



# Pupils walk the line

**Pupils from Phoenix Academy in Edmonton, North London, undertook a 'Victoria Line' sponsored walk in January this year to raise money to buy computers for school children in Sri Lanka.**

The students took nine hours to walk from one end of the London Underground line to the other - from Walthamstow Central to Brixton - to raise just over £800 for the Paalam International School in Wattala; part of the work PCC supports in the country. Their efforts were boosted by gifts from members of Rainbow Church, in north London, which took the final total to £2,000.

Ninety per cent of the children in the Paalam school don't have a computer at home, so it's important to help prepare them for the workplace.

"The children do their spelling and reading on the computers, which saves the teachers a lot of time and allows them to progress in their work quicker," says Karen Dey, director of Paalam International School. The new computers also allow older children to learn advanced computers skills.

PCC's IT manager, Gareth Hawkes, travelled to Sri Lanka

to set up a new computer room for the school.

"For kids in the UK computers are an every day thing, but it's not like that in Sri Lanka. We have a system of privileges and at the end of the week we send the children to use the computers as a reward," says Karen.

As a thank you, the North London pupils may soon get the chance to visit Sri Lanka and see the results of their efforts. "I've asked Adrian if the Phoenix Academy fundraisers can come and see what they have contributed to the school, so we are actually working on bringing a group of them next year," says Karen.

The school opened in September 2003 with 15 children. Today the school boasts 162 pupils, both Tamil and Sinhala. "That's pretty unusual in Sri Lanka, but I hope that the situation will change now that the war is over," adds Karen.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### It's for charity, stoooid!

Phoenix Community Care was awarded charity status in January, which will help with funding applications. "If you're dealing with other fundmaking trusts sometimes they won't give money to a company, even though it's a not-for-profit company, but they will give it to a charity. The charity status will allow PCC to apply for grants that were previously not open to us," said Adrian Hawkes, co-director of PCC. PCC's charity number is 1135773.

### Happy campers

Sorted your holiday plans? No? Well, what about pitching up at Camp Rainbow this summer. PCC is inviting all foster carers and friends of PCC to the camp at Waxham Sands, Horsey, in Norfolk, from 4-7 August. The event bills itself on its website as: 'A four day fest of beach, camp, sport, art, spirituality and laughs'. Camp Rainbow has kindly been subsidised by a grant from the National Lottery, and is priced at £27.15 per person including all activities, food and pitch fees, under fives are free. For more details and to book visit [www.campinrainbow.co.uk](http://www.campinrainbow.co.uk)

# phoenix

Phoenix Community Care Newsletter - Issue 6 - Summer 2011

# PCC needs you!



## INSIDE

### Page 2 IN AT THE DEEP END

A foster carer's real life story

### Page 2 INTERVIEW

Q&A with Joy Ezzine - Stennett

### Page 3 A GREAT SHOT AT FUNDRAISING

Charity photo exhibition

### Page 4 PUPILS WALK THE LINE

Sri Lanka school gets new computers

**Could you be a foster carer? Phoenix Community Care (PCC) is on the lookout for people interested in the possibility of becoming a foster carer, and opening their home to a child in care.**

"PCC is looking for people wanting to commit at least a year or two to fostering, who have got the space, the time and the heart," says Joy Ezzine - Stennett, foster care manager.

"The children have had so many different experiences, so a family that maybe hasn't experienced loads of issues is just as qualified as a family who perhaps have."

"People who are ideal candidates are people who have got a spare room, who want to look after a child or young person, and who want to give them hope for the future. It can be a challenge at times but it's good to try and make a difference in a child's life," adds Pauline Hawkes, PCC's co-director.

All the directors of PCC have all been involved in fostering, says Pauline, who fostered for a London borough for 20 years

and also helped to provide training for foster carers.

"PCC was started by a group of people with direct experience of fostering. We wanted to give extra support to foster carers because we've been there, and done it, and know what it's like."

As a result, all PCC foster carers are given 24-hour support, a monthly support group, on-going training and development, and quarterly events for birth children.

"It's been said about PCC that we always go the extra mile which we quite like, so we're looking for people who will also do that. Then it's not just a job it's something they really believe in," says Pauline.

"On average, an application to become a foster carer takes four to six months. Help us foster a future"



**Contact us!** PCC has moved offices. Our address is now 21-23 Bath Road, London N9 0JX. Please update your phone books, too. main phonenumber: 0208 887 6888 foster care direct line: 0208 887 6908 LTC: 0208 887 6909. [www.phoenixcommunity.org](http://www.phoenixcommunity.org)



**What's the application process?** Initial enquiry. Application form filled in. Initial visit by PCC. Invite to a 'Skills to Foster' course, which gives a snapshot of what it is to be a foster carer. CRB, NSPCC and local authority checks. Full assessment by an independent social worker (most are completed in between eight to ten visits). Assessment to 'Panel' for approval. Approval letter sent. Contract from PCC arrives. PCC starts preparing you to receive children.



# In at the deep end

**Dionne, 38, and her husband, Stephen, became foster carers in September 2008. Overnight they went from having one child to looking after four. . .**

“I have always wanted to foster, but for many years I was busy with work. Then a few years ago the time seemed right, so I reduced my work hours to make the time to foster.

“My own daughter was nine at the time. It was important that she was comfortable with what was going to happen. But as an only child, she was looking forward to was to having other children around.

