



Mike was staying in Albyn House, a support hostel for problem drinkers, when Annie, the Project Worker at Reach Out and Fred, a former student who also used to stay in Albyn House and has now stopped drinking for one and a half years, went to give a talk about the things offered in our programme.



In his talk Fred had said 'The thing that I like about Reach Out is that there is something for everyone. Your problems, or lack of them, aren't anybody's business. You meet people with all kinds of disabilities and are encouraged to give everything a go.'

Mike's Story

Reach Out has had many successes in the past year, and each of our students has an interesting story to tell. One inspirational tale comes from Mike Buchan, who has stopped drinking, been treated for throat cancer, walked 120 miles and raised over £1000 for charity, all in the last year.

Getting sober for the first time in 24 years then finding out you have throat cancer sounds horrendous. Mike says that at Reach Out he could go out walking and have a laugh, whereas everywhere else he was told he shouldn't do too much.

Earlier this year Mike participated in an expedition in the Cairngorms National Park where he walked up Braeriach and drank water from the source of the Dee. When at the Wells of the Dee he thought 'this is it: drink, never again! Six months ago I would never have gone back to climbing. I would never have been here. Everything changes from now on. And I'm not going to let the cancer beat me.'



Mike says he needed a challenge to keep him going during his chemotherapy treatment, and so he planned a sponsored walk to raise money for Reach Out and Cancer Research. Having left hospital 2 days before, he began a 120-mile walk from the mouth of the River Dee in Aberdeen, back to the source in the Cairngorms. He generated media interest and appeared in articles in Aberdeen and Peterhead newspapers.

During his week-long trek he walked 15 to 20 miles a day. Reach Out supported him by bringing extra food, walking part of the journey with him and pitching his tent at various points along the way. So far he has raised over £1200 through sponsorship and from people responding to the articles about him.

I asked him what the best bit of the trip was. He said he was just glad to be doing it. He'd been feeling suicidal and just wanted to give up. Planning the walk had given him something to look forward to and an incentive to keep going. Actually doing the walk made him think 'I CAN do it. It's just a case of never giving up.'

While spending a night in a bothy, Mike met some guys who'd been hoping to bump into him. One was a biker who'd lost one arm in an accident and was interested in taking up climbing but had been advised against it. He was sick of people telling him that he'd better not even try, and said that if Mike could walk 120 miles while being treated for cancer, he could try rock climbing with one arm. 'Nothing is impossible. Just try it.'



The Juicing Café

We took in a juicing machine when we banned coca/cola and other fizzy drinks. We tried it for 6 weeks to see how we would get on. It all started with a caffeine free zone when tea and coffee were banned so we tried herbal tea, water from the cooler and freshly squeezed juice as different ways of being healthy. This was back in April. But not April Fool's Day.



This is 11th November and it is used nearly every day. Its fun to work with and I like using the machine. The only thing is that Annie doesn't like cleaning it so she asks me to make the juice! I have made juice with carrots, oranges, apples, tomatoes, cucumber, peppermint, and red, green and yellow peppers. You need to take the seeds out of the peppers first or they go through the sieve and spoil the drink. I found a way to take the skins off tomatoes with boiling water, for people who don't like the skins and it saves washing them!



Apples and carrots are washed first before I put them in the machine. I also have to wash my hands at the start before I do anything. I cut the tops and tails off the carrots before they go through the machine. Apples are just cut in half and the machine separates out the juice from the cores and seeds. The waste goes a different way from the juice. I put the waste in the green compost bin. It is supposed to go up to the allotment to go on the compost heap or you can just dig it straight into the garden.

My favourite juice is carrot and apple with herbs. We never use cartons of juice, we just use whatever materials they give us / carrots, tangerines, oranges. Sometimes the staff give me money and I go to the shops. Safeways is the cheapest and best. Annie sometimes comes with me. Perhaps she thinks I'll spend the money on cigarettes or booze!!!!