

Volunteer Champions - Profiles

Greg J Ford

Worcester Roots Foundation



Some of the activities that Worcester Roots Foundation has been involved in over the past few years have been:

Earth Hour, Watt Fest, Fairtrade Fortnight, events at the Guild Hall, Tool kits at St Barnabas and other schools and our sustainability toolkit at Nunnery Wood High School, and that is to name just a few.

We also hold newspaper crafts workshops at our shop in Cathedral Plaza in Worcester City Centre. I have been part of many of these and have been proud to say that I am a member of the Worcester Roots Foundation, a big thing I have been doing for the Charity is helping promote in the Social Media area. So I feel like I am an important member to the activities that the charity does.

Mark Burton

Worcester Roots Foundation



My name is Mark Burton. I'm 18 years old, live in Fernhill Heath and have a horse called Magic. I'm currently on the tail end of a gap year, having leaving RGS Worcester last June, and will be off to Sheffield University in September.

I volunteer at Worcester Roots Foundation as part of their Future Generations campaign to improve sustainability in politics, starting at a local level, but I also help the group with various odd jobs. So far it's been both rewarding and great fun, and I'd recommend it to anyone – I can guarantee that there's someone nearby who wants help with something important to the community that you'd enjoy helping them with. So get out there and find them!

Sandra Weidrick
Someone's Art



Someone's Art gives people an opportunity to do Arts and Crafts using our own equipment. We notice that due to the nature of expense involved a lot of people cannot afford their own.

Not always for the same reason, but people with illness, isolation, personal difficulties, mental health issues, all benefit – gives people a safe place to go. It also gives them support without cost, so they can access Arts and Crafts without charge.

Someone's Art reaches the wider community with children unleashing their creative energy. We put on an exhibition with a vintage tea party for families to engage in, seeing their wonderful creations.

To the wider community we put on annual events that draw large crowds, allowing the community to dabble in Arts and Crafts and meet new faces.

At the present time we are in negotiation for a building. We have a 5-year business plan supporting wellbeing through creativity.

Dennis Hodgkins
Norton Community Group



Dennis Hodgkins has worked tirelessly in sport for disabled people over the last 30 years helping to inspire young and older people with disabilities to be active.

Dennis began his volunteering in 1982 when he responded to an appeal for help. The organisation, British Sports Club for the Disabled, wanted to introduce a snooker competition for its vast number of members. Dennis offered and over many years organised this and many other sporting events for disabled people.

His volunteering spans many years. Not only organising sporting events, Dennis established a youth club for disabled children who were isolated in society. This was based in Birmingham and he left to go travelling after 14 years.

Dennis and wife Tracey moved to Norton, Worcester where they have had 2 children. There was little to nothing in the area and Dennis set about linking with the community through what is titled a Community Games. In 2011 he initiated and organised a local group to manage the Community Games event in the village. This event attracted over a thousand local residents and was inspired by the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games. Dennis gave his time to help galvanise local residents, businesses and community groups to get involved, having firstly set up a management group to take control. This event has expanded each year and is now in its fourth year.

As an observation Dennis recognised that there is nothing for young people to do in his area and in January 2012 Dennis set up the Norton Community Youth Club, which offers a wide variety of activities for children aged 11 years plus. Since September 2011 he has spent his time working on the project to offer a regular weekly youth club for young people. Since this idea was sowed he went about putting into place the logistics for organising the Club; writing policies, finding a venue, recruiting adult volunteers and raising enough funds to get started. The Norton Youth Club in now 2 ½ years into a progressive programme and has attracted over 140 young people from many villages around the Wychavon area. Two of the members were awarded the Wychavon Young Volunteers award in recognition of their leadership and volunteering skills. Dennis was recognised by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire County Sports partnerships 'Volunteer of the Year' award for his ongoing work.

Dennis is an advocate of the benefits of sport and therefore a champion for the Olympics and Paralympics in 2012, truly believing in their goals and legacy. He was nominated and become an 'Olympic Torch Bearer'. He was honoured to be a torchbearer for this once in a lifetime opportunity and to receive recognition for all his hard works and dedication as a volunteer.

Dennis' latest project relates to the significance of the Norton Barracks and Worcestershire Regiment, who were billeted there. He has galvanised a small group of people to work on a number of projects to help to remember the history of the area and to display this for all to observe and read.

Finally, Dennis has recently been asked to be a 'Volunteer Champion' for Worcestershire Voices and hope to inspire others to give a little of their time and expertise to their community.

Jean Wilson

New Hope



My volunteering activities are as follows:

I founded and manage a daytime respite project based in Worcester. The project works with families who have children who have disabilities, we open every school holiday and every Saturday throughout the year.

My role is to manage a staff team of 30 permanent part time staff.

Staff/volunteer recruitment.

Manage finances which include applying for grant funding.

Plan activities for children.

General Fund raising.

Day to day running of the project to include networking with other businesses and agencies.

