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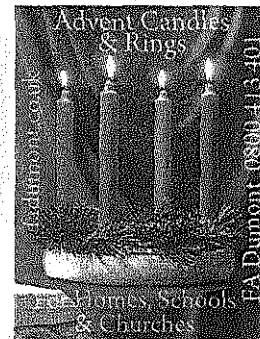
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**John Paul
the Great**

Page 17



**Home and
real hope**

Page 2

Stars' presence packs punch at homeless charity appeal launch

By Paul Donovan

A massive multi-million pound appeal by a Church charity has been launched at a star-studded event in London.

Homeless charity Anchor House aims to raise £9.3m to build 25 new transitional move-on flats and training facilities. It also hopes to refurbish existing accommodation.

Clergy joined celebrities including former boxer Barry McGuigan, *Big Issue* founder John Bird and *EastEnders* actor Steve John Shepherd at the launch.

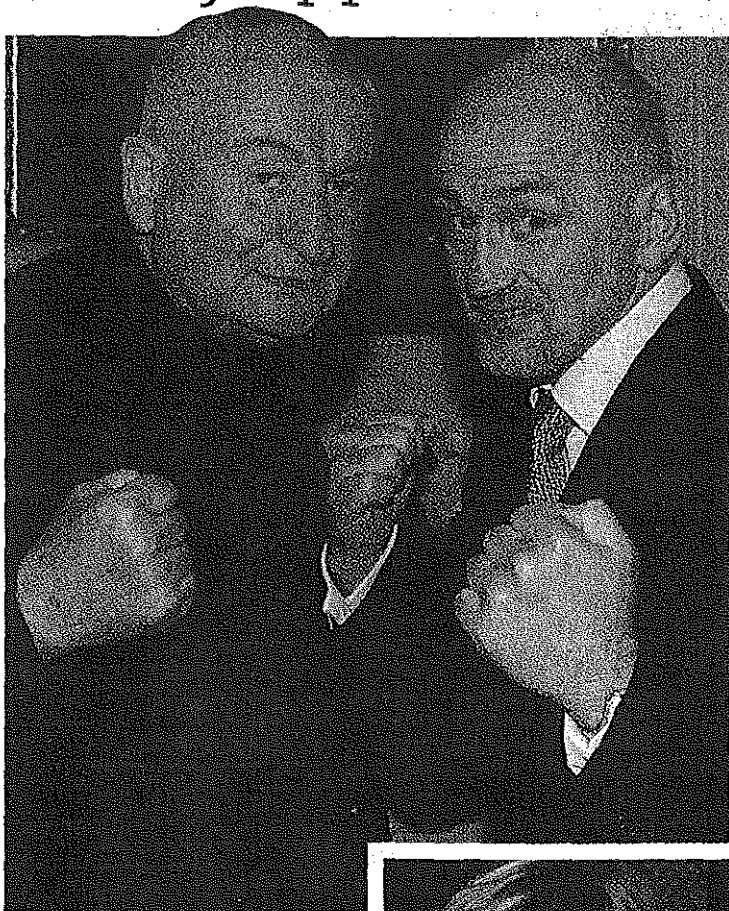
The evening, at the Inner Temple in London, was compered by Catholic ITN news anchor and Anchor House trustee Julie Etchingham, who spoke of the warm welcome given people received at the East End-based centre.

"The challenge is to make the case for support for this East End charity which has proved it saves society £5m a year," Ms Etchingham said.

Anchor House director Keith Fernet said when people came to the centre, they were given a personal development plan. He outlined the case of woman who had been kidnapped, raped and had become a sex slave.

"She has now moved on to become an interior designer," Mr Fernet said. "We are trying to develop a new paradigm in a very low cost environment compared to the homeless sector as a whole."

Bishop Terence McMahon of Brentwood said: "Anchor House is open to all, regardless of ethnicity. The centre also has strong ecumenical connections in East London."



Joining forces: John Bird with Barry McGuigan and (inset) Julie Etchingham

"It helps residents transform their lives. This appeal has set its target high at £9.3m but I feel the cause is deeply deserving"

Mgr John Armitage, the vicar general of Brentwood, added: "Anchor House helps start lives again with new confidence and self-respect. It helps people to find necessary strength of character."

