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Welcome to the SPRING edition of the GRASSROOTS newsletter!

It has been a very busy start to the year for the GRASSROOTS team. Fairtrade Fortnight 2017 was a particular highlight, when we reflected on the many exploited and vulnerable individuals, communities and nations in our world. Visiting Kenyan tea producer, Patrick Kaberia Muthaura, voiced this profound message: "We do not want charity or aid. We want business to trade fairly with us so that we can help ourselves", echoing the challenge of Catholic Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador, who said "Aspire not to have more, but to be more". Romero was assassinated in 1980 for speaking up for the voiceless poor. "Many", he said, "would like the poor to keep saying it is God's will for them to live that way. But it is not God's will for some to have everything and others to have nothing. That cannot be of God." During this season of Lent, may we all examine how our actions contribute to justice in our world. If they do not, let us consider acting differently.

Fairtrade Fortnight

Patrick Kaberia Muthaura, a Fairtrade tea producer from Kenya, was guest of honour at our Fairtrade Fortnight celebration event at the Luton Town Hall on Tuesday 28th February 2017. The event included presentations from St Joseph's Catholic School, Cllr Jacqueline Burnett and Cllr David Agbley, while jeweller Harriet Kelsall showcased Fairtrade gold.



Cllr Jacqueline Burnett signed a Fairtrade Declaration on behalf of Luton Borough Council

The Council Chamber was full almost to capacity with people from different faiths and cultural backgrounds, who were all challenged to spread the Fairtrade message and adopt this year's theme - 'Don't feed exploitation. Choose Fairtrade – because farmers deserve a fair deal'.

Precious Pearls

Our annual Precious Pearls event took place on Thursday 9th March 2017, with over 140 women from different faiths and cultures gathered to celebrate International Women's Day. Held in High Town Methodist Church, this year's event had the theme of 'Women Sharing Traditions and Cultures', and featured a wide range of entertainment, information-sharing and activities.



Members of Ghar se Ghar entertained over 140 women who attended Precious Pearls

Presentations included Hajj and Lourdes Pilgrimages, Military Life for Women, the Luton Irish Forum, and reflections on a Ghar se Ghar trip to Waddesdon Manor. The evening was completed with an array of skits, songs, dances, poetry and piano recitals, plus cultural foods and warm conversations.

Home from Home

The Near Neighbours funded Home from Home project was launched in February 2017, gathering participants from diverse backgrounds to chart an informal oral history of migration to Luton. Focusing on a different cultural group each week, sessions take place every Monday, 1-3pm, in the Holy Ghost Parish Centre until 3rd April 2017.



Home from Home is bringing together people from diverse faiths and backgrounds

Asking 'Where are you from?', 'What brings you here?' and 'What makes this home?', sessions include cultural foods, music, poetry, and photographs. Themes are explored through personal testimonies and honest reflections, with deep and insightful discussions shared in a spirit of goodwill.

Other GRASSROOTS News

Robin Hood Feast

A Robin Hood Feast with a medieval theme took place on 16th December 2016 in the All Saints Church Hall, celebrating the achievements and hard work of all involved in the Community Archery Project. Participants of diverse ages, faiths and backgrounds shared great conversation, a variety of food - and a fun quiz all about Robin Hood!

Near Neighbours Welcomes Special Visitors

Philip Davies, a Faith Advisor from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) came to meet the GRASSROOTS team on 10th January 2017 to learn more about our work. A few weeks later, on 9th February 2017, we welcomed Melanie Dawes, Permanent Secretary for the DCLG, to visit local Near Neighbours funded projects and hear about the impact and successes they have had within the local community.

Holocaust Memorial Day

The Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration took place at the University of Bedfordshire on 26th January 2017 under this year's theme 'How Can Life Go On?'. The evening included the lighting of candles in memory of the 11 million victims of the Holocaust, a recitation of the Kaddish (Hebrew prayer for the dead), the sharing of a survivors story, and a dramatic performance from students of Stopsley High School, helping attendees to understand the meaning and significance of the Holocaust.

Circle Dancing

Circle Dancing sessions, featuring traditional folk dances from around the world, continue to run across Luton. To find out more please visit us online at www.grassrootsluton.org.uk/news-events/circledancing2017, call us on 01582 416946 or email us at annhyde204@msn.com

Buy Your Fairtrade Goods at GRASSROOTS!

GRASSROOTS is continuing to stock an exciting range of Fairtrade goods including teas, coffees, honey, food spreads, nuts, dates, candles, gift cards, bags and much more. We can also create your very own gift hampers for Mother's Day, or for any other occasion you need. To see what we have available, simply get in touch and visit us in the GRASSROOTS office!



Dates for your Diary

Telling Stories on Tuesday 21st March 2017, 4:00pm at the Hat Factory is an innovative project about growing up in divided communities. No need to book – just show up!

Bahá'í Naw-Rúz Celebration on Saturday 25th March 2017, 6:30pm at Chaul End Community Centre. Email richard_g58uk@yahoo.co.uk to reserve a place.

Churches Together in Luton AGM on Saturday 25th March 2017, 9:45am at Holy Ghost Parish Church. Email ctl_admin@tiscali.co.uk for more details.

Abrahamic Faiths Talk on Thursday 30th March 2017, 7:00pm at Holy Ghost Parish Church. Email admingrassroots@btconnect.co.uk to reserve a place.

Fairtrade Steering Group Meeting on Thursday 6th April 2017, 10:30am at GRASSROOTS in High Town. Email admingrassroots@btconnect.co.uk for more details.



The Robin Hood Feast gathered together people from many different backgrounds



Melanie Dawes visited the All Saints Church Peace Garden and Allotments



Students from Stopsley High School performing at the Holocaust Memorial Day



Circle Dancing is great fun, healthy and inclusive of people of all abilities!



The GRASSROOTS office now has an exciting display of Fairtrade goods – come and see us!