



Goldsmiths Community Centre

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Annual Report of the General Committee

on the work of Goldsmiths Community Association

and its activities during the past year.

AGM Monday 25th January 2021 6:30pm



Goldsmiths Community Association

Our vision is to be a strong, financially stable and thriving charity that works in collaboration with an empowered, resourceful, mentally and physically healthy, and connected community.

Our mission is to

- Accommodate a range of activities that are relevant, accessible and affordable for local people
- Ensure that those living locally are aware of the centre and can access the information, opportunities and activities we offer
- Provide a welcoming, safe and supportive environment that is sympathetic to their needs, irrespective of who they are
- Support local people to improve their mental health and wellbeing
- Cultivate an environment of tolerance and the acceptance of difference
- Encourage active participation in the life of the local community
- Nurture an ethos of trust and mutual respect
- Support the development of new initiatives and groups that meet local needs
- Encourage local partnerships and networking that reflects the diversity of the community
- Ensure that we are democratic, accountable and trustworthy

Governance

GCA Trustees (January 2020-December 2020)

Alan Till	Chair - <i>resigned as Chair in March 2020</i>
Elizabeth Wood	Vice Chair, Service provider - <i>resigned from board November 2020</i>
Susanna East	Treasurer, <i>Acting Chair August 2020 - current</i>
Cllr Mark Ingleby	Ward Councillor, local resident
Charles James	Service User, Lawyer - <i>resigned from board May 2020</i>
Shipra Ogra	Service User, local resident - <i>Acting Chair April-July 2020</i>
Israel Oyebamiji	RCCG Pastor, local resident
Liezel Spratley	Local resident
Louis Vine	Appointed October 2020

Current Staff

Darren Taylor - Business Development Manager

Brian Gregory - Premises Officer

Jade Nembhard - Operations Manager

Dione Swain & Dawn Fiorentini - Operations Duty Officers

Fiorella Fronzi - Apple Tree Cafe Manager (resigned March 2020)

Roz Hardie - Whitefoot Ward Community Development Worker (funded by LBL) (resigned November 2020)

Assisted by a strong and able team of volunteers from our local community

Chairs' Report 2020

Like so many organisations across the world, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on Goldsmiths Community Association and the community centre. We started the year full of hope. In February staff, trustees and volunteers participated in a team-building away-day focussing on shared values and what the centre means to each of us. By the start of March we had increased centre users, our community development work in the ward was going well, and we were excited at the prospect of welcoming One Health Lewisham as tenants, but we could not foresee the challenges the year would hold.

I am immensely grateful to our staff team who have demonstrated exceptional resilience, flexibility and positivity in response to the uncertainties of being furloughed and adapting to work in a changed environment. The centre was closed to the public for most of the year and without hire income we lost our main revenue stream, but thanks to the dedication and commitment of staff, trustees and volunteers we continued to support our community as best we could.

Highlights of the year include:

The critical impact of our Community Development Worker's contribution to the set up of Lewisham Local and the borough-wide response which led to developing stronger partnerships with other voluntary organisations and agencies. We were actively involved in the distribution of essential baby items (nappies), orange juice and fresh fruit. The Centre also served as a distribution point for free packed lunches during the October half-term, and we were pleased to be able to offer school uniform clothing, donated to the Apple Tree, to visitors.

Seeing the amazing transformations to our outside spaces achieved by the Downham Men's Group who we are proud to host and pleased that we were able to continue working with them in a safe socially distanced way during lockdown. Together with GCC garden volunteers, and supported by occasional visits from Good Gym volunteers, they have ensured that the centre grounds look attractive and are safe for community use. The rainbows that volunteers were supported to make during the first lockdown brighten the fence and serve as a symbol of support for the NHS.

Risk assessments are essential, especially in the current climate, but they are not terribly exciting. I am very happy that, led by our Operations Manager, we achieved a full review of policies, processes and procedures to enable the centre to operate safely and that GCC risk assessments have been given as examples of good practice to other community groups.

Having these documents meant that we were confident in welcoming some of our users back to the centre during the autumn and it is particularly commendable that we also welcomed new groups including Goldsmiths Community Home Ed Group and South Skate.

In August our Operations Manager and Apple Tree volunteer team introduced the Apple Tree Market Place as an alternative outlet for the charity shop and cafe. The events were a great success bringing much needed income as well as providing purpose for our volunteers, and providing a COVIDsafe outdoor event for the local community when they had lost so many of their usual activities as reasons to get out of the house and look forward to. We hope to resume them when restrictions are eased. I'm also pleased to share that the Apple Tree volunteer team is also now using online resources to boost sales.

We are especially proud of our involvement with the Give A Song project. When Chloe brought the idea to us during the first lockdown, we recognised the value of bringing music to the most isolated members of our community and were very happy to support the development of the project. None of us could have imagined how the project would grow and how powerful it would prove to be in brightening the lives of so many isolated and vulnerable people, and how rewarding it would be for the wonderful and talented team of musicians who also face financial pressure due to arts-work drying up.

In December, it was very rewarding to participate in the Corbett Christmas trail by hosting a mini trail through the centre grounds. Well done to everyone who helped bring some festive cheer for the community to enjoy.

Managing a building of this size and age is a huge and continual challenge. I am very pleased that we achieved significant progress in establishing a programme of planned preventative maintenance in 2020 and made several key improvements to help ensure the building is compliant with regulations and safe and comfortable for everyone.

