



Warwickshire & West Mercia AFC CJS Remember Veterans Project Case Studies



Jackie (Volunteer) Case Study

I recently began volunteering for Veterans Contact Point; I am not a veteran myself. I am happily offering a day a week of my time to help what I consider a worthwhile cause. Some of my friends are sceptical about this. They wonder why I chose to make a 40-mile round trip from Rugby to Nuneaton each week, instead of just picking a more local charity. They suggest that at 58, on a low income, and still affected by a major illness I suffered in 2014, I should perhaps be doing more for myself now – conserving my strength and resilience towards the continual battle to get well. Putting any spare time and effort into finding ways of improving my own financial lot.

I couldn't disagree more – I think finding the right volunteering opportunity is as beneficial to the volunteer as it is to the charity. For me, it offers an alternative from sitting at home, focussing on "better" days when health was something I enjoyed, rather than fretted about, pain only related to the occasional headache, ailment or injury and energy levels were something I tried not to be smug about! As I looked through volunteering opportunities, it occurred to me that my own problems paled into insignificance compared to what veterans had to deal with regularly, the losses they suffered protecting people like me. Although I have no military background, I had helped military charities before, and it seemed to me that the VCP had a unique role to fulfil. For my part, I felt I had a lot to offer a charity, even if I had lost a little confidence, and some of my skills were a touch rusty. If there is two things I have never been afraid of, it is admitting my shortcomings and learning new skills!

My background is very settled; having lived in Rugby all my life and brought up four daughters in a house that was always full of animals, I am now happily a nanny to two granddaughters. My employment history, however, is quite diverse. On leaving school, I trained as a secretary and went on to work as a PA for several years. I later took on a whole variety of part time and casual jobs whilst my children were young and as they grew, I found more demanding roles, which involved event planning and management; administration; volunteer co-ordination; reception and fund-raising. I regularly ran several part-time jobs simultaneously - at the time that I became ill I was a duty manager, a conference hostess, a receptionist and a survey interviewer. Throughout my life, I have also volunteered for many charities in a variety of ways, including:

- Climbing Snowdon, swimming Lake Windermere, taking part in the Great South Run and helping to arrange a fun run, all for Nowzad, a charity whose aims include reuniting servicemen with animals they have befriended and who have often become a lifeline to sanity to them, whilst serving in Afghanistan or Iraq.
- Organising a sponsored 1000-mile swim by members of a Sports Centre for Help for Heroes.
- Helping to set up Rugby Cats Protection, with particular responsibility for PR and writing the newsletter.
- Arranging an appeal and collecting supplies from local people following the fire at Manchester Dogs Home.

I am so impressed with VCP's commitment to volunteers and their approach to training, complimented by resources made available through the Remember Veterans Criminal Justice Project. They strive to ensure volunteers are enriched from their experience with the VCP. They are willing to use any



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resources available to them to help volunteers progress in the areas they have expressed interest. At the same time, they provide more standardised training specific to understanding and helping to resolve veterans' problems, whatever they are and from whatever background they have.

Although I have only been with the VCP a very short time, I have already attended 3 excellent courses including a 2-day accredited course on Military Mental Health First Aid and a further 2-day course on Peer Support, both provided by the Remember Veterans Project. Prior to these, I had concerns that as a civilian I may not have the necessary understanding of the motivations and thinking of veterans to provide effective support in this area. However, these courses have given me a desire to be involved in this work, along with the necessary knowledge and confidence which, combined with prior skills, should enable me to successfully support veterans.

I aspire to being involved in various areas of VCP, to understanding the organisation fully and working with their partners to help to enhance and expand this vital initiative. I hope very much to be involved in providing veteran peer support. I also look forward to helping with reception, administration, event planning and fund-raising, and to exploring ways I can help with marketing, particularly with social media. I hope to refresh and improve my IT skills and learn about the design and maintenance of websites.

My ultimate wish is that I will find suitable employment and I hope my experience at the VCP will help me achieve this. In the meantime, I am just looking forward to my future time with the charity and supporting those veterans in need.