

# Unionlearn supports London's Turkish and Kurdish communities at the DayMer festival

10 July 2015

Unionlearn spent a day at the Day-Mer Festival in Hackneys Clissold Park. They had a stall in the Union City marquee which focused on supporting disadvantaged learners from North Londons Turkish and Kurdish communities.

The Day-Mer Festival is in its 26th year and attracted around 12,000 people to listen to music and speakers, have picnics and catch up with friends and family and generally have a good time.

Otkay Shabaz is Secretry of Day-Mer and said this years festival was a great success.

“ Our aim has always been to form bridges between the Turkish & Kurdish community and the native and other ethnic minorities here in UK.

We have offered all community groups, trade unions and political parties a platform to introduce themselves to the community. In addition we ensured that key speakers from unions, campaign groups and political parties were invited. The festival itself reflected all of this work and ensured a diversity of all kind, age, ethnicity, gender and religion was present in our park festival."

Otkay was keen to ensure that local groups and organisations got to know each other.

“ In previous years people attending the festival focused on the stage program. This year, in contrast to previous years, visitors were happy to go to stalls more, talk to people, spend time socialising, and get to know about local campaigns etc. rather than just observing the stage.

Also children and young people were able to play and socialise without the fear of gangs or other known issues. Despite having from many different postcodes, different ethnicities, different religions and backgrounds everyone was happy to be in the same environment and echo an atmosphere of unity.

We believe the festival has once again been a success."

For unionlearn it was an opportunity to talk to individuals and community groups, introduce them to the idea of union learning and let them know about some of the courses that unionlearn and local trade unions can help with - in particular IT and distance learning.

It was also a chance to engage with local youth groups, including Day-Mer Youth, that are so involved with the event organisation, and find out what support they might need.



Megan Dobney © Erem Kansoy

Adrian Ryan Senior Union Support Officer, said after the event:

“ This was a great opportunity to talk to people from the Turkish and Kurdish communities and find out their learning needs. It's also great to see the way that the organisers empower young people and give them roles in the running, of what is, a major event. Young people were running stalls, stewarding, setting up some of the infrastructure and more.

SERTUC Unionlearn was really pleased to be involved again with supporting this festival and the communities it works with."

Day Mer is keen to increase union involvement. This year SERTUC Regional Secretary Megan Dobney spoke from the stage and called for people to work to together to support disadvantaged and migrant communities across the capital and beyond. Megan was joined by trade union leaders from the FBU, PCS, Unison, TSSA and more.

Otkay is very keen to work with unions to support the Turkish/Kurdish communities.

“ Since the first festival we have made it clear that, just like Tolpuddle, Durhams Miners Gala and other working class festivals, we want Day-mer's Culture and Arts Festival to be in the same category.

In addition we want this festival to send a clear message against racism and division with emphasis on common struggle for common demands. Unions plays a big role in helping us achieve this. We have been very pleased and honoured to have SERTUC supporting us for the past two years."

Education is a major way that unions can support Turkish and Kurdish migrant workers. Many know little about there rights work very long hours on very low pay. Union learning can play a vital role in educating and informing workers of their worker rights in UK and building up their skills. Day-Mer itself is a youth lead organisation and sees learning and skills as vitally important.

Otkay added:

“ We do believe that if young people are given opportunities they have the capacity to learn and develop their skills. With this in mind we are able to offer lots of culture and arts classes as well as educational classes to help young people to learn and develop. Also we have wealth of experience from our previous young members who are happy to offer to help and support when needed.

As the future generation who will be more integrated to life here in UK they know quite clearly that Day-Mer can help them not just today but also with their issues in the future. Day Mer's vision lets young people flourish and build for future. In events such as the festival young people are able to acknowledge all these opportunities provided by Day-Mer by taking ownership and showing full support."

All in all it was a brilliant day and great way for communities and trade unions to work together to support disadvantaged communities and migrant workers whilst promoting learning opportunities that could make a real difference to them.

**Regions:** LONDON, EASTERN AND SOUTH-EAST (LESE)

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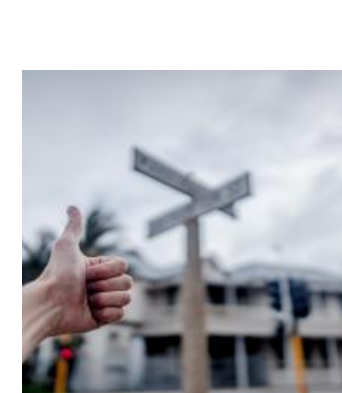
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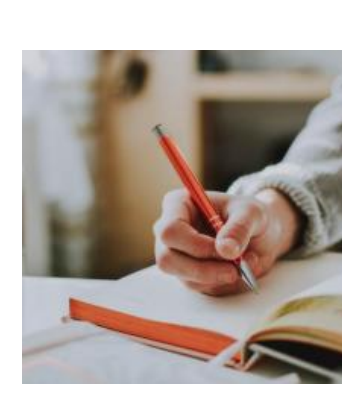
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