted girls to remember that in a loving relationship "sex should be something you want to do not something you have to do".

We also wanted to dispel myths created by the media glamorising sex work as a safe, lucrative and sophisticated career move for young women and educate them about the dangers: the coercion into sex work, physical and sexual violence committed against women working on the streets and the link with drugs.

During an exercise in which we wrote letters containing advice to our former 13 year old selves, we found the advice prescribed was also crucial to other young people. Some of it confronted the sexualisation of young girls:

**don't "see yourself just as a sexual object"** and crucially some of it focused on breaking the silence that often surrounds sexual exploitation:

**"Talk to someone...there is lots of help out there from people who will not judge you".**

These exercises provided a focus and set the mind about with creativeness. The ladies had no problems getting stuck into their story writing and after some polishing off and editing they should be ready to publish at the end of December.

Overall the ladies felt that writing could provide an outlet for expressing and organising thoughts and feelings from the past and present. And that in writing their life stories they could inspire others to feel empowered to take positive action in their own lives.

*Natalie* (Support Worker)



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LOTTERY FUNDED

## Our Thanks

Our thanks go to the following people and organisations for their kind donations over the past few months: Knights of St Columba, Julie Rattigan at The Hub, Coundon Methodist Church, Holy Family Catholic Church, Di Levine, Simon Whitehouse, Duncan Jones, Sarah Hall, the Greek Ladies Society, Bernie Foley and our anonymous benefactors.

## Upcoming Events



### Kairos Christmas: Monday 17th December 2012

The annual Kairos Christmas dinner will be filled with lots of lovely grub, festive fun and a surprise visitor! Join us at St Peter's Centre at 12pm for lots of festive cheer.

### WINGS: Cornerstone Monday's 11.30am – 3pm

Lots of exciting activities are coming up at WINGS, our personal development group, in the new year. We will be setting our goals for the year ahead, customizing clothing and learning about safer relationships.



## Kairos's Newest Member of the Team



I have been asked to write a little piece about my voyage into this strange new world of motherhood. So, here is my take on it so far.

After I finished to go on maternity leave at the end of July I spent the whole of August awaiting the arrival of baby Smith. This phase basically involved lots of cleaning, stocking my freezer full of food, topping up my tan in the garden and endless amounts of shopping. As the due date anxiously approached my activities centred around walking, eating curry, drinking raspberry leaf tea, eating more curry and anything else that might induce labour.

After, what seemed like an endless wait, Zachariah Peter Smith was born on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2012 at 11pm, weighing 7lb1/2 oz. I won't go into all the gory details about the labour but, as my mother-in-law wisely said the pain is short-lived and long forgotten.

We were let out of hospital on Saturday, ready to take on our new role as parents. My first few days being a mother were spent mostly showing off my new little bundle to family and friends and figuring out what on earth I was meant to do with him. As far as I could make out at that point my role extended to feeding, cleaning and cuddling – the latter being by far my favourite.

As the weeks have gone on I have gotten more used to this strange new world of motherhood, although most days I still feel a bit like I'm fumbling around in the dark but as the days go on the darkness is dimming and the light is getting brighter.

If you were to ask me what 3 main things I have learnt from being a mother I would have to say this:

1: It takes a **community** to raise a baby – Zach and I have both benefitted hugely from the support of people around us.

2: What it means to **love** something so much more than myself, or anyone else. Suddenly the wellbeing and happiness of my little boy takes top priority and if that

means leaving the house with odd socks, uncoordinated clothes and appalling hair (a typical day for me) then so be it.

3: **Chocolate** really is the solution to any problem – hormones going crazy; eat chocolate, fighting to stay awake at night whilst feeding; eat chocolate, iron levels are low after the labour; eat chocolate.

Well that just about concludes my motherhood musings. Despite my days being filled with feeds, nappy changes and the like, Kairos still very much remains in my thoughts and I have enjoyed being kept up -to-date with what's being going on. Thank you to all for your thoughts, kind words and support as I venture on this new journey of motherhood.

Nic (Project Worker)

