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3rd May

Coronavirus in Scotland: How you can get learn a new skill in lockdown while supporting Starchild cause



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Developing new skills and finding new interests has helped people in lockdown. Deborah Anderson finds out about a new project which could help inspire others.

WITH people in lockdown having extra time on their hands, we have seen a number of novel ways to keep yourself entertained. Some have learned a new skill or taken up a new indoor hobby, but for those stuck for ideas an initiative to be launched this week, might just give you some inspiration.

From learning to make the best sourdough loaf to a yoga session or singer-song writing masterclass, a whole host of talented people will come together for #GivingTuesday. The idea is to bring various skills together to pass on to people in lockdown and inspire them to try something new.

Founder of Scottish charity Starchild, Michaela Foster Marsh came up with the idea and now has dozens of people offering their help.

“We were looking to reach people in lockdown and continue to keep the work or our charity in people’s minds,” said Ms Foster Marsh. “I put out an appeal to see who could help and very quickly I had a number of people get back to me.

“I challenged my friends to give a masterclass, give a concert, show us how you paint, draw, recite a poem, cook or make cocktails or any other skill or talent you have hidden away or something you want to try.

“It is also about telling us something we wouldn't necessarily know about the person, they could lead a meditation or prayer, anything they feel connected to.



has grown very quickly in just a few days.”

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struggling at this time. She herself is trying to steer through days in lockdown while still grieving for her late husband Scots actor Rony Bridges.

She said: “It is a very hard time for people. I am finding it difficult and I am also grieving for Rony as it is very hard without him. He was such a huge supporter and inspiration for the charity and for me it is heartbreaking for me not being able to help in the ways we normally would.”

Starchild was set up in memory of the founder’s adopted brother Frankie Marsh. Frankie’s parents were both Ugandan and he was adopted at 13 months old. Sadly he died in a house fire at the age of 27.

On a visit to Uganda in 2012, Ms Foster Marsh miraculously found her brother’s family. In a country of more than 41million, she said it was like finding a needle in a haystack but it was obviously meant to be. Overwhelmed by the poverty she witnessed, she came back to Scotland with a dream of setting up Starchild to help the most vulnerable and marginalised in Uganda. Since gaining charitable status in 2013, Starchild has gone on to build a school for Creative [Arts](#) and improve the lives of many.

“We have gone on to support children in Uganda through our [education](#) and feeding programmes, but we can’t do any of that just now as the school we work with has closed,” added Ms Foster Marsh.

“We had been funding two meals a day and these are often orphaned children we are helping. For £14 a year you can feed one child a day, but like many charities we are finding it difficult to do our work at the moment.

“We heard of the terrible plight of one young boy at the Mango tree school in Jinja which we work with who was looking for food. He drowned trying to get fish from the River Nile because he was hungry. With schools closed in Uganda, most of these children simply do not eat.”

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Glasgow baker Justin Savage was only too happy to help out when he was contacted about the idea. He runs Anniesland bakery Beefcake which has recently reopened on reduced days due to lockdown.

“When you get a call for Michaela we always try to help out where we can and we also sponsor a child through the Starchild project,” said Mr Savage.

“We were closed initially but have been able to open back up but are just operating on a Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We have seen our handmade loaves fly out the door. I think people want something comforting at this time.

“We are known for our sourdough and I suspect I will do a video on bread making, but given the time we have it might have to adapt. It would be a challenge for people to try if they wanted. A lot of people want to have a go at making their own bread so this might be a good way to try it.”

West End yoga teacher Penelope Stewart has already been reaching a new audience in lockdown as she has started class on Zoom but #GivingTuesday will give her a new opportunity.

Ms Stewart, who set up YogaMakesMyDay, said: “I run a garden studio and only have about eight people in my class, but on lockdown I have been running them online and have had 20 to 40 people joining in. I am paid by donation at the moment and I have been asking to people to donate to a charity that is able to help people in lockdown whether to be a homeless charity or food charity.

“When Michaela told me what she was planning I thought I could help out. It might be a short introduction to yoga. People seem to be looking for something to relax them during lockdown and I think with yoga you can do that.

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