



# MEP NEWSLETTER – JULY 2024

Welcome to the MEP newsletter – a place for everyone to share news and information.

## DATES FOR SUMMER 2024

As usual this summer MEP will be taking a break from normal lessons, while Exeter Street Hall is closed. The last session of normal teaching will be on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> July, and the new term starts on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September.

As in previous years, we are organising events for students and volunteers during the summer break. Here’s what we have planned so far. We are also looking at bus trips to Devil’s Dyke and/or Rottingdean:

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July:** Gardening at the community garden

**Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> July:** Hearts and Flowers at Stanmer Park (limited numbers)

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> August:** Picnic in Preston Park

**Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> August:** Music and Nature walk at Waterhall (20 places)

**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September:** Nature and crafts at Plot 22 (limited numbers)

**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September:** Cooking Course at Community Base (limited places)

If you would like to come to any of these events, please ask your teacher for more details.



Thank  
You

## THANK YOU TO EXETER STREET HALL

Back in May, the Exeter Street Hall’s management committee donated an incredible £2,500 to MEP! Everyone at MEP wants to thank the Hall for such a generous donation. Some of this money will be used during the summer to organize a picnic and other outings for our students and volunteers.

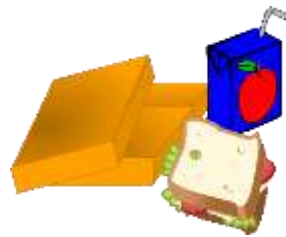
MEP is a community project and throughout the year our financial sub-group applies for funding to organizations and trusts that support work around asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants. Due to the national situation, getting funding is becoming more difficult so the donation from ESH is even more welcome and appreciated.

Thanks once again for this donation and for all the wonderful support that MEP receives from ESH throughout the year !

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Did you know that one of our MEP students has a connection with sheep?! Find out more by reading about it later in this newsletter....



## Join us for this year’s MEP Big Picnic!!

All students and volunteers are invited to the MEP Big Picnic.

**When?: Monday 12<sup>th</sup> August**  
from 12.30

**Where?: Preston Park,** near the Rotunda Café. MEP will buy everyone a drink, ice cream or cake from the cafe, but please bring your own food and drink as well.



# Kirat's report on the MEP Community Garden



Hello All,

We are now in the middle of summer; the longest day of the whole year has passed, and it is light before 5 am and dark after 9.30! This year even people who have lived in the UK for a long time have noticed we haven't had much sunshine, and every sunny day feels special. We hope July, August and September will be sunny and warm.



As some of you know, in March and April some MEP teachers gave students a lesson about the Community Garden. They also chatted about gardens and farms you have known in your lives and about what you might want to see growing at the MEP Community Garden. Nine of the students who had these lessons and two volunteers filled out the questionnaire. Other students chatted to Kirat about the Community Garden when she was at MEP on Mondays. Generally, everyone has a story to tell about the gardens they remember, they were curious about the Community Garden and many students wanted to visit this year.

Many MEP students also said they would like us to grow tomatoes, aubergines, okra, spring onions, spinach and lettuces, and flowers like roses and clematis. Siddig mentioned he would like us to plant a grape vine and a pear tree. Planting one or two trees is best in the autumn and is a great idea.

We know that many of you like the idea of meeting at the MEP Community Garden and being in the green space to enjoy nature. We are able to give you your bus fare if you come to our events, and have started a WhatsApp group. If you would like to join the group, please speak to Kirat.

## Two students had memories of their gardens:

*In Syria my garden was big. I had flowers and orange trees. We played in the garden. We grew lemons and apples.*

*My garden in Eritrea was medium-sized. We had a banana tree. We drank coffee and ate fruit. We grew cabbage and salad.*

Do you want to describe your garden or have a story about a garden you would like to share? Do you have a picture someone has sent of your garden or a beautiful place that you would like us to add to section in the next newsletter called 'My Favourite Garden'?

