

## SOCIAL

# COMMUNITY SAINTS

## HOMELESS IN ST. ALBANS

St. Albans is one of the richest cities in the UK. It has old-fashioned shops, posh restaurants, and private schools. According to UHY Hacker Young Chartered Accountants, St. Alban's population has an average salary of £43,500 per year and according to the BBC the average house price is nearly half a million (£421,324). Guess you have to be very comfortable to live in St. Albans. But what happens if you are not?

**T**hen you might have to make frequent visits to 2A Spicer Street, where Centre 33 is located. Centre 33 is a drop in centre where homeless and socially or materially disadvantaged people in the St. Albans community can come to relax, be social, and enjoy a free meal and a drink in a friendly, welcoming environment. When we heard about this place, we couldn't believe there were homeless people in the area, so we thought it would be best to see it for ourselves. Not far from the building, we saw nice expensive cars, which reminded us we were in St. Albans. But when we got to the door, we were scared to go in. For a few seconds it didn't feel like we were in the same place anymore. We finally summoned up the courage to go in and to our surprise we were met by the lovely volunteers that helped run the centre, and after being offered food and drinks we thought it would be a

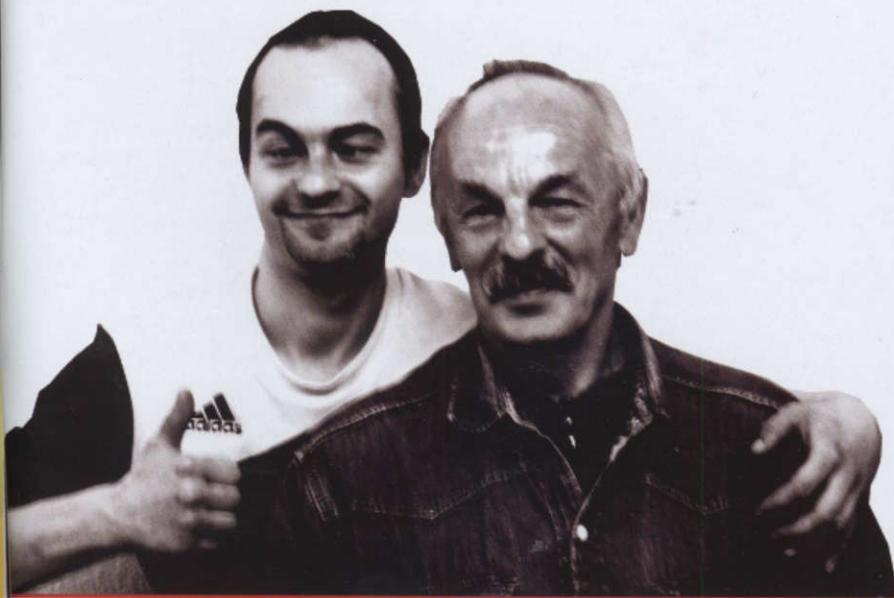
good idea to sit and talk to the people who make use of the centre. These guys were very friendly, happy and funny. They told us their stories about how they get by everyday and what they have to do to survive. We met a young guy with his dad, a young couple and others who were by themselves. The one thing you could feel in the building was love. They were all happy and that felt good, but they all sang the same song, and that was that they all felt the people and Government could do more to help their situation. The centre operates a strict no-drug and no-alcohol policy and accommodates some of the brightest people you could meet that have been unfortunate enough to rely on the daily meals that Centre 33 provides. One of the guests told us he used to have a job in Central London and lived in Watford, but didn't wish to go into detail about how his life had changed. Without prying too much



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we continued to stay and talk with those at Centre 33. But eventually it was time to go home. We felt sad to be leaving these people who had welcomed us warmly and showed us love and affection. I sat in the car for a few minutes and I could feel the tears running down my cheeks. It definitely wasn't what I was expecting to see in a city like St. Albans.

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[www.centre33.org](http://www.centre33.org)