Working with local special needs schools to promote the project which in turn leads to new families using the service.

Attending training courses as required (e.g. moving and handling, first aid and epilepsy).

Liaising with families about the welfare of their children, establish and review policies and procedures.

Ensure all staff are DBS checked and reference checked.

Attend child centred meetings with other professionals.

Carry out risk assessments and reviews of such documents.

Ensure the building we use is fit for purpose, i.e. buying new equipment for the children to use.

That covers most of what I do! I also do the gardening!!

Jayne Nicholl

Friends of Springfield Park



I am Vice Chair of the volunteer Group the Friends of Springfield Park, Kidderminster. When I moved back to the area 18 months ago I knew no one. As a single person it is often difficult to make new friends. Joining the Friends of Springfield Park (FoSP) has been a real lifeline. I now have a group of great friends of all ages. I enjoy volunteering to help make our Park a better place for the entire neighborhood. As the Park is in a 'Big Local' area, my volunteering now includes being on the Steering Committee for that process whereby £1m of lottery funding will be available to improve the community.

I have recently helped FoSP take the steps to becoming a Community Interest Company so that through social enterprise we will be able to generate profit that will be returned to the local community through developing the Park and its amenities.

After many years spent in sales and marketing, I have found the skills I learnt in business very transferrable and useful in promoting and developing the group. I write press releases, create brochures and other literature, as well as being actively involved in the outdoor activities in our 42 acres: weeding, litter picking and helping run activities and entertainments for the families who now visit the Park. Prior to the activities of the Friends group, much of the Park was neglected and unwelcoming. Now we have a vibrant area where we are aiming, through the Social Enterprise, to run a cafe and visitor centre and provide a fitness trail and BMX track.

Keith Young

Like many others I am doing what many thousands of people do everyday of our lives in one form or another.

Some years ago I came across a book describing the life of Mother Teresa, speaking from the slums of Calcutta she wrote, '**We do no great things, only small things with great love.**' Simple but accurate, I would suggest.

My involvement with volunteering really began in 2006 when I took early retirement following diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. At that time I felt the need to give something back while still able.

My volunteering can be divided into 3 main strands:

Parkinson's Disease

Local community involvement in the restoration of Wribbenhall Parish Room
Running courses for the NHS aimed at persons with long term health conditions called the Expert Patient Programme.

With Parkinson's I am actively involved in local fund raising. I also organise ad-hoc lunches at local pubs for people with the disease and their partners/carers. I've been doing it since 2006. It takes very little effort but gives a welcome opportunity for people to chat about their condition, have a chuckle and relax.

The Parish Room

It had been falling into disrepair for many years and was in a sorry state. By good fortune a number interested individuals came together at the same time. My background was property and so it was natural for me to oversee the refurbishment project. This extended into fund raising working closely with one colleague, Tony Trick, in particular. The outcome is for all to see!

The Expert Patient Programme

Run by the NHS, locally managed by Annette Jaep, 01527-507055. I generally assist in running 2 of 6-weekly courses aimed at helping those with long term health conditions - just trying to find ways to build their confidence to cope with life.

Mike Randle

Sight Concern and others



As promised a little about myself.

I lost most of my sight in June 2010, becoming registered blind in July 2011.

I have always been involved with local voluntary groups, but more recently with Sight Concern Worcestershire – Wyre Forest Branch as Chairman.

The Wyre Forest branch is a monthly social group that meets for the benefit of those with sight loss within the Wyre Forest. The branch gives the opportunity for people with sight loss to socialise with others with sight loss and gain peer to peer support. It is an essential service for some of the most vulnerable within our district.

Our monthly meetings take place on the afternoon of the 1st Monday of each month at St Mary's Chantry Kidderminster. Volunteers arrange transport, refreshments and

entertainment, providing a safe environment for people with sight loss to benefit from meeting people with the same issues.

Currently I'm also a volunteer for;
The British Red Cross - running various first aid courses and raising funds;

Scouting – I'm a District Explorer Scout Commissioner for Stourbridge District, assisting with the provision of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, in the last 12 months 5 of our young people have received their Gold Awards at St James's Palace. This year we have over 45 young people doing their Awards.

Last year we also had the privilege of nominating one of our young People for the WellChild Awards, and were proud when he was picked from 100s of nominations from across the UK to win the category of Inspirational Young Person.

In the last 12 months, I managed to raise in excess of £40,000 to aid with a number of projects;

Purchase of a "Second-hand" mini bus (ramps for wheel-chairs) to allow us to provide support for the increase in numbers of young people wishing to take part in the DofE Award and to ensure that it is accessible to all;

To replace and update old furniture in the District Scout HQ;

To purchase specialised light-weight camping equipment.

Howard Painter

Chairman West Midlands Search & Rescue



I have been a volunteer in a number of areas for some time and all have either developed from hobbies or as a result of an association with similar minded individuals. All have been done because I enjoy the activity associated with the particular role. None of the volunteering activities have come from a feeling of a need to volunteer, they have happened automatically.

