



Accessible and rewarding volunteering

ONE OF the great privileges of being a High Sheriff is to shine a light on the community heroes in our counties – never has it, or have they, been more relevant and essential than in this year following the global pandemic, war in Ukraine, looming inflation and the cost-of-living crisis.

In the past few months I have met with over 100 amazing charities, community interest companies, and organisations with wonderful people doing wonderful work responding to various urgent needs in the county – from manning mental health hotlines, to harvesting food for food banks, supporting the sick, elderly and isolated, and hosting refugee families, to name but a few. Almost all of these wonderful organisations are desperate for more volunteers.

My theme this year is volunteering and I have not only been thanking all those who currently are, and highlighting the ordinary people doing extraordinary things, but also trying to show others how accessible and rewarding volunteering can be. In order to reach as many potential volunteers as possible I have been working (with volunteers!) to harness the power of social media and launched ‘High Sheriff Asks’ on Facebook and Instagram which highlights the opportunities and benefits of volunteering. This has undoubtedly

been part of the reason that the online following has trebled since April.

I began my year with a series of meetings to raise awareness of Crimebeat. Bringing together representatives from church, education, council, alternative provision, youth groups, law and order, and others in a series of meetings made for some fascinating conversations and connections made. Over the past few months I have heard the words ‘prevention and early intervention’ almost every day, and the word ‘purposeful’ and the phrase ‘lived experience’ just as often – for young people, their peers are the next best thing to ‘lived experience’; it is a fact that they listen to their peers more than any other group. For their peers to think of purposeful activity which in turn prevents crime is so ‘on message’, and with more meetings to come, I hope that we may see some initiatives put forward by Shropshire in the coming years.

It has been a momentous year. We have had Platinum Jubilee celebrations with associated lunches, beacons, fetes, and parties in the park. We planted 1,000s of trees for The Queen’s Green Canopy project and applauded community heroes bearing the baton for the Commonwealth Games. Then, of course, came the devastating news of the death of the longest-serving monarch in our history.

It goes without saying that nobody embodied community spirit more powerfully than our Late Queen Elizabeth II; she was an inspiration and has given us all a legacy to cherish and a standard of humanity to admire.

I think all High Sheriffs in recent years had been hoping that the duty did not fall to them, but reading the Proclamation was undoubtedly a defining moment and it was extraordinary to be part of something so historically profound. The momentousness of the



With Perry, the official mascot of Birmingham 2022, and Mayor of Telford and Wrekin Cllr Raj Mehta at an Energize School Games event supporting the legacy of the Commonwealth Games



Opening the new Men’s Shed in Cleobury Mortimer

occasion weighed heavily, but thanks to the immaculate planning of many behind the scenes the events in both Shrewsbury and in Telford were fantastic, and it was hugely heartening to see how many people turned out, or watched online, to recognise the historic moment and to pledge their support for our new King.

In early October I shall be hosting around 1,000 people at two events: the first as a fundraiser for the Shropshire Community Foundation and the Alzheimer’s Society, and the second a ‘bring a volunteer’ party to celebrate the many unsung heroes in our county.

The adjectives tumble for my first six months as High Sheriff – interesting, exhilarating, compelling, humbling, fascinating, genuinely life-changing... and exhausting!

◆ Selina Graham

Hon Mrs Graham, High Sheriff of Shropshire 2022-23



Unveiling the Covid Memorial Sculpture in Market Drayton