

LGBT Q:alliance open mic night

Music reporter **Vicki McCarthy** reveals the story behind the open mic event run by MK's only charity for the city's LGBT community...



The SCENE

Social Butterfly... I love that term, it's one I often use to describe myself actually!

Socialising, interaction and being around people is my idea of heaven, and through my work here and on MKFM, I'm lucky enough to have my social life amplified, meeting the greatest and most interesting of people.

This happened again last month when I initially arranged an interview to discuss an upcoming, local open-mic night taking place this month.

But when I met up with TJ Richards, it turned out that the story behind this event was much more than I realised.

TJ is one of the trustees and volunteers behind Q:alliance; MK's only charity that provides support, information and representation for the city's LGBT population.

This open-mic night is actually part of a long line of social events for the



community. "Q:alliance was founded in 1998," TJ explained. "We're managed and run by local people who have detailed knowledge of the issues and challenges we can face locally."

So how does the charity tackle these challenges?

"Through various means," she continued. "We educate, we support, we advise, and we started up social events so that members of the LGBT community have a regular opportunity to enjoy themselves with like-minded individuals.

"We've run quiz events, games nights, writing and art workshops, we've even arranged a dog walk event!"

And now the open-mic? "Yes!" laughed TJ. "We held one before and it was so well-received, we just had to hold another one."

Which is taking place on 13 September, at Bar Bar Black Sheep.

Regenerated from a Victorian shop front, sitting in the heart of Wolverton's town square, Bar Bar is part-financed by a crowd-funding campaign and is a vibrant,

social-enterprise coffee house, bar and gallery.

After Q:alliance bore the brunt of Government funding cuts, the charity had to relinquish its CMK premises in 2016 and Bar Bar agreed to let them use its venue for meetings and events.

Eventually leading to the open-mic night bookings, which I'm totally a fan of!

They're a great opportunity for folk to get in front of a crowd, sharing their burgeoning talents to an appreciative and engaged audience.

"It's a warm invite to our community," smiled TJ. "Our door is open. So come along, get involved, form new friendships and enjoy the entertainment."

TJ then advised me that she's not musical in the slightest!

But these events are more than that... they're there for the social butterflies, as well as those who are yet to spread their wings.

Find out more at <http://qalliance.org.uk>

Call 07928 027444 or email jon@celebratemk.co.uk if you are interested in advertising in Celebrate:MK