

# Volunteer Case Study

## MILLIE BRIERLEY

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

Fun | Friendship | Wellbeing  
Teamwork | Creativity.

### About Millie

Millie is from Whitstable and signed up to be a volunteer initially because she enjoys working with people older than her. She goes to pottery classes which she loves, enjoys volunteering and is a member of Soroptimists international



### Read Millie's personal insights on the project:

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## My biggest overall personal achievement

- My biggest challenge was starting the sessions with confidence. Starting a new session or any other project, I always feel a certain amount of uncertainty.
- I overcame all of these challenges and noticed my wellbeing improved a lot.
- I enjoyed being part of a team and working on specific projects which were implemented within a tight time frame.
- Taking on and committing to such a huge project. I am very busy and there were always time constraints. I am very happy that I never missed a session although I still had to manage my diary.
- Since becoming a creative volunteer my own practice has become more creative and the project increased my creative confidence a lot.
- It was wonderful to start a session with a group of clients when there was nothing on the table and to end the creative session with beautiful pieces of art and shared feelings of fun, happiness, friendship and joy.
- Every session was hugely rewarding and satisfying for everyone involved.
- I believe art and creativity are important for the wellbeing of everyone and for the elderly and vulnerable people and children especially'.

## My most rewarding highlights

- Seeing the final outcomes and the response from participants.
- I believe art and creativity are important for the wellbeing of everyone and for the elderly especially.
- I already had experience of working with older people and was aware of their resilience and long-life experiences. But, I did not appreciate that with encouragement everyone can be creative and gain lots of confidence and enhance their wellbeing.
- In supporting the older people in the creative sessions, I noticed, over the course of weeks, that they became more open and friendlier, they were ready to 'get to work' and could work independently.

- So many participants said they couldn't paint or do art, but, it often transpired, they had loved art when they were young, but they had forgotten.
- I worked with lots of participants but I particularly remember three lovely people I supported. (see below )

**I met 'J' at Age UK Herne Bay & Whitstable**

**She told me she couldn't draw or do art, but with encouragement she decorated a mug with pretty flowers.**

**The paints we use look quite pale before they are fired and so it is difficult to imagine how they will look when they are finished.**

**So, when I presented 'J' with her fired mug, she was totally amazed and thrilled to see the bright colours and her beautiful design.**

**She looked at me and said, 'this has made me happier than I have been for a long time!'**

**I was stunned'.**

**'E' from Age UK Herne Bay & Whitstable was very reluctant to join in, but with gentle persuasion engaged with the project.**

**I worked with her for several weeks and I could see that she became increasingly confident with painting a mug and creating beautiful ceramic flowers.**

**We talked and laughed a lot and she told me she was 99!**

**'E'. also told me that she had worked for the London Fire Service during WW2, responsible for looking after 300 firemen and ensuring they were fed and had somewhere to sleep.**

**She received the British Empire Medal from the Queen for her services.**

**You would never know about her exciting life by seeing a little old lady sitting in a chair in a care home'.**

**Another client I really enjoyed working with was 'C' from the COGS group in Swalecliffe.**

**'C' has dementia and I think Parkinson's disease. He is a lovely man.**

**I learnt he is only a few years older than me. His motor skills were quite shaky, but with support he produced four amazing tiles for the COGS mural.**

**'C' never gave up and always wanted to carry on. He remembered we both had twin grandchildren, which we talked about.**

**I will never forget him. His big smile, determination and willingness to work with me and try hard. I felt truly humbled.'**

## Changes I noticed: impact & outcomes

- 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.
- I will miss my weekly sessions with all the wonderful people I met.
- I feel very privileged to have been a volunteer and we are all so proud of the participant's achievements.
- I hope very much similar projects can continue with the support of our band of dedicated volunteers".
- This project enabled participants to either re-engage with art and creativity or in some cases to discover that they could do it.

## How the project helped me: the legacy

- Right from the start of this ground-breaking project I felt engaged with the aims of supporting elderly people through creativity and art.

- The three training sessions for volunteers were very professional and enabled us to work together as a collaborative project team.
- We knew what we needed to do. The leaders of Our Work of Art were all highly committed and worked tirelessly to make the project happen.
- I felt a great sense of commitment to the project, the participants, to Catherine and Gerry, who I worked with, and to the other volunteers.
- We all felt passionate about what we were doing'. Everyone was extremely helpful and professional.
- This was a massive project and Catherine, Gerry and Fay (and others) gave their full commitment.
- Facebook was a great communications tool. We all knew what was going on and felt that she was being kept 'in the loop.
- For me the project increased my creative confidence, capabilities, skills and wellbeing.
- I really enjoyed Gillian Farrell's studio practice pottery sessions, which were offered to a group of volunteers.
- The project 'made everyone happy and it should be ongoing'.