Francis House Children's Hospice opens new charity shop in Withington

Tuesday 24 May, 2022

After the pandemic forced the much-loved Manchester children's hospice to close its only charity shop in Burnage, Francis House Children's Hospice has opened a new shop in Withington.

The premises, located at 470 Wilmslow Road, are bigger and brighter, and staff and volunteers are hoping to attract a new clientele as well as welcome back its many regular donors and shoppers.

The shop is selling everything from clothing, shoes, books, toys, toiletries, textiles and bric-a-brac.

Jason Connor, shop manager, said the ten volunteers couldn't wait to get back to work after the shutters were pulled down in the Burnage store more than two years ago.

He said: "They've all been chomping at the bit; they've been bored and a lot of them like to be kept busy that's why they work for us as well as giving something back.

"It's a good opportunity to move to Withington. If we'd moved further away, we might have lost the volunteers as 80 per cent walked to work and a couple used to drive. They have been a big help in setting up the new shop and have gone straight back into doing what they did before, so we've not had to train all new staff.

> "Withington is a busier area for donations and for footfall. The shop in Burnage had been a part of the community for 22 years but in recent years it got a bit quiet for us with all the other shops closing down. There are a lot more students here so it will be interesting to see what the custom will be and what people think of the new shop.

"I'm looking forward to getting back to trading and to having the space, more stock and a few more lines to give people more choice so that they spend money, which is after all what we are here for."

The Francis House shop is joining five other charities with a presence on the high street, but Jason sees this a positive rather than a negative.

He added: "You do get a type of shopper who is a charity shop shopper, they will come and do all the charity shops, looking at each one of them in turn. My mum used to do that, she'd go to a place and go in all the charity shops. Speaking to the neighbours here on Wilmslow Road, one said it's good to have another shop because your custom will come into us and vice versa.

"It could dilute our donations a bit. In Burnage we were the only one there, so everyone would bring their stuff into us. It's different here, if you've got two bags full of stuff to donate you might pass two shops to come to us, but people will come out of their way to get to us, and we always pick up from people if needed."

Careful management of donated stock ensures that the best return possible can be achieved. Niche items and memorabilia can be found on the Francis House charity eBay shop where they can fetch more money by reaching a wider market, for other goods the shop is the best option.

> Jason explains: "You've got to judge it right. For some clothing we can get more money for it in the shop. On eBay there is a lot more choice and that brings down the price. If someone comes into the shop and they need a pair of jeans for Saturday night, they might just pay the price you've put on it.

"But if it goes into an auction on eBay there is the risk that you'll only get your start off price as there might only be one person looking for something that size that week. It's fine to keep it in the shop for a couple of weeks and wait to get the right price."

Visitors to the new shop will find plenty of good quality items to choose from including shoes and toys as the more unusual items. Golfers may be interested in thousands of golf balls donated by a local golfer who finds the discarded balls whilst out walking his dog. The golf balls of varying price ranges are available to buy on request.

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Francis House has been providing care to children and young people with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions and support to their families since 1991. Based in Didsbury, Manchester, the hospice relies on charitable donations to fund the majority of the £12,900 daily running costs.

Local contractors Chapel Green Contracts of Leigh, W&G Services of Gatley and Optimum Electrical of Stockport carried out the alterations of the former toy shop to include a staff kitchen and stock room area.

David Ireland, chief executive of Francis House said of the new shop: "It looks great, and we are really grateful to the contractors who worked with Francis House and have done all the work free of charge.

> "When we found the new premises, they needed adaptation and we had to buy some equipment, but thankfully these long-serving contractors carried out the work voluntarily and we cannot say how grateful we are for that.

"After the Burnage shop closed, we had to open another shop. We get so many items donated that we need to be able to do something with them, and we can benefit the care of the children with the cash that we receive.

"We are hoping to re-establish the community spirit we had in Burnage. It is a much more vibrant community hub in Withington, and we feel that it will be more beneficial both to the community and to Francis House.

"We are really grateful to the volunteers who have returned to help us in the shop, and we are sad at the loss of volunteers who have died during the shutdown."

The shop can be found at 470 Wilmslow Road, Withington, M20 3BG and is open 10.00am-4.00pm Tuesday to Saturday.

Donated items, excluding electricals, furniture and safety goods such as child car seats, can be donated during shop opening hours. Parking and unloading are available at the back of the shop on Gledhill Street.

To support the Francis House shop visit www.francishouse.org.uk/get-involved/shop/ or call Jason on 07599 822137.

Company Contact: