

DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

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SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR DARLINGTON HOMELESS OUTFIT

The Sky really has become the limit for a County Durham homeless charity, thanks to a grant from Darlington Champions.

Darlington-based charity Stop2Night is about to make an appeal for volunteers on Sky TV's Community Channel through a short film produced with the financial help of County Durham Foundation's Darlington Champions campaign.

County Durham Foundation has spent ten years funding good causes in the community and recently launched Darlington Champions, which aims to encourage more local people and businesses to help fund local good causes.

Stop2Night offers emergency frontline support for people between the ages of 16 and 25 who find themselves without a roof over their head. It provides them with emergency accommodation in the homes of volunteer-families who work with the charity.

Stop2Night, which is run by Bridget Chapman, has a team of about half a dozen volunteer-families, but is looking for more to expand its support network.

That's where Darlington Champions stepped in, to fund the production of a three-minute TV advert, which will run for two months on the Sky TV Community Channel.

Bridget offers emergency-accommodation at her home, which she has done for ten years as she herself became homeless when younger and decided to help young people in the same position. She says the cash from Darlington Champions is a real boost to the service.

“We’re extremely grateful for the money that Darlington Champions and County Durham Foundation have given us, as we don’t get funding for this kind of thing from the council or the other agencies.” said Bridget.

The TV advert will explain how the Stop2Night operates and its relationships with statutory agencies like social services. It will also explain that:

- volunteer-families are not expected to accommodate anyone who has not been thoroughly vetted by the statutory frontline agencies for issues such as criminal records.
- they will not be asked to accommodate anyone under the influence of either drink or drugs.
- they are paid expenses of £40 a night.
- a 24-hour support service is available to volunteer-families, through S2N, in case of emergencies.

Bridget said: “The work itself is very rewarding. I was homeless a long time ago in my younger days, so I really appreciate what it means to have a roof over your head.

“The thing is, these days anyone at all can find themselves in this situation; it doesn’t mean there has to be a stigma over it. We find quite often that what we’re dealing with are young people whose families have fractured and they’ve found themselves with nowhere to go.

“They’re just young people who have found themselves in a crisis situation and need someone in their hour of need. That’s where we come in.”

This is the second time that Darlington Champions and County Durham Foundation have stepped in to help Stop2Night, as they helped fund some of the charity’s staffing costs last year.

County Durham Foundation hopes its Darlington Champions will help the foundation boost its endowment fund from £5 million to £10 million by 2010 and is appealing to more businesses, organisations and individuals to get involved.

Gillian Stacey, chief executive of County Durham Foundation, said: “As a Darlington Champion, you will join a team of business professionals and local people who are already helping to make Darlington one of the most exciting places to live in the North East. Our aim is to encourage local people and business to help local people.”

ENDS

NOTE TO EDITORS:

County Durham Foundation was launched in 1995 to distribute grants and build an invested endowment fund that now has 60 donors, including companies, individuals, families, trusts and other organisations who want to fund good works across the county.

Its vice-presidents include the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Tony Blair MP, and the world-renowned naturalist Dr David Bellamy.

For further information contact Andy Barker at Results Network PR on 0191 519 7268/07855 352 303, or Mel Caldwell at County Durham Foundation, on 0191 383 0055.

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