



CHECK IT out... Paul Burgess, right and Jason Bromley with the £1,000 donation to help establish Performance Plaza.



Paul Burgess as female impersonator Gemma... additional plans to offer drama and music to all.

# Widow of 9/11 helps realise drama dream

By MARINA BEVRY

AN UNLIKELY friendship between Oldham female impersonator Paul Burgess and a widow of the September 11 terrorist outrage in New York, has helped turn a dream into a reality.

Paul, otherwise known as Gemma, got to know 35-year-old mother-of-two Dorothy Bignall on an internet website.

Dorothy's husband Nick was killed in the attack on the World Trade Centre twin towers, and sparks flew between the two because of their very different political views.

Despite that, a friendship blossomed, and now Dorothy has sent Paul a cheque for £1,000 to help him set up an organisation in Oldham to help people deal with issues in their lives through drama and music.

"I was completely blown away to be contacted," said Paul, of Copsterhill Road.

"I really didn't want to accept it at first, but when Dorothy asked me why I never bothered about what other people thought of getting Performance Plaza started and doing some good with it, I accepted and now we are getting the ball rolling."

Paul explained: "I want to promote performance as something much more than being to entertain."

## Excellent

"Drama, music and art are not used enough. People don't think about going to a drama group unless they want to be an actor."

"Performance Plaza is not for actors, it is for ordinary people who have ordinary jobs."

The online article added: "Drama is an excellent teaching tool. It can help people and something from

someone else's perspective, and help them deal with their own feelings and issues in their lives."

Paul has enlisted the help of musician Jason Bromley to help him get the scheme underway, and he said both were eager to make it a success.

He wants to set up a local drama group, and aims to stage an annual "One Found Party" for children who would normally not get the opportunity to see a production.

His other plans to collect unwanted musical instruments for Performance Plaza and offer free group tuition.

Dorothy's donation will go a long way towards making the dream a reality.

Anyone who wants to get involved, particularly someone who can help with secretarial duties, should contact Paul on 01628 686709 or email [plazaplaza@btinternet.com](mailto:plazaplaza@btinternet.com) or visit [www.plaza.org.uk](http://www.plaza.org.uk) for more information.