

BSA Celebration

On Saturday 6th March 2010, the Mayor of Bedford, members of Bedford Borough Council and local churches met together to celebrate one year since the launch of Bedford Street Angels. The afternoon began with a presentation, introduced by Adam May, our Project Director looking at the work which Bedford Street Angels has been involved in, and included a powerful DVD interview with the adopted parents of Robert Gill, who was murdered on Boxing Day 2007 and the reality of the Street Angels on a Saturday evening. There was also a short address given by Paul Blakey MBE, the National founder of Street Angels who praised the work of the volunteers.

The volunteers don't wear wings or have halos, but a group of Street Angels are helping to reduce violent crime in Bedford town centre. Next month marks one year since the Street Angels project was set up by fifteen local churches from across Bedford, to offer help and support to the thousands of people who visit the town's numerous bars and clubs every Saturday.

In their distinctive red fleece, they set out in teams of three to patrol along a wide area focusing on the town centre. More often than not, the Street Angels are available to help people, especially the vulnerable; those who may have become isolated from their friends, are on their own waiting for their lift home to arrive, need direction to locate taxi ranks or cash machines. But the Street Angels are also on hand to help those who have had too much to drink, or wait with folk needing Paramedic attention. They do their best, by talking with groups, to prevent scuffles breaking out and are on hand to help in the aftermath of any.

There were tributes to the energy and commitment of the volunteers led by the Mayor of Bedford, Dave Hodgson, Cllr Will Hunt, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety within the Bedford Borough and Frank Fender, the Retail Alcohol Partnership Officer for Bedford Borough Council and Coordinator of Bed:safe.

Following a short address by Frank Fender, a cheque for £3,500 was presented by Paul Dawson on behalf of the Bed:safe Licensees Forum to continue the work that Bedford Street Angels is engaged in.

Following the presentation, there was an opportunity for guests to meet with the volunteers over refreshments. To conclude the event, there was a Celebration Day service led by Major Ian Loxley, Chair of the Bedford Street Angels with input from the Gideon Theatre Group, made up of members of local churches. There was an act of commission for volunteers led by the Bishop of Bedford, the Right Reverend Richard Inwood and Pastor David Gibson from Russell Park Baptist Church.

Reflecting on the day, Adam May, Project Director of Bedford Street Angels said

“I thought the event was an amazing testimony to the work that has been achieved by Bedford Street Angels in our first twelve months. I was heartened to hear the tributes from the Mayor of Bedford, Cllr Will Hunt and Frank Fender to the long term commitment of Bedford Borough Council to our work.

As I said in the presentation, we are not a one year wonder, but something that will continue to grow and develop.”