

FRIENDS OF BIG ISSUE NORTH

WINTER 2018

Miley's hope for the future

As the festive season approaches, many of us will be welcoming family, friends and loved ones into their homes, ready to come together to celebrate this time of year surrounded by the warmth of a family and stability of permanent shelter. Sadly, for some Big Issue North vendors, this kind of Christmas simply isn't an option.

Meet Miley, a 23 year old from Liverpool. Despite her tender age, she has endured three years of life on the streets. We spoke with Miley, and found out more about her journey.

Miley said: "I've been living on the street for three years. At one time I was sitting down begging, but I don't want to beg any more. I started to sell the magazine because I was homeless."

"My childhood was hard. My dad was a heroin addict and an alcoholic. My mum's partner killed my dad when I was ten. After that I was put with my uncle, but my uncle's friend did bad things to me. And then I got put with my older brother, but his girlfriend kept hitting me and I went to school with bruises on my arms. So in the end they put me in care."

"Then, in 2011, I got hit in the head with a brick and I ended up in hospital in a coma. The injury causes me a lot of problems and I find it hard to get work now."

Because she struggles to find mainstream work, Miley explained that the flexible nature of selling Big Issue North has helped her. "Selling the magazine is good because you don't get in trouble if you don't turn up and I like talking to people – I'm very talkative. It's nice when

people stop to chat. I enjoy selling the magazine. It makes me smile and I am proud to sell it. I'm trying my best."

"I want to get a job and do something. My hopes for the future are to get a regular job, and to be able to look after myself and live like a normal woman."

As you can see, for a young woman who has experienced a life time of trauma at such a young age, Miley is making great progress. Due to the unique type of work that selling Big Issue North offers, Miley has been able to go from begging on the streets of Liverpool to being self-sufficient and generating her own income. Thanks to our staff at the Big Issue North office, Miley also has somewhere safe and warm to go if things get tough, and someone to listen.

Our staff ensure that Miley receives daily access to housing help and food banks, and we come out to visit Miley each day while she's working on pitch.

Miley has a message for the people who take the time to buy and take the magazine from her, "I want them to know that not all homeless people are the same and I would like to thank them for supporting Big Issue North."

As you can imagine, some of the experiences that Miley has been through have made her wary. That means that she didn't want her face in any pictures, and doesn't want to use her real name – so we've changed it in this story. But every time you donate to Big Issue North Trust, or buy the magazine on the street, it's people like Miley who you're supporting to have a warmer, safer Christmas, and a 2019 full of hope for the future.



If you would like to support Big Issue North, helping vendors like Miley to have the chance at life that they deserve, please make a donation today.

Letter from Fay

Welcome to the Winter 2018 edition of our newsletter.

This Christmas, we wanted to bring you a story of hope for the future in the most difficult of circumstances. It's thanks to you that we're able to support people like Miley, and change lives.

We're also really pleased to tell you a little about what our vendors get up to when they've finished a day's selling.

Have a fantastic festive period, and a happy new year.

Fay Selvan,
Big Issue North Chief Exec



AROUND THE REGIONS

It's been busy over the past few months!

In **SHEFFIELD**, vendors were invited to sell magazines featuring an exclusive Arctic Monkeys interview at the Fly DSA Arena for the band's homecoming shows.

In **YORK**, one vendor is working with a local stone mason to create a statue as part of York Minster's refurbishments! Keep an eye out for pictures in the next FBI when the work is completed.

In **ROCHDALE**, we gave an assembly to more than 100 students on homelessness and how selling a street paper like Big Issue North gives more back to the individual than begging.

In **LEEDS**, we've signed up to be a part of the Big Change, replicating the Manchester Homeless Charter to highlight what support is available to those engaged in begging activity.

In **HULL**, we were invited to speak about Big Issue North as part of World Homelessness Day, hosted by Emmaus, Hull and East Riding.

In **SHEFFIELD**, we will be helping out at Help Us Help's stall in the Christmas market – raising awareness of what provisions are available for those who are begging in the city.

In **MANCHESTER**, we exhibited in the Greater Manchester Social Enterprise Network, highlighting the invaluable work of our organisation to others in the city.

A home for Christmas

With cold winter nights on the way, most of us will be spending Christmas in warm homes, with friends and family and all the comfort of modern life.

Thanks to your donations, this year, many of our vendors will be spending Christmas indoors. Our support can range from simply picking up the phone to make a referral, to spending time supporting the vendor to present themselves as homeless at local council facilities, advocating on their behalf.

We caught up with a number of people whose winter will be a bit more festive as a result.

