

Cyrenians launch a new film today at The Scottish Storytelling Centre

A unique and innovative approach to supporting vulnerable young people who have been homeless is being showcased in an engaging short film to be premiered later today (but there is a sneaky wee trailer below.....)

Devised and produced by the residents and volunteers at Edinburgh's two Cyrenians Communities, the film portrays what it is like to live, volunteer and work in the communities, and highlights why this approach works for both residents and volunteers.

Cyrenians has two residential Communities. The City Community in Leith and the Farm Community to the west of Edinburgh. Over the course of a year the Communities will provide support to around 29 individuals aged 16-30. Each Community has up to eight residents at any one time, who live there as a result of being homeless, usually following a family relationship breakdown, drug or alcohol issues or a mental health problem. Both Communities also have around six volunteers who live with the residents helping to provide a safe, stable environment and ultimately resulting in residents moving on into the wider community.

Dani Jones, aged 26, one of the residents who took part in the film describes the impact living in the Community has had on him: "Cyrenians is a chance to get back on your feet if you are homeless or in need of help. It's given me a second chance, not only in life but in giving me the motivation to do well."

With funding from The Agnes Hunter Trust, the Cyrenians'

residents worked with Media Education, volunteers and staff for six weeks to create the short powerful film which captures what it is like to live in a shared living environment and how this supports individuals to grow and develop, increasing their social and emotional skills.

The challenging and exciting project provided an industry-based training experience giving both residents and volunteers an opportunity to learn new skills, build confidence and self esteem. Of the six residents and nine volunteers who participated in the project, all agreed they felt a real sense of pride and achievement with the final film.

Cyrenians Community resident Annie, aged 26, described the filming making process as a positive experience and said: "Sometimes I find team work and communication difficult but through this project I think we worked very well together and showed what it is like to live in the Cyrenians communities."

Ewan Aitken, Chief Executive, Cyrenians, said: "We hope this film will be a in inspiration for those who feel they don't matter or that no-one cares. Cyrenians communities are places of change for everyone involved; whatever the reason they are there. There are no labels; there are only people together on a journey of transformation and hope. No-one is beyond change. Some may stumble but others are there for them. And everybody matters, everybody makes a difference."

Iain Shaw, Director, Media Education, who worked with residents on the project, said: "We have been delighted with the levels of engagement and the commitment to the project from all involved. This is reflected in the quality of the final film. I hope that residents and volunteers use their involvement to seek out new opportunities and use the project as a basis for demonstrating their abilities in terms of creativity, teamwork and technical skills. We have found this project to be very worthwhile and look forward to working with Cyrenians again in the future."

The premiere of the film at the Scottish Storytelling Centre today will allow residents' friends and family to share the experience. The film will then be used to help prospective residents and volunteers gain a better understanding of life in the Communities and to help recruit future volunteers.