

Spotlight

Welcome to Spotlight where each issue we profile one of our member organisations. In this issue we will focus on **The Angel Community Canal Boat Trust**.

Rose Parnis, who has been the project manager of the Angel Community Canal Boat Trust (ACCT) for the past two years, met me on a nice sunny day in her office on the bank of the Regents Canal in Islington. She explained that ACCT was formed in the 1970s by a local resident called Crystal Hale who was out on her boat one day and was unlucky enough to be the target of some children throwing stones. Instead of reacting aggressively, she invited the children onto her boat and thus, the idea of ACCT was created. And this year they are the Mayor of Islington's Charity under the name 'Islington Kids Afloat'.

Today, ACCT run day and residential boat trips on the canal in the purpose-built 'Angel II of Islington', for around 2000 children and young people a year so that they can experience life on the water. Rose explained that their aim is to get kids away from the TV and involve them in an activity that gives them skills in team building, listening and communication.

However, it's not just children that benefit. Rose explained that they are currently working on four different projects:

- 1) Learning Afloat Project – This project was piloted in Easter and aims to give adults with learning difficulties the chance to enjoy the boat and canal. So far, 4 people have benefited from the project but Rose hopes that soon, all adults with learning difficulties moving into supported accommodation will be able to benefit.
- 2) Get Out And Learn (GOAL) project – This is a curricular based project designed for schools in which groups of 30 children go aboard the boat, attend a workshop at the canal museum and walk along the canal.
- 3) BMER groups – Rose says that use of the canal is very underrepresented by black, minority ethnic and refugee groups. ACCT have received funding specifically to promote the canal to these groups.
- 4) Fathers and Sons project – This is a two day project. On day one, the sons come and learn skills on the boat which they then teach their fathers or parent guardians on day two. It encourages listening and communication. Rose says this project might well be expanded to cover whole families.



So it all seems to be working very well for the ACCT. I asked Rose if there were any difficulties. 'Of course' she says, 'we are completely dependant on external funding and so it is a constant battle to ensure that the projects are fully funded. Without the funding there is no way the children would be able to afford to experience life on the waterways'. As I left Rose in her office and headed back along the canal, I still had her words in my ears... 'I think that I have the best job in London!'

For more info:
www.angelboat.org
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