Our initial budget forecast for 2020-21 was positive with a predicted surplus of several thousand pounds. Our main stream of income comes from hire charges, and the closure of the building in March meant that we not only lost this critical revenue stream, but also had to refund a considerable amount of hire fees. Our anticipated agreement with One Health Lewisham would have brought additional income and much-needed investment to the centre but fell through due to changes in their service delivery as a result of COVID-19.

When the government announced cash grants in April the guidelines were not friendly towards community centres, but our Business Development Manager led a successful campaign for recognition and we received core cost funding of £25,000. At the start of the second lockdown the government announced another round of cash support grants but again our application was rejected. So again, our BDM led our appeal, and I'm pleased to say that we have now received confirmation of further government funding which will make a huge difference in reducing the financial impact of COVID-19 and the forecast deficit for 2020-21.

Trustees and staff are preparing a comprehensive business plan and strategy to ensure that we improve our financial sustainability as well as continuing to strengthen our relationship with Lewisham council, our charity partners, local community groups and ward residents, and work together to build resilience and connection and meet the health and wellbeing needs of our community.

We welcome contributions of ideas and support from all community members, please continue to follow us on social media and look out for opportunities to contribute to plans through surveys and consultation and a chance to get involved and participate in shaping how we support and help empower local communities. Your continued input and contribution will be invaluable as we recalibrate and prepare to relaunch as soon as it is safe to do so.

In 2021 I hope we will be able to welcome back all user groups and visitors and to work with our community to plan and host a range of events and activities. The team of Apple Tree volunteers are keen to resume their roles and I look forward to helping them develop the Market Place events and being able to reopen the shop and cafe as reimaged and COVID-safe spaces.

We will continue to work with Chloe and Give a Song on growing the project's reach and impact, and the Blue Ribbon Foundation and Downham Men's Group to realise the shared dream of establishing a 'Men's Shed' on the site.

We have been awarded funding by Community Waves that we plan to use to develop a programme of events led by and focusing on BAME communities and addressing current health and social inequalities.

I would like to end with a thank you to everyone who has supported Goldsmiths over the last year. We have been fortunate to work with some exceptional individuals and groups. I am grateful for the support and commitment shown by my fellow trustees and the staff team throughout 2020. Since the beginning of March the changing circumstances have required more frequent meetings and communications, many members have demonstrated exceptional commitment and flexibility to offer support outside of their usual roles. I would like to express particular gratitude to Liz Wood who made the decision to retire from her trustee role in the autumn, Liz has been a stalwart trustee and Goldsmiths champion for over twenty years and was instrumental in saving the centre for the community in her role as Chair during some of our most challenging years between 2013-2018. Liz continues to be involved with the centre through Goldsmiths Dance Academy, the GDA fairy dancers were the highlight of the Christmas trail and I'm looking forward to when they are able to perform on the main stage once again.



Goldsmiths Community Association Lewisham Mayor's Award recipients

Jade Nembhard

Jade, as Operations Manager at Goldsmiths Community Centre, and the only operations staff member not placed on furlough during the first lockdown. For her exceptional hard work, diligence and commitment. Jade ensured that the community centre was safe, compliant and prepared to reopen as restrictions were eased. And for her continued dedication and commitment to the design and implementation of creative and pragmatic COVID-safe measures to keep our staff, volunteers, service users, and the community safe.

Roz Hardie

Roz, as our Community Development Worker, continued working throughout the national lockdown and went above and beyond her role to support local community groups and make a significant impact in Whitefoot, Downham and the wider community whilst also being seconded to the Lewisham Covid-19 response team.

Chloe Edwards-Wood

Chloe, the brainchild behind the very successful Give-A-Song Project, has worked continuously with her team of volunteer musicians to deliver joy to some of our most vulnerable and shielding community members and lifting their spirits through the power of music and song (<https://www.instagram.com/giveasong/>).

Keith Brookes and Michelle Byrne

For their regular and reliable visits to keep Goldsmiths Community Centre grounds looking good, and working in collaboration with the Downham Men's Group to reinstate the allotment patch and achieve a good crop of fruit and vegetables that benefitted the wider volunteer group at GCC.

Blue Ribbon Foundation - Downham Men's Group

For the Men's Group's achievements for the benefit of Goldsmiths Community Centre and its members during the year, including clearance to bring neglected spaces such as the shed, forest school, allotment patch, and other outside spaces, and working in partnership with GCC volunteers to maintain the grounds, reclaiming and recycling waste materials to create new resources for the centre e.g. market stalls.

Apple Tree Volunteer Team

For their positive and committed response to changes to their roles, supporting each other throughout lockdown and demonstrating strong teamwork and dedication to achieve our Saturday outdoor markets and through their efforts help create a positive experience for the local community during the pandemic.

Acknowledgements and thanks:

There is a large community of people and organisations to thank for supporting the work of the Centre and the Association. Please accept apologies for any unintentional omissions from this list:

Downham Men's Group

Give A Song - musicians and volunteers

Community Waves - funding

Give A Song funders: LBL Micro grants, NLDC, online donations, raffle sales

Goldsmiths Community Nursery

London Borough of Lewisham Council - for financial and practical support from officers

Community Connexions

Lewisham Local

Good Gym Lewisham

Everyone who contributed to the Christmas trail

All of our user groups and hirers who have worked with us to keep our community safe.

The reliable team of GCA volunteers who give their time so generously - we would be lost without you!

Our neighbours for their continued support

Our dedicated team of staff and trustees