Carl: "I had some problems with my family. I was homeless for about 10 years – stopping in hostels and things like that. I was in a tent for nine months. I stayed under a bridge near the canal, and then I moved on to a roof top near the trams. I am in my own council flat now, which feels good. I've got a good flat, brand new carpet and curtains in the bedroom, a washing machine. Now I have a permanent address. My flat is all kitted out. It's all decorated and the bills get paid now that I have a job selling the magazine."

Dave: "It feels great to have my own place again. I can watch telly, I've got light, I can use the toilet whenever I want. All those basic needs that get taken away when you are homeless, I've got back. And I'm feeling healthier too. Fingers crossed this place will work out."

Stu: "I'm in supported accommodation which focuses on drug rehabilitation. It's a brilliant place. I've only been there for



a few weeks. Before that I was staying on friends' sofas and sleeping rough."

Justin (pictured): "Selling the magazine helped me get a place, get a deposit together. And now it helps me survive. It's not brilliant, but it's better than begging. This is the next step up from that. I have got to start somewhere and progress slowly from there."

David: "At the moment, I spend a lot of time sleeping on a mate's settee. One of the reasons that I'm selling the magazine is so that I can get enough money together to get a deposit and first month's rent. That way I can move to an area of my own choice and get myself sorted."

Simon: "People in the office have been really helpful. At the moment, for example, I'm living in a first floor flat and I have to drag myself up the stairs using the banisters since my MS diagnosis. The office staff are helping me to try and get a ground floor flat."

Carl, Dave, Stu, Justin, David and Simon are just some of the vendors who have been helped in 2018.

If it weren't for the donations made to Big Issue North Trust, this would not be possible. Make a donation today to help us to change lives.

Street Noise hits the road!

Street Noise hit the road this October with the Big Busk – raising money for Big Issue North Trust.

The Big Busk was a five-day event taking place across Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Liverpool and Preston, taking place during World Homelessness Week (9-13 October).

Thanks to a partnership with Skiddle, we commandeered a modified double decker bus that opens out from the side and becomes a stage, and spent a day in the centre of each city. A mix of local artists and bigger names played 25 minute slots throughout the afternoon and early evening. It was non-ticketed, but with opportunities to donate to the trust around the bus.

Among the leading artists to perform was rising star of the UK music scene

Tom Grennan. Other great artists on the bus included Y.O.U.N.G (pictured), Rick Witter (DJ set), Aziz Ibrahim, and The Jade Assembly, plus many more. Alt-rock band Y.O.U.N.G showed their support for Big Issue North in a major way – appearing in all five cities!

Tom Grennan said: "For me it's important to make people aware and take notice of homelessness and those who sell Big Issue North. People are selling it for a reason, and that's to try and get some money, not just to sit about, but to earn for things they need: shelter, water, food. It's so important to recognise that. For me to do this, and to be asked to do this, is very humbling and if I can help just a little bit then that would be amazing."



WHEN I'M NOT SELLING...

This Christmas, we want to take some time to highlight the person behind the Big Issue North bib. Every time you buy the magazine or donate to the Trust, you're not just helping someone to survive, you're helping them to pursue their passions and interests.

We spoke to a number of vendors, to find out what it is that they like to do once they've finished grafting on the street – and found an amazing range of answers, from playing the accordion to climbing mountains – here's just a handful.

Ste: “When I'm not selling, I get my push bike out of my flat and cycle, I pedal from town to sell Big Issue North but having a bike means that I also have the freedom to see my mum.”

Daniel: “When I'm not selling, I sing with my wife, who also sells Big Issue North. We sing in our church all year round, but especially during the big festivals like Christmas.”

Tommy: “When I'm not selling, I love playing video games, it's just a way to relax and take my mind off things. My friend and I save up between us to get things when they come out. I'm like a kid at Christmas when I get a new game!”

In fact, we got so many, that we made them the focus of our 2019 calendar! The calendar features some stunning photography, as well as quotes from vendors. And, it doesn't just make a great Christmas gift, but is also a way to raise much needed funds to help support Big Issue North sellers to change their lives this festive period.



If you would like to buy our 2019 calendar, it's available now at our online shop. All proceeds from sales of the calendar go back into Big Issue North, to support vendors to move on with their lives.

shop.bigissuenorth.com

Vasile honoured for show of resilience

Holmfirth vendor Vasile has been honoured at the Royal College of Nursing's Black History Month celebrations in Leeds.

As part of the celebrations, he received an award for 'Demonstrating Resilience in the Face of Hardship' at a ceremony at the Park Plaza Hotel, following an impossibly difficult year for him and his family.

