

# Being a part of it

If done well, charity nights can bring benefits for all involved. We drop by the Oak in Coventry after its roof-raising Help for Heroes event.

How do you fill a pub on a dreary weeknight two weeks before the average payday? For charity champions like the Oak in Baginton, Coventry, the answer is simple.

Pubs that support good causes do so to play a positive role in their communities and make a difference to those who need it. But there's no disputing that charity fundraisers also give customers a compelling reason to visit their local more often.

Which is exactly what happened one wintry Wednesday last November, when the Oak played host to swing singer Frankie Martin on the 212th gig of his Great British Pub Tour – a record-breaking 366 shows at 366 pubs in 366 days.

The aim of tour, which ends in April, is to raise as much money as possible for forces charity Help for Heroes, while giving pubs across the country the chance to pull in a crowd on a quiet night.

It certainly worked a treat for the Oak, whose efforts generated more than £2,500 towards Frankie's fund – the highest total so far – and put an extra £1,000 in the till.

## Spending habits

"It attracted new customers into the pub and encouraged those who usually come in at teatime to stay later. It certainly changed people's spending habits," says retailer Gayle Goodwin, who organised the event after reading about the tour in *Eagleye*.

"Frankie created a real buzz. He played two sets, helped with the auction and raffle, and really mingled with the customers. Everyone was donating so generously, particularly since it was two days before Children In Need. We're in the middle of a recession, so you have to give people a good reason to donate their hard-earned cash."

Gayle and her team ploughed a lot of effort to making the evening worthwhile for all involved. They contacted suppliers to

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help with the raffle prizes, which included a mountain bike and VIP tickets for an Aston Villa match, while some staff pledged to work for free.

A lot of energy was invested in the promoting the fundraiser, while costs were kept to a minimum. The only spend was £30 on a leaflet-drop for three nearby villages, while Gayle took advantage of Facebook and the local media to build interest.

It paid off, with the event gaining BBC coverage. In fact, it became quite a talking point, bringing the pub longer-term benefits. "We've since been approached by groups who'd like to replicate the event for their charities," says Gayle.

The Oak is no stranger to supporting good causes, having raised money for the Tsunami victims, Air Ambulance and the local hospice. Help For Heroes has been a particular touch-point for the pub since it held a wedding for a local serviceman who was later posted out to Afghanistan.

In terms of the bigger picture, the Oak's Help for Heroes event has contributed toward an estimated £100,000 for injured soldiers – an amount that's far exceeded expectations.

"It just shows how important our great British pubs are to the community," says Frankie. "The simple kindness of their owners, staff and customers is what's kept me going on this marathon of a tour. It has rekindled my faith in humanity."



UNITED FRONT: The Oak's Chris and Gayle Goodwin join forces with singer Frankie Martin on his Great British Pub Tour



DRIVING SUPPORT: Frankie and Gayle notch up the best event on the tour so far

## Promote your pub's good work

Remember to register your fundraising events and charitable donations on the Pub Aid website at [www.pubaid.com](http://www.pubaid.com)



## Beer and a balti



It's thanks to the British Army that curry is the nation's favourite dish, after troops occupying India during the Raj developed a taste for the local cuisine. Now ABF The Soldiers' charity is asking us to return the favour by getting involved in its fifth annual Big Curry fundraiser in April.

Pubs are being urged to hold events such as 'beer and balti' nights to help raise money for soldiers, former soldiers and their families in times of need.

Register at [www.bigcurry.org](http://www.bigcurry.org) for a free fundraising pack, invites and posters, plus curry recipes from soldiers and celebrity chefs.

SUPPORTING ABF THE SOLDIERS' CHARITY

## The Great Poppy Party

Need an excuse to get customers in the party mood this summer? To celebrate its 90th anniversary, the Royal British Legion is holding a Great Poppy Party Weekend from 10 to 12 June in a bid to raise £1m. Visit [www.thegreatpoppypartyweekend.org.uk](http://www.thegreatpoppypartyweekend.org.uk) to register your event.

