

July 2009



LOTTERY FUNDED

**Dover Detainee Visitor Group's work is secure for the next three years!**

After a long and difficult process of selection, fierce competition and four months of uncertainty, we thankfully received the good news: DDVG has been granted funds by the Big Lottery Fund (BLF), to cover the whole project expenses for the next three years.

The need of our project has been recognized by the BLF once again. In our new bid an expansion of our project was included therefore our office staff will be restructured. The new structure of DDVG is enclosed with this Info Page.

Part of the success of our bid was due to our monitoring and evaluation systems. In this sense, we would like to thank all our volunteers who filled in the follow-up forms after visiting a detainee, or the feedback forms after attending training, DVD nights or DDVG events, for their contribution to this success.

## Ex-volunteer keeps in touch with DDVG

We would like to share with you some parts of a letter sent to us by Stuart Weagher, one of our office volunteers, who moved from Kent some months ago.

"I am only pleased to have been of help to you. I wish I could have done more. I enjoyed my time at DDVG very much. I found everyone easy to get along with, a great, dedicated and sincere team. I was proud to be part of you all. I wish you the best of luck with your funding."

The whole team in DDVG would like to publicly thank Stuart for his input and support to all the staff in DDVG during his time in the office. You are missed very much and we wish you every success.

If you like this newsletter or would like us to include certain topics please let us know . Tel: 01304 242755 / PO Box 294 Dover Kent CT17 CT17 9GY / [ddvg@btinternet.com](mailto:ddvg@btinternet.com)



When you finish reading, recycle it!

## DATES TO REMEMBER



Culture Day at DIRC: 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009. 2-4 pm

DDVG AGM: 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2009 (see invitation)

Suicide Prevention Training: 27<sup>th</sup> of October. By Tony Bond from DIRC, at DDVG (time to be confirmed)

Diversity Training: 11<sup>th</sup> of November. By Mike Underhill from DIRC, at DDVG (time to be confirmed)

## Did you know that..

Currently we have 11 Immigration Removal Centre's in UK, 3000 bed spaces, 2525 for men and 425 for women and families, 30 holding rooms at ports of entry and Reporting Centre's and Caley House, a new non-residential facility at Heathrow airport ? This data was taken from Ms. Sarah Edwards presentation for the Coordinator's Conference titled: "Expansion on the UKBA Estate" June 2009.

## Our Visit to Beech Grove Community

A group of 12 people including volunteers and members of staff visited Beech Grove Christian Community in Nonington on the 11th of June. The experience was a success and allowed us to get to know people that have a completely different way of life and would like to help and support the vulnerable or those in need. Volunteers had the opportunity to ask as many questions as we wanted and in words of some of the visitors present, the visit was "thoroughly enjoyable and fascinating"; "lovely people, hospitable" and "fascinating, well worth a visit."



## To Chris Pilcher

By ex-detainee Lazarus Banda

I knew Chris and Stuart Pilcher when I got my first bail in December 2004 and became friends when I joined the choir at Aylesford Priory. They became my regular visitors at DIRC when I was re-detained in January 2005 facing my deportation to Zimbabwe. Both Chris and Stuart became my sureties when I went for a successful bail hearing without a solicitor. I greatly appreciated her incredible support and help for me and my family in Zimbabwe and for the detainees. We both became regular visitors and she helped many detainees in their needs.

'Winter is past, the rains are gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come. Arise, my love, my fair one and come away' (SS 2: 11-12)

These words are from the Song of Songs in the Old Testament. I remember Chris in the beauty of summer, the time of birdsong, of fruitfulness, of beauty. And though we mourn the loss of a loving friend, we also rejoice and give thanks for a life that was full of beauty, of goodness, and indeed, song.



In this article I want to speak of Chris most especially in terms of music, as she sang with us here at Aylesford in the choir and her reaching out for detainees in Dover. In the Bible joy, love, sorrow, praise, are often

expressed in song. We can think of every life being a unique song, a new song, because it has never been sung before as it is in this particular life and in this particular way.

The song that is our life is breathed into us by the Holy Spirit and carries its own unique melody—sometimes joyful, sometimes sad, sometimes a bit off key, sometimes overflowing with gratitude, sometimes rising from the depths of sorrow.

Chris' life was like her singing which had two aspects. One was a very pure and true voice, confident enough to sing solo. The other aspect was that she was a wonderful choir member because she could blend in without dominating.

Chris' voice was pure and true. We can see it as a metaphor of her search for truth, justice, her desire to come to terms with her own life in all its unique aspects. Chris was eager to learn, to grow, to create, to reach out for detainees. She wanted to discern God's will in integrating and accepting her life story. She came to terms with her final illness.

As a visitor she knew how to make things pleasant to detainees by a kind word, a helping hand, a shared coffee... 'Little nothings' that made friendship with someone like Chris a joy and enrichment for all who she visited and for all who knew her. She enriched all those she visited as we witnessed her courage, her serenity, her desire to grow and her search for God, justice and for meaning. The detainees were enriched by the way Chris blended in, made friends, brought harmony and joy and to so many lives in thoughtful, caring ways, often so small as to pass unnoticed.

### The International Tracing and Message services from the British Red Cross

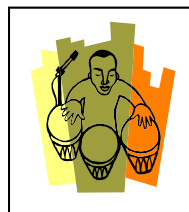
The Red Cross provided us with a information session on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June about their service to restore and maintain contact between families who has been separated by armed conflict, political upheaval, natural disaster or migration. 12 volunteers attended and gave very good feedback about the session. We would take the opportunity to encourage volunteers to attend trainings sessions, as it is a chance to enrich their knowledge about topics that are useful in their visitor's role. DDVG is looking forward to work in partnership with the Red Cross and thanks its coordinator, Mrs. Vanessa Wood for taking the time to come to our offices and enlighten us in this interesting and sensitive topic. If you feel this might be useful for your detainee please contact DDVG for further information.



### DDVG's presence at the Multicultural Festival in Dover

Sheila Forster DDVG's chair and Claire Parker, member of staff, opened DDVG stand on Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup> of June at the Dover Multicultural Festival. Vebi, Marianela and lots of volunteers took turns managing the stall on the day. This Multicultural Festival is a yearly event organized by KRAN and a great way to explore what other charitable and non-charitable organizations are doing in our community. It is also interesting to see entertainment from different cultures present on the day. We have managed to recruit 5 new volunteers for the Dover Detainee Visitor Group from this event.

### Culture Day is an Open Day at Dover Immigration Removal Centre



The Dover Immigration Removal Centre has a Culture Day annually. On this day detainees, staff, and visitors mix and enjoy a relaxing afternoon full of music from round the world. This year it will be on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009 (time to be confirmed).

DDVG invites volunteers to come along this day. There are only 20 spaces available. We need to have your names by the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, as your names need to pass by security clearance at DIRC. Please write this day down in your agendas and contact the office if you would like to join us.