

News Bites

25 years of help

NEWBURY: Loose Ends, part of community group Christians Together in the Newbury Area (CTNA), is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

The group is made up of 70 volunteers who produce five meals per week in Morton Hall, in Northbrook Street, for those in need, as well as offering clothes, hygiene products and friendship.

Colin Powell, chairman of CTNA, said: "I am very impressed by their commitment to the whole person - members are really interested in the wellbeing of their clients."

Bus pass check

WEST BERKS: Residents who use free or disabled bus passes in West Berkshire are being reminded to make sure they are valid, after a new policy came into force last week.

As of last Monday ticket machines on buses now tell people using the Concessionary Travel Pass if they are no longer valid for travel.

An amnesty period is running until October 4, and passengers are being urged to apply for a new pass as soon as possible if needed through West Berkshire Council.

New scheme

NEWBURY: The new Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) is being offered at Newbury College for people who want to work in construction.

CSCS is a leading scheme in the industry, and most developers require workers to hold a CSCS card.

Tracey and Oakley resume canal trek

By Adam Flinn

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FOLLOWING a two and a half month hiatus, a partially-sighted woman and her guide dog will resume their quest to walk 70 miles along the Kennet and Avon Canal from Kintbury on Saturday.

Tracey Clarke, 49, who only has pinhole vision in her right eye and no sight at all in her left, set out in July to walk from Bath to Reading with her Labrador Oakley to raise £5,000 for The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

Husband Tim was following alongside in their canal boat, on which they live.

But as the trio reached Hungerford, Tim's dad Raymond suffered a fall at home and passed away, meaning the walk was put on hold at Kintbury.

Now they are looking to resume where they left off and finish the final 24 miles to Reading by next weekend.

A relaunch event is being held at The Blue Ball pub in Kintbury on Saturday, with another event planned at The Bacon Arms in Newbury the following day.

"We're resuming the walk and going to Reading, which we're



going to do within the space of Guide Dogs Week from October 3 to 11," said Tracey.

"Once we got to Kintbury, we had already raised the £5,000 to sponsor a puppy and we've named it after Tim's dad, so we're now aiming to raise another £2,500 at least."

They chose The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association to fundraise for after Tracey began to lose her sight in 2011.

She had been born with no functional vision in her left eye, but didn't have any problems with the right eye.

She had a career in pharmacy

and was a member of the Institute of Advanced Motorists.

"In 2011 I started to realise I was missing things that were coming from my right until they were right in front of me," Tracey added.

"At that stage my eye had shut down to around half and half vision.

"And then over the course of a further six months it shut down to just a tiny pinhole in the middle."

Tracey paid tribute to her dog Oakley, describing him as a "life changer".

She continued: "Without him I

honestly dread to think where I would be, because I had started to sink into depression and didn't go out at all.

"I felt it wasn't safe to go out, so he basically transformed my life to the point that I was out regularly and enjoying walking for the fun of walking.

"We are trying to raise £7,500 in total at least, it is just a little way of trying to say thank you."

To donate to Tracey and Oakley's fundraising efforts, go to justgiving.com/guidedoggoakley.

Tracey and Tim Clarke with Oakley on their canal boat

Four car thefts prompts police warning

POLICE are urging residents to make sure their cars are secure after a number of thefts from vehicles were reported in West Berkshire this month.

The first was between 9pm and 8.30am between September 10 and 11 in Purley Rise, Purley on Thames, when a purse was stolen from a car.

Then between 2.15pm on September 20 and 8am the next morning, two pairs of designer sunglasses were taken from a car in Almond Drive, Thatcham.

An iPod and mobile phone was stolen from a vehicle in Horseshoe Road, Pangbourne, between Midnight on September 20 and 10.40am on September 22.

And between 12.30pm and 1.10pm on September 22, thieves smashed a window of a car parked in Blenheim Road, Newbury, and stole a handbag.

Nighbourhood inspector Chris Ward said: "We are doing everything we can to identify and arrest the offenders.

"Motorists need to be extra vigilant, to secure their vehicles at all times and should not leave valuables on display."

He urged anyone who saw anything suspicious or has any information to call 101.

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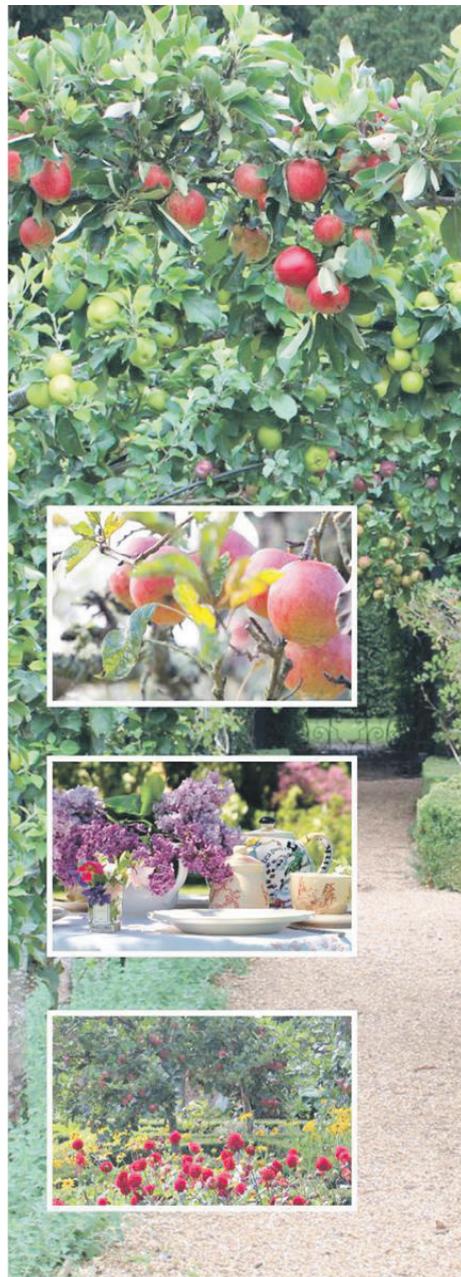
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