

The Suburb is a truly remarkable place and its community spirit second to none. Here is a remarkable example of the Suburb community pulling together and literally saving a life. This is Kay's story in her own words...

# Garden Suburb Theatre saved my life

KAY GRAHAM

I have been a member of Garden Suburb Theatre (GST) for nearly 50 years. Back in the last century, we performed in the Institute theatre and in Little Wood. After the demise of the Institute, we put our plays on at The Gatehouse in Highgate, The Bull in Barnet and The Phoenix in Golders Green. Sadly, we can no longer perform indoors in Hampstead Garden Suburb but we do still hold our summer shows in Little Wood.

From the start of Lockdown back in March 2020, until quite recently, GST members got together on Zoom, often twice a week. The Wednesday evening meetings were occasions when a topic was chosen and any members who wished to could join in and contribute a poem, some prose, an original piece of writing or even a song. On Wednesday April 7th, the topic chosen was 'Water' and I was the first person to speak. I started to introduce my reading and then, quite suddenly, slid off

the screen! Luckily, the other GST members realised something must be very wrong and while one person dialled 999, another (coincidentally... and luckily) knew the phone number of my neighbours who had keys to let the ambulance team in. Very soon, I was on my way to the Royal Free Hospital.

I knew nothing of this for the next 16 days which I spent in ITU, and several more in HDU, where I slowly recovered enough to listen and talk. I had suffered an AAA (Abdominal Aortic Aneurism) which has a very low chance of survival. I needed an initial six hour operation to repair the aorta, and shortly after that, a second major operation to amputate my right leg as the blood supply to it had been compromised by the first operation. This second operation had an even lower chance of a successful outcome; my children were consulted and said I was 'tough, fit and determined', so they went ahead and I did, indeed, survive.



Kay Graham in her garden (Photo: Carolyn Graham)

After a total of 7 weeks in the Royal Free Hospital, and 3 more weeks of rehab at Finchley Memorial, I came home and am now learning to manage my new existence. Thanks to my family, my neighbours and many friends and ex-colleagues, I have no shortage of company, shopping and advice! Once I have installed a lift so that I can go upstairs, and

have received a prosthetic leg and learned to walk again, I hope to return to a relatively normal life and go back to my hobby of glass fusing and selling pieces in aid of the North London Hospice.

If it hadn't been for the quick actions of the GST members on the Zoom call that fateful night, I wouldn't be here now. They really did save my life!

# Project ImpACT's Supermarket Sweep

THE PROJECT IMPACT TEAM

Project ImpACT, a programme offering impactful youth volunteering opportunities and a registered DofE provider, participated in the first ever, teen-led 'Supermarket Sweep' for food banks at Tesco supported by Food Bank Aid.

While the teens didn't quite 'go wild in the aisles' they were very excited to finally be able to volunteer in-person with their friends after over a year of virtual volunteering from their homes.

They spent over £1,000 from charitable donations, filling numerous shopping trolleys high with basic groceries, including lots of fresh fruit and vegetables desperately needed by families that rely on food banks.

They were also challenged to spend an additional £1 on items that would help a family in need and provide maximum nutrition. Items chosen by the ImpACT teens included tins of tuna, baked beans and cereal bars. The Tesco staff were delighted to support

the initiative and reserved a checkout just for them. Other shoppers were also really supportive, with a number giving the teens donations on the spot including a doctor who said he had been helped by a food bank when he arrived as an asylum seeker a few years ago.

Naomi Russell, who set up the Hub food bank in response to the COVID pandemic, said, "donations have 'fallen off the cliff' as things return to normal. Unfortunately, people are forgetting about those who the pandemic has hit badly and who remain in dire straits. Your support is therefore appreciated more than ever at this time. We love that teens are participating and thinking about those less fortunate."

Lisa Zeital from Project ImpACT said "we were thrilled at how successful this event was and the way the teens really embraced this really meaningful challenge. We are looking forward to running more exciting hands-on volunteering opportunities with partner charities."



Photo: Project ImpACT



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