“On 2 November 2008, a sibling group of two boys and one girl, all aged under five, arrived. I thought: ‘how am I going to cope?’ It was full on, but after a few weeks things settled down. I have learnt so much through looking after them, and have achieved things I never thought I was capable of.

“For any placement to be successful it’s important to try to work comfortably with the professionals involved in the process. You also have to do things correctly to make sure your voice is heard because although you’re the one with the children on a day-to-day basis, that can sometimes be missed.

“The hardest bit about being a foster carer is making sure you’re addressing any issues they have. You double-check yourself: am I doing all that I possibly can to make sure that these children are achieving? What can I do better? What haven’t I done?”

“The best bit is seeing their overall development. When they arrived the oldest one arrived couldn’t read and didn’t know his numbers; now he’s really good at both. The middle child had a speech problem; now he’s a little chatterbox.

“It’s also great to see the love they now have between each other. When they first arrived they didn’t know how to interact. Even though they were brothers and sisters, they didn’t know how to play with each other at all.

“As a first-time foster carer I can’t measure PCC with any other agency, but I have a few friends and family members whose experience of fostering has been totally different. Maybe it’s because PCC is smaller, but they are very foster-carer-friendly. They are interested in what they can do to make things better for you.

“When we accepted the children we didn’t realise that they would be with us for so long – they are still here. But my husband and I are committed to seeing it through, because we don’t want to leave them in a worse state than when they arrived, or see them passed from foster carer to foster carer.

“In my opinion anyone thinking about foster caring should go for it. You have to be strong, but as long as you are willing to give love and support you’ll be successful.”



## INTERVIEW

Joy Ezzine - Stennett, foster care manager

**Give us a snapshot of your CV. . .**

I’ve always been in social care. I’ve done everything from youth work to care work, working with young people and old people, and people with disabilities. I’m also a mum. I qualified as a social worker in 1988.

**Why social work?**

I come from a very large family - I’m the youngest of nine - that faced numerous difficulties growing up. My parents emigrated from the Caribbean so I know what it’s like to experience things like racism, cross cultural issues, financial pressure. . . feeling a bit left out of life to a degree. I also had a lot of friends in care and spent a lot of time in children’s homes, so I think that had an impact. And I believe in social justice; I want to see what I can do to improve things for children and families.

**What three words best describe you?**

Impulsive, caring. . . and that I always tried to cram five hours worth of stuff into one. I always try to do too much.

**PCC works with a lot of teens. What advice**

**would you give the 13-year-old you?**

Just keep at it. You want everything now, but if you take small steps towards what you want you will eventually get there. Short term pain leads to long term gain.

**What book are you currently reading?**

Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance by Barak Obama. I don’t read much. I pick up a book whenever I go on a train, which is not often. But he writes in a very eloquent way and it’s quite hard to put it down.

**Tell us about your family. . .**

I’ve got an 18 and a 25 year old, and I’m bringing up my granddaughter as well, she’s nine. I became a grandma at an age I’d have preferred not to be, but I think life experience helps you to be a better social worker.

**What’s special about PCC?**

PCC is the third foster care agency I’ve worked for. They go all out to make things better for people. PCC’s ethos is definitely about putting people first rather than making money as an agency.



# A great shot at fundraising!

**A trip to visit the projects PCC supports in Kenya inspired 18-year-old Malachi Kelly to stage a popular photography exhibition, and get some career direction in the process.**

The idea for the event, held in London and York at the end of 2010, came after visiting Sure 24 Boys Home in Nakuru, Kenya, run by church leader and former street child Sammy Nawali,

The home cares for 37 boys aged 5-18 years some of whom are HIV/AIDS orphans or victims of post-election violence. “After I visited it was like: ‘wow, I really want to do something for these kids,’” says Malachi.

The exhibition featured 52 prints profiling life in the orphanage, shots of Kenyan wildlife and some of Malachi’s UK work.

“I was the most shocked out of everyone that the exhibition went so well. I had been worrying about whether we were even going to cover our costs, but we raised about £4,800 from selling prints.”

The picture that sold the most was called ‘Shoes’ (see above), taken in a garage run by the project to give boys from the village employment.

Money raised by the event is helping to build classrooms at the Living Fountain Academy, where kids from the orphanage and community attend. “Schooling gives the boys a chance to get employment in the future,” says Sammy.

The photos may soon provide Malachi with employment of his own, too. “When I went to Kenya photography was a hobby, but while the exhibition was on I decided I’d like to try it as a profession.”

Malachi starts a foundation degree in professional photography at the City of Westminster College, London, in September.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### New PCC website

PCC has a new website which sets out the different areas we work in the UK: our foster care agency; working with unaccompanied minors and supported people; housing

trafficked women and their children; and offering training and education programmes for young people. It also details the projects we support in Sri Lanka and Kenya. [www.phoenixcommunity.org](http://www.phoenixcommunity.org)

### Investing in people

In April PCC was awarded Investors in People certification. The award is a business standard for recognising good people management.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Giving just got easier

Fancy doing a sponsored cake bake for PCC, or what about a sponsored headshave?! PCC is now a registered charity with the JustGiving website, which

has helped raise millions of pounds for good causes since it set up in 2001. JustGiving provides a secure way to collect sponsor money online and will even sort out getting the tax back from the government

on any donation made by a taxpayer. Brilliant! So, come up with a fundraising idea, run it past us, then go forth and multiply via your own JustGiving page. Contact PCC on 0208 887 6888 with your fundraising ideas.