

inspire



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INSPIRED TO GET INVOLVED

FANTASTIC DAY OF FUN

'A fantastic day of fun for all' is how tenants described our recent Tenants' Fun Day. The day was a huge success with over 250 people attending, the highest turnout yet!

There really was something for everyone who came down to join us, from face painting, to Pogo the Clown and a Punch and Judy Show, not to mention Santa in his Grotto! Discussion groups were also held where tenants gave their views and ideas to help us improve the services we provide.

One lucky tenant even received an early Christmas present, taking home the star prize of an LCD TV/DVD combo! "We were really pleased with the feedback from

tenants," says Michelle Layram, Tenant Involvement and Community Officer. "Tenant involvement is incredibly important to Spire Homes and we welcome anyone who wants to get involved with where they live and the services we provide".

We would like to thank the Tenant Forum members who gave their time to help organise the event with staff both before and on the day. We hope to see you at next year's Fun Day. If you would like to find out more about how you can become involved, then get in touch with Michelle on 01933 415322 or email getinvolved@longhurst-group.org.uk.



Our first GARDENS IN BLOOM competition coming soon

We will be launching our first Gardens in Bloom Competition in our next issue of 'Inspire' so look out for your entry form.

The competition will be open to all our residents. Judging will take place in the summer so why not start planting now!

- There will be 3 judging categories:-
- Best individual garden display
 - Best tubs, basket or balcony display
 - Best sheltered scheme display

Good Luck!



See enclosed Anti-social Behaviour leaflet and a report on how we have performed over the last 6 months

ONE NUMBER - ONE CALL

0845 603 5399

that's the number to ring for our new One Stop Shop. Just one call does it all, and it's a low-cost number too.

Whether it's to log a repair, ask advice on a home adaptation or to report neighbourhood problems, 0845 603 5399 is the number to phone where a member of our dedicated team will be able to help.

The One Stop Shop was set up in response to feedback from residents who

said they wanted to make contacting Spire Homes easier, so this is what we did. We changed it so you only need to phone us on one telephone number and it's also a low-cost one, which means that telephone calls are charged at a local rate to the caller, with Spire Homes paying the balance.



SMILING FACE OR FROWNING FACE? YOU DECIDE!

If you give us a smile, we know we're doing well and if you give us a frown, we know we need to do better. No, we're not going daft, we're talking about our new Govmetric system.

We are very proud to be the first housing association to have installed this new and innovative customer satisfaction feedback service.

Don't be put off by the name, it's really easy to use and takes just seconds of your time. And not only that – but you can do it with confidence as your response will be recorded anonymously.

Every time you call in and see us, or whenever you talk to us on the phone, you can let us know if you are happy with the way we dealt with your request or enquiry.

If you phone us, then you will be invited to take part in the survey and will be put through to a short recorded message and asked to press the appropriate button on your phone.

If you visit us you can use the touch screen panel. Simply touch the appropriate button giving the reason for your visit and then choose one of the "smiley faces" to record how pleased you are with us. It's that easy!

If you're happy, then we're happy. If you're not happy, then we will work towards making things better. It's all part of our service to you and our commitment to provide excellent customer service. So, let us know, do we deserve a smiling face or frowning face?!



Customers using the Govmetrics panel in our reception area

Children "design a no smoking image" competition and the WINNER is ...

At the Tenants' Fun Day we held a children's competition to design a no smoking image with the aim of using it in our leaflets. We had a great response and would like to say thank you to all the children that took part.

Samantha Watson (age 15) with the help of her mum came up with the idea from home. Samantha's mum gave up smoking and put the money she saved into a tin, which paid for a Christmas break to Butlins.

Congratulations and very well done Samantha, who won a goody bag and also well done to a close runner up, Shannon Pentelow (Age 5).

Samantha and her winning picture and the tin that gave her inspiration.



STUB IT OUT

In July 2007 it became illegal to smoke in a public space.

We've put up signs, we've talked to people about it, but we're still receiving reports of people smoking in hallways and communal areas. Please, stub it out. Not only is it illegal, it's upsetting for non-smokers.

Remember, it's not just residents who are not allowed to smoke inside, the law applies to everyone from contractors and workmen to visitors, friends and family – even Spire Homes' employees cannot light up in our properties.



