

Jo's run will help abused women

JO Cullimore knows how important women's refuges are – she once spent five weeks in one.

The mum-of-two, from All Saints Church in Denmead, was placed in a refuge for women fleeing domestic abuse in 2006 with her children Emma, then 2 and Tyler, then 1.

That's why she'll be running in the London Marathon next month to raise essential funds for Women's Aid. The cash will be spent to help other women escape domestic violence and to raise awareness of the problem.

"We were lucky," she said. "We not only had a safe place to stay, but the support we received from Women's Aid was second to none. We were back on our feet in no time.

"Without Women's Aid we couldn't have done it. That's why Women's Aid are so close to my heart – and always will be. In my eyes they are lifesavers. They helped us escape abuse and now I want to raise as much as I can to help Women's Aid help many more sufferers.

"Domestic violence is a serious problem, with one woman in four experiencing it during her lifetime. It is shocking that in today's society, one woman is killed every three days by a violent partner or ex-partner."

Jo, who is 35 and lives in Waterlooville, now also volunteers once a week for Women's Aid, help-

ing the women there with art and craft activities.

She's now in training for the gruelling 26-mile slog around the streets of London on April 17. Jo had previously only run 5km in the Race for Life last year.

She hopes to raise £3,000 for Women's Aid through sponsorship and also through a fundraising dance night that will take place on March 19 at the Hampshire Rose in Widley.

Local fitness guru Maria Bentley, who runs courses and workshops in pilates, salsa and cheerleading, will run a couple of dance sessions during the evening. And her husband Paul Bentley will provide the disco.

Tickets cost £5 per person. It's for over 16s only and there are only 150 tickets available. To book, contact Jo on 07771-888660 or jocullimore7@btinternet.com.

To sponsor Jo for her marathon run, see www.justgiving.com/jocullimore. Payment can be made via debit or credit card or via PayPal.

Women's Aid is the national organisation in the UK helping women and children experiencing physical, sexual or emotional abuse in their homes.

To find out more about the work of Women's Aid call 0117 944 4411 or see www.womensaid.org.uk. For help or advice, call the 24-hour domestic violence helpline on 0808 2000 247.



Jo Cullimore running to support women's refuges

Prison to host day looking at forgiving

AN exhibition showing inspiring examples of Christian forgiveness will go on display at Kingston Prison in Portsmouth.

The F-Word Exhibition will show images of victims and perpetrators whose lives have been shattered by violence, tragedy and injustice, and tell stories of those who have chosen to give and receive forgiveness.

There will be a guest speaker at the event and a chance to join in the discussion forum. The day will attempt to answer the questions: 'Who needs forgiveness? And why?', 'Is it possible? And how?'

It will take place on March 31 from 10am onwards with the discussion forum from 2pm-4.15pm. There is a minimum age of attendance of 18.

For details and to book a place please contact the prison's co-ordinating chaplain, the Rev Paul Newman on 023-9295 3229 or paul.anthony.newman@hmps.gsi.gov.uk.

Volunteers pack gifts for Ghana

HUNDREDS of gifts collected by volunteers in our diocese are now being distributed to churches and schools in Africa.

Volunteers gathered at a scrapyard in Waltham Chase to load a large shipping container full of crayons, baby clothes and theological and school books to send to the parishes and schools we are linked with in Ghana.

The 72 boxes set sail last month and are now being shared among churches, schools and centres that are part of our Inter Diocesan West Africa Link (IDWAL).

The donations will go to the Cape Coast Theological Seminary and the Nkawie Retreat Centre near Kumasi, as well as to a number of churches and schools in the northern dioceses of Sunyani and Tamale. Some will go to churches near Accra.

Organiser Marion Syms, from our cathedral, said: "It is a privilege to be involved in this work and to glimpse the Kingdom of God in action."

Imam helps recreate pilgrimages

PUPILS at Wickham C of E Primary School welcomed their local imam to help them explore the idea of pilgrimage.

Year 6 children were learning about pilgrimages in their RE lessons, including the duty of Muslims to travel to Mecca during their lifetime, but they were relying on textbooks and the internet rather than personal testimony.

So Sheik Fazle Abbas Dattoo, the imam at Al Mahdi Centre in Wickham, visited the school for the first time to share his experience of pilgrimage.

The imam brought a scale replica of the Kaaba in Mecca and the class walked around the model to imagine the annual event which attracts about three million people.

The children dressed up in the ihram, the clothes worn when on pilgrimage, and listened to personal stories from Sheik Fazle Abbas and Husein Suleiman – who is also from the Al Mahdi community.

The children asked Husein questions about his recent pilgrimage to Mecca.

"I really enjoyed pre-

tending to walk around the Kaaba," said 10-year-old Kayleigh Gunn.

"People were standing on my toes and we were all squashed together! I could imagine what it would be like to visit the Kaaba."

The school's headteacher Maria Ackland said: "The visit brought an important personal element to the children's learning and school staff are keen to embrace further opportunities to enhance learning and promote understanding between those of different races, creeds, and outlooks."



Sheik Fazle shows children pilgrims' clothes