

Volunteer Case Study

MARY WILLS

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

Engaging | Satisfying |
Expanding | Community
Friendship

About Mary

Mary lives in Whitstable and signed up to become a creative volunteer because she believed it would enrich her own life as she loves being with people. She enjoys art as a hobby and recognises its therapeutic value. She feels very fortunate and wants 'to put something back' which is what this project facilitated.



Read Mary'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

- I learnt so much more about the community in which I live.
- I enjoyed the company of people who live here, and through the chats with our clients and other volunteers, I learnt about its [the community's] history.
- My life has been enriched by the relationships developed with the clients and other volunteers.
- Among our clients there have been retired teachers, men who have travelled the world and those who fought in the war.
- There have been artists/artisans who have revisited art for the first time in years, and those who haven't picked up a paintbrush since their school days.
- My volunteer colleagues have been an interesting bunch; kind, thoughtful, exotic and very talented.
- The biggest overall personal achievement for me was becoming more patient generally (I think).
- I feel the biggest challenges for me on this project were being on time, being adaptable and coping with inadequate feelings when you learn new skills.
- I managed to overcome some of these challenges; I still rush to be on time!

➤ My most rewarding highlights

- The most rewarding highlights were the wonderful and engaging client-friends I met and the fabulous artwork that they produced.

- The best outcome for us all was sharing of the pleasure on our client-friend's faces when their finished work was unveiled.
- My love of Art has been fed by learning about materials and how best to use them.
- Seeing the transformation of pottery from before 'firing', to the stunning collaboration of colours that results, has been awesome.
- In supporting the older people in the creative sessions, I noticed over the course of weeks, that they became chattier and more confident.
- As time passed their countenance changed when they saw us.
- The smiles were automatic as was the 'rush' to secure their seat at the table.
- Initially they had been reticent to join in, afraid to give up their armchairs and/or to miss the bingo numbers.

➤ Changes I noticed: impact & outcomes

- I feel I have gained a greater understanding of how stimulation at any age is truly enriching, and that it is never too late to try something different.
- Being with - and taking more time to listen to - other people, is truly rewarding.
- Being involved in this project has changed my view of older people a little because I always thought that getting old was a natural decline ahead.
- Now I can see that a 'can do' and 'I'll try' attitude to life will make my old age as fulfilled as my younger years. 'You've got to be in it to win it'.

- I think I'm more adaptable most of the time.
- I'm more relaxed about learning new skills; you don't have to be an expert at everything to get good results
- Unbeknown to us, one of the ladies I worked beside had been a true artist who hadn't painted for decades. This project reignited a real hunger to paint and she really loved the reactions to her work.
- A gentleman I worked with was very poorly sighted and didn't think he could paint or work with the clay. He was persuaded to join in. He gently felt the material and shapes of the tools. With a little guidance he produced pieces to give to his daughter.

➤ How the project helped me: the legacy

- I feel the project process and approach has been very worthwhile.
- It has been particularly effective because those involved with running the project were truly committed to the enrichment and development of all participants, our clients and us volunteers.
- The trio of Catherine, Fay and Gerry has been professional, caring, articulate and great company.
- Catherine has been the person that I have spent most of my time with and so must put her first on my 'most effective' list. She is a super communicator, articulate, thoughtful and skilful.
- Fay is a powerhouse, Idealist, driven and enthusiastic. In her company you cannot fail to be charmed and impressed by her ambitions to make a difference.
- Dear Gerry, tirelessly worked away in the background. She is consistent in her passion to ensure that the project is visible to the outside world.

- Gerry is truly professional and talented in choosing the right shots. Without Gerry we wouldn't have been able to ogle the beautiful images that are our indelible memories of this wonderful enterprise.
- I found it reassuring and very helpful to have their support and friendship.
- They had quality and ethics at the centre of everything they undertook. They worked tirelessly to make 'Our Work of Art' successful.
- In truth I don't think I have come across a harder working and dedicated group before.
- I would definitely recommend this project experience to other people who are thinking of becoming a creative volunteer.