

Pompey striker kicks off model Kairos project

IT'S a model Kairos project that has already captured the imagination of teenagers in Liss.

Hundreds of well-wishers crammed into the new premises of the Crossover youth drop-in centre to see Pompey striker Svetoslav Todorov officially launch the project. It was a double celebration for Pompey fans as the team had beaten Wigan to confirm their Premiership status the previous day.

Scores of teenagers saw the centre for the first time, met its new manager Richard Harris, listened to local band Davros, feasted on cakes and queued up for Todorov's autograph. It helped whet their appetite for the official opening of the centre at the end of May.

The centre aims to be a place where 11 to 18-year-olds can play pool or other games, access the internet safely, watch large-screen TV, buy food and drink or simply chill out, anytime from the end of the school day until 10pm. It should ultimately be open seven days a week. The inspiration for the project came from Kairos and community research suggesting that a meeting place for teenagers was top of most Liss residents' wish-lists.

A project committee was formed last November, bringing together St Mary's Church, the parish council, other local churches and community groups, with support from police and the county youth service. They acted quickly to secure a former furniture workshop near Liss station as the venue for the centre.

Committee chairman Michael Oakley, who is also PCC treasurer, said: "We're delighted we can congratulate Toddy and the team for their brilliant finishing which meant they avoided relegation, and we hope next season won't be as fraught!



"This is not a youth club, as there are no rules or formalities. It's more like a pub without beer. The ambition of those who had the original vision is that the young people will adopt it as their own and participate in the running of the centre."

And parish council leader Councillor Nigel Paren said: "Portsmouth's survival was down to the leadership qualities of Harry Redknapp. Michael Oakley has been our Harry Redknapp!"

"In five months, we've got from the formation of a committee to our venue launch, and a lot of that is down to Michael's drive and determination."

The original vision came after research showed there were about 800 11 to 19-year-olds in the parish, but no dedicated youth centre. Two youth groups only opened one evening a week in restricted space. Liss also has the highest number of teenage pregnancies in the district, and reports of anti-social behaviour by bored young-



Above: local band Davros play in the centre; below: Pompey's Svetoslav Todorov cuts the ribbon at the launch

sters had grown.

The committee were also inspired by the ecumenical Kings Arms project in Petersfield, which both police and civic authorities have praised for its work with young people.

In a similar way, worshippers in Liss hope the new Crossover centre will show their faith in action, while conveying the Christian message in a subtle way. The centre will be run by a charity, with much of the work done by up to 100 volunteers from the area.

The Ven Trevor Reader, chairman of our Diocesan Kairos Group, said: "From its inception, this has been a model Kairos project. The research has uncovered a genuine need in

the community, Christians have been at the forefront of trying to meet that need, they've worked in partnership with other community groups, and they've cemented the church's place at the heart of that community."

The centre's setting-up costs of more than £40,000 have been funded by grants from our diocese's Kairos pump-priming fund, the PCC, parish council and East Hampshire District Council, as well as individual donors. More fundraising to meet its ongoing running costs of around £36,000 a year is now taking place.

Help those in hospital experience worship

NEW volunteers are needed to help patients experience Sunday worship in hospital chapels.

The chaplaincies at both the Queen Alexandra and St Mary's Hospitals in Portsmouth are looking for new volunteers to help push patients to the chapels in wheelchairs.

They would join a loyal band of chapel volunteers who share a monthly rota for bringing patients to the 10.30am service of Holy Communion.

The acting head of chaplaincy and bereavement services, the Rev Frank Hillebrand, said: "Being a patient in hospital can be a very challenging experience, as the bishop has eloquently reminded us in speaking of his recent experiences.

"It can be just the time when you feel the need to worship most of all, but you are dependent upon someone else to get you there.

"The work brings its own rich rewards for the volunteers, as the patients are often very moved and grateful for the worship experience - such a direct way of responding to our Lord's command to care for Him in those who are sick."

Anyone who is interested in volunteering - perhaps for one Sunday each month - can contact Frank Hillebrand on 023-9228 6000.

Change in way diocese supports our unpaid clergy

THE way in which unpaid clergy are supported in our diocese has changed.

The Rev Robin Coutts, who was already diocesan director of non-stipendiary ministry, has also been appointed diocesan director of ordinands. But he will relinquish his responsibilities to offer help and support to non-stipendiary clergy after their initial curacy. That will now be handled by our three archdeacons.

The change comes after the Rev Richard Brand, who was our director of ordinands and priest-in-charge at St Peter and St Paul, Hambledon, took up a new job in the Leicester diocese. Robin Coutts has also moved parishes to take over Richard's post as priest-in-charge at Hambledon. He will be licensed by the bishop on June 12.