

## They slept out so others don't have to

Over 40 intrepid souls gathered at Guildford Cathedral on Saturday 30 January to get a small taste of being homeless for the night. The event was held to raise awareness particularly of young people who have nowhere safe to stay, and to raise funds for projects run by the YMCA that offer vulnerable young people a chance of something better.

The SleepEasy Sleepout received support from various groups and individuals. Men from the South African Church helped a mature volunteer build a more resilient shelter from cardboard; university students who'd volunteered to serve hot food during the evening, stayed on to sleep out. Several people had been moved to sign up just by reading about it in the Surrey Advertiser!

YMCA CEO Pete Brayne and his wife Val took part again this year. He commented, "Having experienced last year we were even better prepared this time. I felt very warm from the nose down! But I felt surprisingly vulnerable having so little between me and the outside world." Alex O'Brien works at Plantation and managed six hours of sleep - possibly a record! But it really brought home to him how tough things are for homeless people - he heard a comment that 28 young people were homeless in the Guildford area that night which set him thinking. He said, "It was great to see so many young people take part, and for them to understand the importance of studying and getting jobs to secure a decent future."

Matt Russell works in Plantation Café and persuaded several friends from Eternity Church to take part. He said, "On one level it was good fun - but it was huge eye opener for all of us. No one got much sleep and it was an awesome experience."

Churchouse Financial Planning sponsored the event and for the second year Kelly's of Guildford donated cardboard boxes which were put to good use creating shelters and insulation against the wind and cold. YMCA supporter Nevin Stewart again supplied ample quantities of excellent home made soup which was most welcome in preparation for the long night ahead.

Guildford YMCA is most grateful to the Dean of Guildford for permission to use the Cathedral precincts, and to the Board of Education for the use of the Education Centre - a welcome haven of warmth and hot drinks. When the brave sleepers woke to the frost of early morning, they were greeted with hot savoury breakfast pastries courtesy of Guildford's West Cornwall Pasty Company.

Donations are still welcome for the SleepEasy Campaign, made payable to Guildford YMCA, and if you've sponsored someone who slept out do pay up soon - they so deserve it!