## Recent Events at the Garden

This year we have met at the Community Garden a few times already. The first time was in **April** and luckily the weather was nice...it didn't rain! Nine teachers came and everybody helped in so many ways. Six students and six children came, and we had a good time planting seeds and tidying up the polytunnel. Planting seeds is a hopeful thing to do. Jenny and Susan were amazing because they waited at the bus stops for students and teachers who did not know



the way. Jayne helped with beautifully labelling the seeds we sowed. Will, Jackie, Nefeissa and the children helped to plant potatoes. And Paolo made us all happy with his chatting! Siddig and Ismail did some fantastic work wheelbarrowing the woodchip because we needed to start making the ground even and safer for walking. We drank tea and juice and ate biscuits and nuts, and the time went by so fast. It was great teamwork and fun.



In **May** we met again. This time it was on a Thursday, and we kept the time for those who wanted to learn gardening...there was no tea party on that day because the gardening at this time is very important. We needed hands to put seedlings in the ground - cucumber, courgettes, tomatoes, aubergines, okra and beans. Some of the flowers had grown but not everything, because of the cold weather. The corn the children planted in April sadly did not grow, but Will said corn is very difficult to grow there because the badgers and foxes eat it, so maybe we have been spared the disappointment early this year.

On **June 22nd** we met again, and 4 students

and 3 volunteers were there. The weather was much warmer, and many things are growing well now. We weeded the polytunnel, planting more courgettes, beans and flowers. We ate biscuits and drank tea again. We ate some of the juicy strawberries, and Will picked the first courgette and dug up some potatoes. Silvana later cooked a lovely meal using things we had grown, as you can see here.



We are planning to make the Garden better step by step. We want to make it safer for walking up and down the slopes, and to try to grow more vegetables, fruits and flowers. Some of you, as parents, who have visited now will realise it is a lovely place which gives children a hopeful and peaceful experience of growing plants. Other adults might just enjoy being there and be reminded of gardens in other places they know and have loved so much. We understand it isn't easy to come to the Community Garden with small children, as we can't give you a break from keeping a close eye on your children there

(they are always your responsibility). Even so, coming to our garden is still an enjoyable activity and another chance to learn English by chatting with teachers and of course getting to know other students.

If you haven't come to the allotment before, you are welcome to come one day this year. We next plan to next meet on: **Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July between 11 and 2pm** , and we will also be arranging another date later in August.

**Please ask your teacher if you would like to join us at the Garden.**

## Amin's Award

Our regular student Amin, whose full name is Qahraman Muhamadamin Sultan, was awarded an ESOL Star 2024 from Met College. The award recognised his hard work and excellent attendance at college, but also his kindness and support to other students. **Congratulations!**



Amin told us a surprising fact: he volunteers in Brighton with the council to look after sheep. Here's what he said:

The council was looking for volunteers to help with livestock (animals). My teacher Andy helped me to apply. I did a one day training course to learn what to do, for example, how to check on the sheep and to check the electric fence. The training was in English.

For one to three hours every week I go to the site, at Whitehawk Hill, to check that the sheep are ok. There are 88 sheep in total, all female, in three groups. I check that they have not fallen over, and that they have enough water. They do not need food as they eat the grass. I have to send a report each week to the manager.

I enjoy helping with the sheep and it has been very good for my mental health. It is particularly good because where I used to

live, in Erbil, I was a veterinary health officer. I had a diploma from the Veterinary Department at Erbil. I used to look after all kinds of animals, including sheep, horses, goats and cows. I often gave them vaccinations. I also looked after birds – hens, pigeons and even canaries.

*Did you know that if you are an asylum seeker, you are allowed to be a volunteer? There are a lot of opportunities, such as helping out at a food bank, and it's not always necessary to have a high level of English. If you would like to find out more, ask your English teacher.*

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## Sewing Group News

Once again we had a very busy term in Sewing Group. We made some great clothes, and were lucky to be given some lovely fabrics and other supplies by kind donors.

Our students included Sherin, Rabab, Maliha, Amal, Silvana, Teresa and Sharifa.



If you are interested to join the Sewing Group this year, please let us know. We have a waiting list, but we can add your name.

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*We hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter. If you have ideas for future editions, or would like to write something, please contact Susan, at the Sewing Group.*