GARDENS BLOSSOM THANKS TO LORRAINE

Devon Walk in Rushden is the perfect place to enjoy a little bit of peace and quiet thanks to Lorraine Douglas who has recently moved there. Lorraine decided to give the communal garden some tender loving care after recently moving to the scheme. Now, after several hours of ground clearing and planting, the gardens are full of blossoming flowers and shrubs.

Lorraine's neighbours were so impressed with her efforts they nominated her for our Community Award.

Because of Lorraine's efforts and hard work, we had no hesitation in presenting her with a certificate and bouquet of flowers. We've also awarded Devon Walk tenants a grant of £150 to buy even more plants!

Well done Lorraine!

If you know someone who deserves a community award and want to nominate them, please contact **Michelle Layram**, on **01933 415322** or email **getinvolved@longhurst-group.org.uk**. The person you nominate must be a Spire Homes tenant and remember we are always looking out for people who make a valuable contribution to your community.



DREAMING OF BUYING YOUR OWN HOME



Whilst property prices have come down in recent months, owning a home of their own is still just a dream for a lot of people. However, with shared ownership, more people than ever before can afford to put their first foot on the property ladder!

If your two main obstacles to owning are high valuations

and ever increasing mortgage repayments, then our Shared Ownership Scheme might just be the solution.

The scheme allows you to buy a share of the property with a mortgage and pay a subsidised rent on the remaining share, which is owned by us.

We've currently got some new two and three bedroom properties in Easton on the Hill, Raunds, Wellingborough and Woodford available to buy through this new scheme.

So stop dreaming about owning your own home and give us a call on 0845 608 0059 or email spirehomes@longhurst-group.org.uk

LOSE WEIGHT, FEEL GREAT IN 2008!

There's no doubt about it, if you want to feel great, lose weight! Two Spire Homes' tenants did just this and now feel on top of the world.

So, if your New Year's resolution is to lose weight then why not follow the example of Jim and Mandy, who've recently lost 11 stone between them and now have more energy, feel fantastic and even sleep better!

Before embarking on Weight Watchers, Jim weighed 24½ stone, with his wife Mandy weighing 13½ stone.

Inspired by a friend who had lost a lot of weight and worried about their health, the couple decided to give Weight Watchers a go.

In just 18 months, Jim lost 7½ stone and Mandy 3½ stone!

Now, they feel much better in themselves. They both have more energy and are generally healthier. Mandy even says that her husband has stopped snoring, which means they both get more sleep at night!

Wanting to lead a healthier life required dedication and support, with the campaign to lose weight even involving Mandy's mum who joined in too.

As well as attending regular classes, Jim and Mandy changed their diet. Snacking stopped and lots of fresh fruit and vegetables replaced those crisps and chocolate bars. Drinking lots of water also helped as did regular exercise.

"I walked a lot," says Jim. "And Mandy took up cycling. It's really important to remember to treat yourself from time to time though. Without a treat, there's no reward for all the hard work. Having said that, my little secrets really helped. And we couldn't have achieved



Before



After

anything without the help and support of Sarah Burns at Weight Watchers."

So, just what are Jim's secrets for success? Well, he recommends:

- Reducing the size of your plate
- Watching out for carbohydrates
- Eating lots of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Don't snack
- Stop eating when you're full
- Treat yourself every now and then (but not all the time!)

"If you really want to lose weight, you can," says Jim. "All you have to do is eat well and exercise more. It's not rocket science, but it does require dedication and it's really worth it when you feel so much better as a result!"

Would you like to rent a garage ?

From just £9.47 per week you can solve your parking problems. If you live in one of the following areas and are over 18 then we have garages, but if you're interested you need to move fast as we allocate them according to the date of the application, so it's first come, first served.

- Collyweston: Westonville and Woodfield
- Islip: Drayton Close
- Nassington: Eastfield Crescent
- Oundle: Bellamy Road, New Road, Springfield Road and St Peter's Road
- Raunds: Ashfield Avenue
- Ringstead: Greenbank Terrace
- Rushden: Balmoral Avenue, Grafton Road, Headingly Road and Nippendale
- Southwick: Brookside
- Stanwick: Parklands
- Thrapston: Heron Avenue and Highfield Road
- Upper Benefield: Gibson Drive
- Woodford: The Leys



For further information and an application form, please write to Spire Homes, 1 Crown Court, Crown Way, Rushden, NN10 6BS, phone us on 0845 603 5399 or email spirehomes@longhurst-group.org.uk.

