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HELSINGBORG

Sally Russell builds a network for new Helsingborg residents: "Never say no to an invitation"

She came to Helsingborg 2008 from the UK. Now she is helping other new Helsingborg residents to make up for life in the city.



Brith Lindahl

Sally Russell has just organized the first event of the year with New Year - New Start. On Drottninggatan 7A, on Tuesday people were invited to mingle and listen to tonight's lecturer, life coach Alexandra Skoglund.



Sally Russell (on the right) creates meeting places and helps new Helsingborg citizens into the city and Swedish society. Among other things, she organizes lectures, as on Tuesday night, when life coach Alexandra Skoglund ran a workshop.

Picture: Sven-Erik Svensson

The event is just one in the program arranged for this year. Sally Russell and colleague Jenny Wieslander Chandler's company Helsingborg's International Connections mean that new Helsingborg citizens will get a good start in the city.

"When you come to a new country, it's often also a good opportunity to rediscover yourself," says Sally Russell.

Sally Russell came to Sweden in 2008. Her husband had a job in IT in Lund but the family had difficulty finding a home. They began to look at cities all around and so the choice fell on Helsingborg. Here their two sons could go to the municipal International School of Helsingborg.

- It was the best decision we ever made, this city is great for us as a family. Here is the sea, the forest and the vicinity to Kullaberg, she says.

Sally Russell, who worked as a French teacher in England, initially committed much to the children's school, as parent, volunteer and resource.

As a young English teacher in France, she had noticed how important it is for contacts to enter a new homeland. And - how important it is to have an open mind yourself. By a teacher she had been advised: "never say no to an invitation". And when she started talking with an older couple on a train trip, she accepted their invitation to visit. She got to know the couple and their children and they became friends for life. So the advice from her teacher is something she brought with her.

"One thing usually leads to something more," says Sally Russell.



Sally Russell feels well at home in Helsingborg where she came from England almost 10 years ago.

Picture: Sven-Erik Svensson

In Helsingborg, she eventually met Jenny Wieslander Chandler, who lived abroad for 12 years and as a returnee experienced similar difficulties. Then the idea was born to develop a business focused on facilitating new and new-born healthcare citizens. Now Helsingborg International Connections has been established for four years and since the end of the year, Sally Russell has been employed - from her half-time work as a librarian at the International School of Helsingborg - to work with the company full time.

- We have more than 1,000 that follow us on Facebook and 500 for which we send newsletters. We engage all ages, from students to seniors approaching 70, and they come from 60 different countries, most English-speaking.



Meetings between people are necessary to get to know their city and surroundings. Therefore, Helsingborg International Connections begins events with a mingle, explains Sally Russell.

Picture: Sven-Erik Svensson

Many people want to integrate into Swedish life but may also want to meet people from their home country for cultural reasons.

"Often, you have moved here because one party has got a job, the other may be occupied by the family for a while but needs something more.

- Maybe you had an idea as a young person which you can now resume. There are so many opportunities to get support in Helsingborg, the city is very encouraging.

Helsingborg International Connections have received some financial support and assistance from the local council. During the autumn, Sally Russell has helped develop the company through SoPact, a program aimed at raising social entrepreneurship and making it economically sustainable.

This means, among other things, that they now, apart from coffee meetings, events with different lecturers, guidance and social information ranging from job search to entrepreneurship, now also turn to companies.

"There are several international companies in Helsingborg with employees coming from different countries. To them we can offer tailor-made workshops and in-house courses," says Sally Russell



Sally Russell thrives well in Helsingborg and with the creative environment at Mindpark and Think.

Picture: Sven-Erik Svensson