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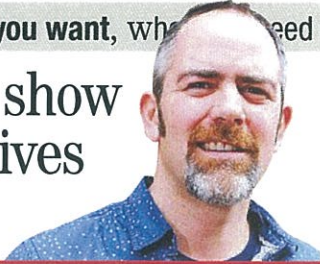
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Curtain up on show that changes lives

Disabled youngsters star in drama production: page 4



A champion for female equality

Dame who overcame the odds: etcetera page2-3



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■ Chef Julie Miller with manager Kelly Foran at The Gammon Rasher in St John's Wood. Picture: Polly Hancock

Head shave chef steps up to Red Nose plate

They say the key to a good fry-up is timing – and cafe cook Julie Miller is heading for a closer shave than most in the name of charity.

Julie, who has worked at The Gammon Rasher in Allitson Road, St John's Wood, for the last 18 months, is planning to have her hair completely shaved off to raise money for Comic Relief's Red Nose Day.

She has already raised £150 but is hoping for much more before her boss Kelly Foran gets the clippers out on March 15.

"It started off that I was going to dye it red and things like that. But I didn't think

it was going to be drastic enough so I decided to take it all off," she said.

Julie, who lives in nearby Broxwood Way, added: "We had one lad in last week who said, 'What? A lady's going to do it?!' and he kept coming back with more change and putting it in the box."

"But it's for a good cause. It was always in my mind that I was going to get fit and do a run. But I'm 50 now so I thought 'I'd do this instead!'"

■ Julie will have her head shaved outside the cafe at 3.30pm on March 15. She is taking donations for Comic Relief at the cafe.

Ill-treatment by dog owner lands a fine of just £185

Sore-ridden terriers cooped up in filthy flat

by Stephen Moore
stephen.moore@archant.co.uk

An ex-hotel manager who kept seven Yorkshire Terriers cooped up in a high-rise flat littered with piles of dog excrement has been fined just £185.

Ilektra Kanelou, 48, refused to groom or wash her pets for months on end, claiming they did not like to be touched.

The animals had sores and infections on their paws, open wounds and severely matted hair when they were rescued by the RSPCA after years of ill-treatment in the flat in Alfred Road, Westbourne Green.

Kanelou, a schizophrenic agoraphobic who has been out of work for 10 years, refused to allow others to care for the animals despite being in financial difficulties because she considered them "her family", Westminster Magistrates' Court heard.

Kanelou was first reported to animal welfare authorities when she turned up at a vet's practice in October 2011 carrying one of her dogs, an eight-year-old terrier called Bijou.

"She had severely thick matting on all four legs and the leg hind leg was lame," said prosecutor Wendy Gutteridge. "Her left hind foot was swollen to two times the normal size and

painful to touch and smelt of infection. There was a laceration extending 3cm across the leg."

Bijou was taken away for treatment and Kanelou was warned about properly caring for her dogs.

She was then visited at her seventh-floor flat by RSPCA inspectors who discovered "a large amount of dog faeces in every room and on the small balcony," said Ms Gutteridge. "Some of it had been trodden and ground into the floor."

'Piles of faeces'

Kanelou declined offers to have her other, healthy dogs rehoused so she could cope better. But when inspectors returned six months later, the situation had deteriorated with "piles of faeces" on the floor and the dogs in a worse state. A month later they were seized.

Kanelou, who suffered from depression, admitted causing suffering to a protected animal and breaching animal welfare laws. She was fined £185 plus a £15 victim surcharge, to be deducted from her benefits. She was ordered to pay £300 towards the £13,595 bill for kennel and legal costs, was banned from owning a dog for 10 years and is receiving treatment for her mental health problems.

Miracle tale of gunfight tunic



A 156-year-old family heirloom that laid undisturbed in an attic for three decades has brought to life in an extraordinary tale of a Regent's Park soldier's survival against the odds. Page 3

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Finishing touches for show that aims to transform lives

Disabled youngsters will star in drama production to be staged at theatre

by Stephen Moore
stephen.moore@archant.co.uk

A charity which helps young adults with learning disabilities to achieve their potential is gearing up for its biggest theatrical show ever.

Students at Pursuing Independent Paths (PIP) will be taking over the Tabernacle Theatre in Notting Hill to showcase their original drama project, *The Mystery Of The Red Hat*.

The show, entirely conceived by the 20-strong class of students, is the group's fifth annual production but the first to be staged in a real theatre – so the pressure is on.

The *Wood&Vale* dropped in on a rehearsal at Paddington Arts last week to see how the play was progressing.

Bill Feeney, director of the charity, based in Shirland Mews, Queen's Park, said: "We really want the audience to see what students can achieve, as they express themselves in creative and dynamic ways."

"The Paralympics surprised and inspired the world by demonstrating how people with disabilities are far more determined and motivated than they usually get credit for. We've known this for a long time and aim to emulate that inspiration in our own community."

The students, some of whom

took part in the Cultural Olympiad last year, have spent six months turning their ideas into theatrical reality, helped by drama therapists.

Most will act on stage but some will be working behind the scenes and all of them have been involved in the script-writing and stage production.

They have learning disabilities of all kinds, from Down's syndrome, Asperger's and autism to rare chromosome disorders like Fragile X and Trisomy 14 mosaicism.

The drama therapy sessions are just one aspect of the charity's work. PIP also offers classes in healthy eating, technology skills, money management and travelling independently on public transport.

This will be "our showcase event," said Mr Feeney. "We want as many people who don't know about us to come down. Our students have a lot to say creatively and we want more awareness and exposure of that."

Danny, a student at PIP, said: "Drama has really helped my confidence and I love performing with my friends."

■ *The Mystery of the Red Hat* is at 7pm on March 22 at the Tabernacle Theatre, Powis Square, Notting Hill. Tickets at www.tabernaclew11.com or 020 8960 4004 or email katherine@piponline.org.uk



■ Bill Feeney



■ PIP cast members in rehearsal for *The Mystery of the Red Hat*



■ Danny, 31, practising his street dance

Pictures: Polly Hancock



■ Angela Ahrendts

Fashion chief gives career tips to pupils

Students from a Marylebone school had the opportunity to mine pearls of wisdom from the head of one of the world's top luxury fashion houses.

Angela Ahrendts, chief executive of Burberry, met 20 pupils from King Solomon Academy at an event held at Eton College in Berkshire that was designed to spur them to apply for top universities.

Ms Ahrendts gave a talk to students from all over the country.

The Year Ten pupils then got the chance to network with Burberry employees and Eton students, asking for career tips and comparing their school experiences.

Natasha Porter, head of Key Stage 4 at the Penfold Street school, was one of the staff who accompanied the youngsters.

She said: "Our students learned a huge amount from attending the event."

The visit was designed to stoke the aspirations of the school's most highly-motivated students who belong to The Odysseus Project.

It is a scheme run by charity The Access Project which aims to get young people from disadvantaged backgrounds earning places at top universities.

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