FBA volunteers (*Photo: Shelley-Anne Salisbury*)

Food Bank Aid busier than ever

Shelley-Anne Salisbury

Food Bank Aid started back in April 2020 when Naomi Russell, founder of FBA, did a collection for her local food bank. Distribution was clearly an issue for the growing number of food banks so she set up a small distribution hub from her home garage. Today FBA operates a distribution hub from its N12 premises given free of rent and rates by Landsec Securities. FBA has distributed £2.5m worth of goods since its inception and now supports 15-20 food banks across north London which, in turn, currently help over 12,000 people (including 3,500 children) every week. And this number is only set to rise.

FBA's message is very simple. Reduce Food Poverty. Reduce Food Waste.

I went along to the FBA hub to meet some of its key management volunteers, Sasha Cohen, Mark Goldberg and Sue Green, as well as FBA's recently appointed CEO Dalia Davis.

FBA's premises are in Chaplin Square, Finchley, right opposite Vue cinema and next door to MacDonalds. The location crucially allows for easy access for deliveries/collections with plenty of parking space; the hub area itself is positively cavernous compared to Naomi's garage where it all started. Products are neatly stacked and sorted into clearly labelled storage bins and boxes, making the picking and packing a smooth operation. Sasha, a Suburb resident, who volunteered right from the start and is FBA's Events Co Ordinator (and organisational guru – labels are her thing) told me it's full on.

Seven or eight car loads of goods go out every day (the hub operates deliveries five days a week but is open to receive donations every day) and is reliant on volunteers. When I arrived, there were six volunteers picking, packing and loading for the afternoon deliveries for the driver volunteers. The whole distribution process is remarkably well organised and no one's time is wasted so the maximum amount of deliveries can be accomplished. The volunteers sign up to the FBA WhatsApp group to keep everyone up to date with FBA's daily needs and requirements. FBA works in a unique way, by communicating with the foodbanks directly. FBA knows what products are needed and links that back to the volunteers who, in turn, message out donation requirements. This way there is minimal to no waste.

Management volunteer team member and Suburb resident, Mark Goldberg, a startlingly agile octogenarian with a Glaswegian lilt, had just finished his morning foodbank drop off shifts when I arrived. He offered me delicious cake someone had kindly dropped off for the volunteers to have on tea breaks.

There was a real sense of community and camaraderie amongst the volunteers who clearly enjoy helping and plainly get huge satisfaction from seeing the hub and their roles in it making such a difference. Sue Green, another Suburb resident, said the hub was a wonderful place to connect with other like-minded people and had given some volunteers a real sense of purpose especially through the pandemic.

FBA are keen to educate schoolchildren and parents about food poverty and give talks at schools. The summer holidays are obviously a period of great concern for those families reliant on free school meals and they depend heavily on their foodbanks at this time. FBA provide nutritional lunch packs to the foodbanks to help with this. Sasha also showed me lovely treat bags made up by an elderly couple from the FBA food donations which are then distributed by the hub. These are the little things that make a huge difference. As Dalia said, if everyone added a couple of extra items to their weekly shop and donated to FBA, it would all add up to make a difference. Leaving the final words to Marcus Maughan, FBA's General Manager "Whether you give one or one hundred, it all helps."

FBA have over 200 volunteers on their books but need more as the hub is growing. If you would like to find out more about volunteering or donating go to www.foodbank.org.uk or email info@foodbankaid.org.uk. Or scan the QR code (left) to donate.

Key items needed now: *Baby food (particularly formula milk), Sanitary wear, Toothpaste/Toothbrushes, Tinned fish (mackerel/tuna – in oil if possible)*

FBA JustGiving QR code

Sue Green, Mark Goldberg and Sasha Cohen (*Photo: Shelley-Anne Salisbury*)

Car loaded and ready for delivery (*Photo: Shelley-Anne Salisbury*)

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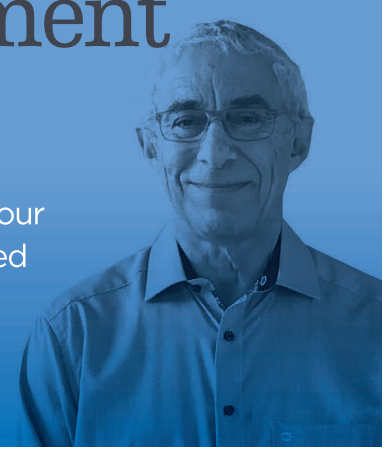

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Hilda returns to South Africa at the age of 103!

Father Alan Walker

Residents Association life member Hilda Williams returned to live in South Africa on 11 August, the day after her 103rd birthday. Hilda will be known to many on the Suburb for her stewardship of Fellowship House for more than three decades.

Hilda Benjamin was born on the remote Atlantic island of St Helena in 1919. In 1936, aged 17, she left for South Africa to enter service. Two years later she married Albert Williams and together they had eight children. Albert died in 1961 and when her children were grown up Hilda joined her brother in London where she worked as a housekeeper in the home of a theatre costumier in Mayfair. In 1980 she moved to the Suburb (where her brother was caretaker of the Institute) and settled in the Barnett Homestead. She helped her brother and also worked in the staff canteen in Waitrose, Temple Fortune. In 1984 she started looking after Fellowship House.

From childhood Hilda was a committed Anglican and on the Suburb a regular worshipper and volunteer at St Jude's. For the last few years Hilda lived at Eastside House. We wish her well as she returns to live with her family in South Africa.

Photo: Father Alan Walker