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Herne Bay's Maya Amangeldiyeva: Pride of Britain Award



On Friday 15th September, it was announced that Herne Bay's Maya Amangeldiyeva was revealed as a regional winner for the Fundraiser of the Year category at the 2023 Pride of Britain Awards.

Many of you will know of or have heard about Maya, from either her community café at 20 High Street, her free shop at 31 High Street or her colourful attire and enthusiastic performance at the Herne Bay Carnival where she won best float. Maya moved to Herne Bay in 2015 from London and has always been at the heart of the community. Maya set up Maya's Community Support Centre in December of last year and shortly after opened the first "Free Shop" in the country. Every day hundreds of people visit the shop and are able to benefit from clothing, food, toys, and much more all, of course, for free.

The popularity of the service that she offers has led her to expand to several other storage units where she has a hire rail with formal wear (which can be hired for free for special occasions), there is a storage area for large furniture items where sofas, wardrobes, and white goods are seen coming and going every day. "People believe in what she has started and like to donate to us," said Dr Andrew Robertson (Director at Maya's Community Support Centre). Andrew explained that this can cause storage problems as Maya is very keen to help more people because she finds it hard to say no to anyone struggling.

In March of this year Maya spearheaded a campaign for clothes and blankets to go to the Turkey/Syria Earthquake. Beverly Hardstone, director at Maya's Community Support Centre, said "I was overcome with emotion seeing the streets around the café lined with people queuing up to bring donations. The people of Herne Bay really came together and backed Maya bringing enough donations to fill six articulated lorries".

"Seeing the amazing local support and donations keep coming and coming I had make sure that people's donations were going to go to the people who really needed it, so I took a team to the boarder of Turkey/Syria, slept in a tent with the other earthquake victims and helped unload and distribute the lorry. I wouldn't have been able to have slept if I didn't see with my own eyes that what we had collected was going to the right people," Maya Amangeldiyeva.

For Maya, it is really important to see the final destination of any donations.

Maya has also been sending aide constantly to abandoned villages and orphanages of Ukraine.

More recently, Maya was involved in a fundraising plea for a local young man whose mental health problems were heightened by the cost of living crisis who sadly took his own life. His family came to the Community Café and asked Maya if she could share their fundraising page as they had thousands more to raise to pay for the funeral. Maya took to the streets with high viz and a bucket and then held a vigil at the memorial, vowing to stay at that place until enough money was raised. By 6am the following day Maya had raised £8,000 when the target was £5,000 and celebrated by jumping into the freezing water. Seeing how the community came together once again to support Maya was really special. Hundreds of people turned up during the night while Maya was camping after seeing her Facebook post, each with a handful of notes and they just kept coming even all through the night taxis were bringing people from neighbouring towns to stand vigil with Maya.

Maya won the regional fundraiser of the year award for the south east Pride of Britain. This is no surprise to those who know her and see what she achieves day in day out. Running a food bank up until midnight seven days a week and always being on hand for emergency situations. Maya is very proud of what her organisation has achieved and those who work with her all agree it wouldn't have been possible without her tireless hours of work she puts in every day, Maya is keen to say it's a team effort and wouldn't have been possible without the army of volunteers who believe in what she does and follow her every day. Maya travelled to London for the red carpet and National Awards ceremony in October. She has started a movement of community help and support, the more this model is advertised the more people could be helped.

Maya runs really unique special and non-traditional way of charity work, and says we usually surprise people with a different vision of sorting out problems, we are doing things differently and that's why we are making a difference; "no one should struggle in silence".

Maya's Community Support Centre will be open on Christmas Day for those who have nowhere else to go to celebrate together, and are aiming to feed thousands this Christmas and by giving away food and Christmas gifts we are going to give hope and love to our community! There will be no local kids without food or gifts this Christmas!

All of our services are welcome to anyone that needs our services from any area.

Only by removing silly competition and uniting, the power of people working together can achieve.

Maya attended the awards barefoot for 24 hours which covered the Pride of Britain National Awards including the red carpet to raise awareness for poverty, homelessness, cost of living crisis, everyone in financial and mental crisis and for those who have effected by global disasters like wars, earthquakes or global inflation.

For anyone who wants to support Maya Amangeldiyeva in her work you can donate money or bring food to the Community Café at 20 High Street, Herne Bay. For anyone who would like to donate to Maya's Community Support Café, the Community Interest bank account details are: Account number 4760 9720, Sort Code 23-05-80, Mayas Community CIC.

November 14, 2023 4:49 pm

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