

Volunteer Case Study

CHRIS JONES

5 words that sum up Chris's overall experience of the project:

Stimulated | Inspired |
Achievement | Confidence |
Involvement

About Chris

Chris lives in Herne Bay. She has been involved with Age UK for over two years after relocating from Somerset to live closer to her daughter and six grandchildren. She started volunteering to help make new friends. She is aware of how easy it is to become lonely and isolated. As a befriender, Chris met some amazing ladies whom she still visits for a coffee and a chat as friends. Chris was excited and interested in the 'Our Work of Art' project opportunity.



Read Chris's personal insights on the project:

- My biggest overall personal achievement....
- My most rewarding highlights....
- Changes I noticed: impact & outcomes....
- How the project helped me: the legacy...

➤ My biggest overall personal achievement

- Over the course of the Our Work of Art I felt stimulated, inspired and challenged as I didn't think I could draw or paint myself.
- I am proud that I was able to achieve the work that I did;
- My general wellbeing improved a lot and my self-esteem has soared. I am no longer withdrawn and depressed.
- I have learnt new skills in pottery, ceramics and glazing techniques. My confidence improved and I now feel that that I can achieve new creative things.
- I am proud that I was able to connect with the participants, encouraging them to produce such amazing artwork. I believe their taking part has improved their wellbeing.
- I 'had a go' and this journey channelled my 'inner artistic self' and helped overcome my shyness and although creative in other ways.
- My excitement about the project helped me to have a go. I was able to do this and suddenly my brain connected and I had all these ideas. I didn't know if they would work, but I tried anyway.
- I still have to manage building on the skills that I have learnt. It has been a great opportunity to contribute.

➤ My most rewarding highlights

- Seeing older people gaining in confidence and 'having a go' at things they would not have done before and seeing the final outcomes and their responses.
- Over the weeks, I noticed that they became more open and friendlier; they were ready to 'get to work' and could work independently.

- Many participants said they couldn't paint or do art. Often it transpired, they had loved art when they were young, but they had forgotten. Others may have been reluctant to take part due to their various disabilities.
- Watching participants evolve with gentle coaching and guidance. Their talent was 'mind blowing' even those who said they 'can't draw or paint'.
- Participants challenged themselves and looked forward to the next session so they 'could have another go'.
- Their work on the murals was creative, inspired by memories, and is amazing.
- Assisting the [Canterbury Christ Church, Occupational Therapy] university students in their 'Memory Book' coursework enabled me to learn a lot about myself. It was thought-provoking and cathartic.
- The opportunity to learn about pottery and glazing.

➤ Changes I noticed: impact & outcomes

- I already had experience of working with older people and was aware of their resilience and long-life experiences.
- Since becoming a creative volunteer, the main difference is that I am more confident, more positive and willing to take part. I feel energised and inspired.
- This project enabled participants to either re-engage with art and creativity or in some cases to discover that they could do it.
- I did not appreciate that with encouragement everyone can be creative and gain lots of confidence and enhance their wellbeing.

- I definitely saw a huge change in the people who participated in this project.
- They became friendlier, more confident and independent and were 'ready to work' when we arrived.
- Participants enjoyed taking part; they were amazed and proud of their achievements, especially with their own personal mugs: "I can use this".
- I feel very privileged to have been a volunteer and we are all so proud of the participant's achievements.

➤ How the project helped me: the legacy

- I believe art and creativity are important for the wellbeing of everyone and for the elderly especially.
- It showed that with just a smallest amount of effort, you can connect with people and fuel their hidden creativity.
- Despite having no experience I wanted to 'have a go' and I learnt a lot in making the photo book.
- The project brought a group of people from different backgrounds together to help older people find their creative inner self.
- I feel I have learnt so much from you all and from the very beginning, you all managed to excite me.
- You were all extremely helpful to me. Your endless energy inspired me. It has been a privilege to work with you all.
- I will miss my weekly sessions with all the wonderful people I met.
- I hope very much similar projects can continue with the support of our band of dedicated volunteers.