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## Exhibition celebrates the life of Hindu monk



■ Paresh Patel of the Norfolk and Norwich Indian Society at The Forum exhibition celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda. PHOTO: SIMON FINLAY

An exhibition celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of an iconic Hindu monk began at The Forum yesterday. As part of a worldwide celebration, with more than 100 exhibitions across the UK, Norwich's event is organised by the Norfolk and Norwich Indian Society to mark the birthday of Swami Vivekananda. He was a 19th-century monk

who is credited with raising interfaith awareness.

Paresh Patel, a member of the Norfolk and Norwich Indian Society, said: "He created the blueprint on future world dialogue on religion. He spoke out about world peace, and believed that all religions were part of one mankind." The poster displays will allow visitors to find out more about Indian culture and civilisation,

and include information about the message Swami Vivekananda brought to the world. The exhibition will be at the Forum, Norwich, from 10am to 8pm today, with the lord mayor in attendance tonight at 6.30pm, and 10am to 5pm tomorrow. It will continue at Lowestoft College from 10am to 5pm on July 11 and 12.

## Former barmaid relieved to settle dismissal claim

**Mark Shields**  
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A former barmaid has spoken of her relief at the end of an 11-month ordeal, after settling her claim for constructive dismissal against the golf club where she worked.

Michele Polidano's line manager at Gorleston Golf Club (pictured), Allen Gray, a qualified first aider, sat drinking in the club bar and refused to help after she collapsed in a diabetic coma, saying he was off-duty – conduct described as "appalling behaviour, contemptuous and unacceptable" by an employment judge.

A tribunal found in Ms Polidano's favour on a claim of constructive dismissal, saying the club failed to make reasonable adjustments to her working conditions given her diabetes, and a hearing was held in Norwich yesterday for the two parties to reach a settlement.

The hearing, which was held up as the two sides met for last-minute negotiations, lasted less than a minute and was told simply that Ms Polidano and Gorleston Golf Club had reached a settlement over the events of August 5 last year, though details have not been released. Last



night, the 53-year-old, of Buxton Avenue, Gorleston, said she felt she was getting her life back.

"I'm just so pleased that it's all over with," she said. "The last 11 months have been really, really stressful. I feel like my life has been on hold."

She said she was grateful to golf club members for their support over the past year, with a special thanks for the three members who rushed to her aid when she collapsed.

"I get upset even thinking about it now, but if it wasn't for them there's a possibility I might not be here today. I was very fortunate," she said.

She added she had not received an apology from the club, and still could not understand Mr Gray's behaviour. "I was so shocked at the time that I resigned the next day. Personally, I can't imagine treating another

**“ I was so shocked at the time that I resigned the next day. Personally, I can't imagine treating another human being that way**

Michele Polidano

human being that way," she said. Gorleston Golf Club manager David James yesterday declined to comment on the tribunal.

The hearing on March 26 and 27 was told that when Ms Polidano collapsed, Mr Gray continued drinking with friends, making no attempt to call an ambulance "on the grounds that he was off-duty".

The pair had had a strained relationship since Mr Gray became her manager in 2011, and deteriorated further when rules forbidding eating behind the bar were introduced, meaning that Ms Polidano could not take her medication. Ms Polidano's claims of indirect discrimination and discrimination arising from disability were dismissed.

## Innovative new bid to assist forces veterans

An "innovative" idea to help servicemen and veterans across Norfolk who suffer from alcohol and drug misuse will be rolled out from a Cromer support hub.

The Outside the Wire scheme has been launched by the Norwich-based Matthew Project and will be led from the Junction on Garden Street – part of the Matthew Project.

Two former servicemen – Andy Wicks and Toby Lipton – will be at the helm.



■ Andy Wicks, from the Junction in Cromer, giving support to a member of the armed forces.

Mr Wicks, who served 22 years in the RAF police, said: "We want to catch people who fall through the loop. We at the Matthew Project are seeing more and more people from the ex-service community coming forward and it is not just blokes."

He added the project would not duplicate the work of Help for Heroes and Combat Stress and would work with soldiers, sailors, airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) Forces Help.

It would be tailored to individuals and would include one-to-one support, family support, free treatment services, relapse prevention and alternative therapies.

Rosaline Weetman, chief executive of the Matthew Project, which focuses on drug and alcohol support, said: "We are very excited about it. It feels as though it is a niche area that has not been covered previously."

"There has not been a great deal of research into substance misuse in the armed forces."

Mr Wicks added some current serving personnel and veterans were concerned they would not be listened to by people from a non-military background, but would respond better to people who have "got the T-shirt".

He said one of the reasons why veterans drink was because of the current economic climate.

Sue Pilcher, Norfolk branch secretary of SSAFA, said she was concerned there would be increased problems with alcohol and drug misuse because of redundancies in the armed forces.

→ Call 01263 510900 for information.

## Have your say on celebrations

People in Norwich are being asked for their views on the weekend's Lord Mayor's Celebrations.

Norwich City Council wants people to tell them what they thought of the weekend's events, which brought thousands onto the streets of the city, which will help shape next year's programme.

It is asking people to fill in a short survey at [www.surveymonkey.com/s/2013LMC](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2013LMC)