Vasile said: “I am from Romania. My partner and I have two daughters. They live in Romania with my family. But things are very difficult at the moment. Our son has died. He was only two years old. He had a heart problem. We had to try and pay his hospital fees and I was begging the doctors to help him. Now my heart is broken. My customers ask me if I am OK. And I try and be happy for my customers. But my boy has died and there is a lot of



pain.”

Having spent the money he earned selling Big Issue North on his son's hospital fees in Romania, Vasile also became unwell himself, resulting in him having to undergo a major operation. One of his regular customers, a nurse, heard his story, and helped organise a crowdfunding campaign to ensure that Vasile was able to afford to take some much needed time off to look after his health and wellbeing during his recovery and grieving process.

At the same time, Vasile and his wife, who also sells the magazine, continued to receive support from staff at Big Issue North. They said: “The people in the office are like our family. If we have a problem we can come in and talk to them. They help with things like translations with doctors.”

WHY WE SELL BIG ISSUE NORTH

Chris, Manchester

“Since selling Big Issue North, I have turned my life around. It's kept me out of bother. It's the best thing I ever did. It brings your confidence up, selling the magazine. That's why I want to spread the word about Big Issue North. I want people to know that we don't get the magazine for free, that we pay £1.25 for it and that it's for anybody who is low income or has no money and who needs an extra bit. Any person who is skint. You don't have to be homeless to sell it – it's for anybody who needs it.”



John Liverpool

“When I first ended up homeless, I didn't have a clue what to do and I was sitting begging. It was really degrading, sitting there with my hand out and looking at people's feet as they walked on past. A manager for Big Issue North at the time came up to me and said: “Would you like to be a vendor? It's a job, you know.” And because I wanted to stop begging, I agreed. I don't know what I would have done without it now. I reckon I would have ended up in prison or something.”



FROM THE STREETS TO STUDENT OF THE YEAR

You may remember Alex's story in a previous edition of our newsletter. A few years ago, Alex was begging on the streets of Leeds to fund an alcohol dependency. After realising that his life needed to change, he signed up to Big Issue North to become a vendor. Alex has gone from strength to strength since.

Prior to leaving Big Issue North, Alex was supported by our staff to enrol in a painting and decorating course at Leeds College of Building. Alex has kept us updated of his progress with occasional visits to our office, and he told us recently that he has been selected as the college's Student of the Year, and even has offers of paid employment from his former customers!

Children's hospitals turn design studios

Big Issue North's cover competition is returning this year, giving children who will be spending time in hospital over Christmas the opportunity to design their very own cover of the magazine.

Children's hospitals across the North will be getting involved, and the winning design will be on the cover of a festive edition of the magazine, which reaches over 12,000 people across the

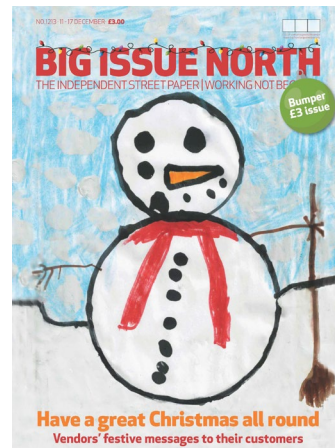
North West, Yorkshire, and Humber.

The artist with the best design will win a collection of art materials, and runners up will receive book-based prizes. All entries will feature on the Big Issue North website and social media platforms as a thank you for getting involved with a great cause.

We have received some great entries in previous years from children all across the North West, Yorkshire, and

Humber – everything from drawings of reindeers and decorations, to paintings of Santa in his sleigh!

Our winner from 2017 was 4-year-old Molly O'Mara from Barnsley who painted a brilliant snowman which won over judges. She told us she was "really happy and very excited."



How to donate

We are so grateful to everyone who donates to us, if you haven't donated already, here are some ways to support our vendors.

To set up a standing order to support our vendors please fill in the form enclosed with the newsletter or call 0161 848 2420.



You can also donate by mobile phone, just text BITN18 and the amount you wish to donate e.g. £20 to 70070



Please make out donations by cheque out to Big Issue North Trust and send it to 463 Stretford Road, Manchester, M16 9AB.



For more ways to raise funds for us please contact fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com

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It's really easy to raise funds for the Trust with EasyFundraising while shopping online this Christmas. Just remember to set Big Issue North Trust as your chosen charity and start raising at no extra cost! Go to **www.easyfundraising.org.uk** today!

BIG ISSUE NORTH SHOP

Starting Christmas shopping?
Check out our online shop, for:

- Tote bags
- Christmas cards
- 2019 calendars
- Back issues and subscriptions
- New product range from recycled magazines

All profits from our shop go back into Big Issue North, ensuring we provide a first class service for our vendors, supporting people to earn an income and change their lives.

shop.bigissuenorth.com

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