USE THE ALLPAY WAY

If you use a swipecard to pay your rent then make sure it has an allpay sign on the back – otherwise it just won't work!

You need to destroy those swipecards that don't say allpay on the back as they're now invalid. If your swipecard features the allpay logo then there's no need for you to do anything, just carry on using it as normal.

However, if you have a debit card then look out for the payzone, Post Office and Paypoint logos at shops, supermarkets and petrol stations as it means you can pay your rent there too.

If you want to save yourself a trip and have access to the internet, then why not pay online at www.allpayments.net? If you don't have a computer, you can still save time by calling allpay on 0870 243 6040 and paying over the phone.

The easiest way to pay your rent has to be monthly Direct Debit. With just one signature, you can save yourself time and effort and relax in the knowledge that your rent will be paid automatically each month.

Should you need any help or have any queries about allpay, then just give us a call on 0845 603 5399 and we'll be happy to help.



MARRIED LIKE ROYALTY

Not many Spire Homes tenants can say they have royal connections but Ivor and Joyce Stokes can!

The couple, who live in Woodford, have recently celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary at the same time as Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh reached the same milestone.



Ivor and Joyce tied the knot on 20th September 1947 in Ringstead. The couple met on a blind date set up by their best friends and it really was love at first sight, as since then the couple haven't been apart.

"The secret to a long and happy marriage is listening to one another," says Joyce. "You also have to work together, especially if you're going to get through the bad times."

For the last ten years, Ivor has been Joyce's full time carer as she is now disabled. "I would be lost without Ivor," she says.

The happy couple celebrated in style with family and friends attending a special anniversary party. As well as enjoying themselves and receiving numerous cards and presents, Ivor and Joyce took it upon themselves to help the Thrapston District Nurses and the Fireman's Fund, by donating £120 to each good cause.

And what's the best thing to happen to them in the last sixty years? "The birth of our six children, 14 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren," says Ivor. We think Her Majesty would probably agree.

inbrief



Inspire formats

Your Inspire newsletter is now available in different formats. If you require a version on tape, in braille, in a different language or large print, please contact us on 0845 603 5399 and we will be happy to help you.



Getting in touch

You can now contact us by email at :

spirehomes@longhurst-group.org.uk

Our main office number is:

0845 603 5399

Log onto:

www.spire-homes.org.uk

COMPETITION VALENTINE WORDSEARCH

Find the hidden words running forward, backward, upward, downward or diagonally. Which one is missing?

V	C	T	N	S	O	P	W	N
R	L	O	V	E	M	R	A	L
S	R	F	L	O	W	E	R	S
E	H	G	R	P	C	S	D	G
S	B	E	I	N	R	E	I	U
S	T	P	A	F	D	N	P	H
I	R	M	N	R	E	T	U	S
K	O	S	A	P	T	R	C	O
R	E	C	H	O	C	S	T	V

- Valentine
- Love
- Card
- Present
- Hearts
- Flowers
- Chocs
- Romance
- Kisses
- Cupid
- Hugs

Name:

Address:

.....

..... Age:

The missing word is:

Last time's winners: Mrs Florence Baxter of Raunds who is the winner of the word search. She will be sent a £20.00 argos voucher as her winnings.

Send entry to Inspire, Spire Homes, 1 Crown Court, Crown Way, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 6BS for a chance to win a £20.00 Argos voucher by 15 March.

DON'T DESPAIR – REPAIR

Isn't it just typical, in the depths of winter when you want your central heating on full blast the radiators are stone cold and when you're just settling down with the curtains closed to enjoy the evening film, the electrics blow!

In fact, at this time of year, these two problems are the most commonly reported repair requests our Customer Services Team have to deal with. So, before you pick up the phone, try out our top tips:

If your heating has not come on, then try turning the thermostat up slightly and see if the boiler jumps into life.

Cold radiators? Make sure you have a radiator key to hand and try bleeding them. Let the air out of the radiator by turning the key but make sure you stop once water starts to come out!

Tripped electrics? It's most likely going to have been caused by the appliance you just turned on. Find out by removing all the plugs on all your electrical items from their sockets. Reset the

consumer unit and plug each item back in one at a time. If the electrics trip again, then you know which of your appliances was at fault. It's usually a faulty kettle or iron, but whatever it is make sure you get it fixed.

If, after following our top three tips or if it's another problem all together, then please give us a call on 0845 603 5399 and a member of our Customer Services Team will be happy to help.

