

Volunteer Case Study

SUSAN FARRIS

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

Fulfilling | Enjoyable
instructive | Creative |
Humbling

About Susan

Sue lives in Chartham with her retired husband and two grown up children. She works part time for charity and enjoys helping people to get the best out of themselves. In the past she has spent time creating handcrafted items but since having children, has never made time for herself to do this. Sue felt that this project seemed like a good opportunity to meet new people, to do some crafting and help older people be creative.



Read Sue'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

- It was with some trepidation that I joined a room full of fifty plus aged women to start the training. I needn't have worried as everyone was in the same boat and Catherine, Fay and Gerry soon put everyone at ease.
- The team was very professional whilst being cheerfully positive. I soon relaxed and enjoyed the training sessions which were enjoyable and informative.
- One of the volunteers recognised me [at the training] and we worked out that we knew each other because our daughters were in the same class at Chartham Primary School about 10 years ago; and so our friendship began.

➤ My most rewarding highlights

- The 'piece de resistance' was the final display of the murals and photographs at the Our Work of Art 2019 exhibition at Garage Coffee. Wow!!
- The tiles looked amazing set together in their frames; what a great end to an enjoyable project.
- The best thing for me was seeing the look on the faces of the tile creators when they came to visit the exhibition.
- The surprise at how their paintings had literally come to life, in the murals, and the pride at their achievements, was such a lovely sight to see. I was nearly brought to tears!
- Another highlight was that I was fortunate enough to be one of the 13 project volunteers to be mentored by the ceramics teacher Gillian Farrell.
- Apart from learning a new craft this was great opportunity to get to know the other volunteers better.

- Joining in these sessions offered a chance to be creative for our own sakes.
- The quality and diversity of all the items produced I felt was amazing considering we had only 6 weeks tutoring.
- Credit was in no small part due to Gillian who gently guided us using “slab clay”, “leather clay” and the art of “scraffito”; words that I had never encountered before, let alone the processes.
- I enjoyed assisting in two sessions helping the Canterbury Christ Church University Occupational Therapy students in creating a ‘Memory Book’ for their coursework, which can be used with people with dementia.

➤ Changes I noticed: impact & outcomes

- Learning to let go and relaxing was one of the changes I noticed in myself.
- I overcame all of these challenges and gained more confidence.
- I allowed myself the luxury of doing something just for my own benefit and is also making time for myself at home.
- I felt valued as a volunteer and part of a team.
- I think that I still have to work on my time management.
- The men who were reluctant to join in at first thoroughly enjoyed their sessions.

➤ How the project helped me: the legacy

- I attended the social media sessions and found the whole process of producing a social record and promoting the exhibition very interesting as I hadn’t encountered anything like this before.

- I learnt a lot from Fay, Catherine, and Gerry and from Karen and Erica on the social media side of things and would like to thank all of them for enabling the project and their help with it.
- Gerry and Catherine were very encouraging and supportive and encouraged my personal projects.
- Seeing older people gaining in confidence and having a go at things they would not have done before. People became more creative.
- The project brought a group of people from different backgrounds together to help older people find their creative inner self.
- I am pretty sure like myself the volunteers are saying “what’s next? We can’t wait!
- This has been such a wonderful experience for me that I hope funding can be found to continue these great projects; it’s so worthwhile.