Volunteering began at University in Hull, but didn't last long! As a student I joined Hull University Social Services Organisation (HUSSO) largely because I was told there were lots of female students in it and not many male....that was lie but nevertheless I carried on. I did, however, stop as I couldn't cope emotionally with what we were doing (work in the very deprived fish docks area of Hull).

Fast forward to 1983 and I joined Worcester Elgar Round Table and began involvement locally in various projects and fund raising.

Throughout this time I was still pursuing my hobby of scuba diving and that hobby required boat driving skills. As an instructor for both diving and boat handling I became a specialist instructor for boats with a local search & rescue group and also did a couple of search dives in the river for missing persons until we were advised to stop that activity.

Eventually in the floods of 2007 we decided to form West Midlands Search & Rescue. We have now become full accepted by Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue and West Mercia Police as well as DEFRA as a national flood relief asset. We operate under CVEC (the Worcestershire County Volunteer Emergency Committee) as well. We are on 24 hour call out for local water and land searches and could be deployed nationally in times of major flooding (deployed to Essex and Taunton this year as well as locally in Worcester).

As a spin off from the search & rescue I am also a Community First Responder for West Midlands Ambulance Service. Living in a rural area means ambulances may take a little longer to arrive and so this is a role where I provide basic life support (including defibrillation etc) until an ambulance arrives.

Joanne Mistry

St Paul's Church

I started volunteering at St Pauls church 6 years ago helping support vulnerable adults including the homeless, alcoholics and drug addicts. For the past year I have been on maternity leave, freeing up my time to be more involved in different aspects of church life. This ranges from helping to prepare and serve food at a lunch group for older people, getting involved in schools work and helping at a group for new mums with children under 1 year.

I have recently started back at work although continue to be active within the church setting up for toddler groups, being part of the tech team and setting up the church for special events. People within the church know they can call on me for almost anything at most times. My daughter accompanies me whenever I'm doing anything. I feel it's great for her social and interactive skills and she enjoys the experience.

Poppy Everton

Summer Reading Challenge, Arts Connect & SOS Animal



My name is Poppy and I'm 18 years old. I skipped a year in high school and therefore took my GCSEs and A Levels a year early. In September I'm heading off to study English Literature at Brighton University on an unconditional offer. I'm also very into alternative music and go to concerts as often as I can.

I started volunteering because as I began applying for Uni I wanted to bulk out my personal statement. I emailed Stourport Library and asked for work experience which resulted to helping with the Summer Reading Challenge. I absolutely loved seeing the children so excited to read because that was always how I felt about reading. This opened up lots of other opportunities for me and I began helping Natalie run Open Mic Nights at Kidderminster Library. I was also put in touch with an organisation called Arts Connect who encouraged me to volunteer in the Mystery Shoppers Programme. This scheme evaluates different Museums and offers them first hand advice in appealing to young people. I also attend arts talks which aim to improve the arts for young people. Last summer I popped into a charity shop advertising for volunteers called SOS Animal in Stourport and began helping out twice a week. I quickly became very attached to the independent charity and the people involved, as I could see the work being done in the shelter from the money that I had helped to raise. I now pop in every day and the staff are just like a second family to me. This motivated a friend and I to organise a charity concert event at Areley Kings Village Hall with local artists performing. We raised a total of £240 for the evening.

Volunteering is probably one of the most rewarding things that a person can do. It has completely shaped my life for the past year and introduced me to some of the most amazing people I have ever met. A year ago I was painfully shy and I feel volunteering has helped to bring me out of my shell. It has made me feel a lot more confident and just generally increased my self-esteem. It's an opportunity to meet new people. Not only does it do all that but due to the impact on my personal statement I have an unconditional offer at University. People can think that volunteering is going to be dull or boring but it is entirely the opposite, not only can you help yourself but you get to help others in the process.

Just jump in and get involved with volunteering because you've got nothing to lose and potentially everything to gain.

Ruth Pawsey
Worcestershire Girlguiding



I'm a volunteer with Girlguiding Worcestershire, I run a Guide Unit in Kidderminster which is currently made up of 32 young women aged between 10-16. I've been a volunteer for 14 years now, as I completed my Adult Leadership qualification when I was 18. We provide a balanced programme for the girls, which include a wide variety of activities – from the traditional things associated with guiding, through to the increasingly popular 'Chocolate badge'. We take part in a number of residential events each year, including camping and overnight stays.

I'm also the PR advisor for Girlguiding Worcestershire; this involves regular meetings with all of the PR advisors within the region to ensure that a targeted programme of events is co-ordinated and delivered. We have a particular focus at present on a campaign entitled 'Growing Guiding', this is specifically to increase the number of adult volunteers which we have, so that we can open more units and respond to the demand of local communities.

Jake Abbott
Worcester Warriors Rugby Club / Acorns

