

The importance of coming together as one community

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High Sheriff of Warwickshire 2024-25

As my year as High Sheriff comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on the incredible experiences, the people I've met and the causes that have left a lasting impact. It has been a year of service, of learning and, above all, of listening – to communities, to those who work tirelessly to make a difference and, most importantly, to our youth.

One of the most humbling experiences was supporting the OurJay Foundation. Born out of tragedy, this foundation has turned grief into a powerful force for change. After Jamie Rees's passing in 2022, his family set out to raise £1,500 for a defibrillator accessible 24/7 at his school. The response was overwhelming and that single goal quickly became a countywide mission. To date, the foundation has raised over £250,000, installed over 215 publicly accessible defibrillators and has more ready to be placed across Warwickshire. These lifesaving devices serve as a lasting tribute to Jamie, ensuring his name continues to make a difference.



With this year's winner of the Young High Sheriff competition, Sophia Wilk from Rugby High School, together with Simon Miesegaes DL (Council, 2019-20) David Kelham DL (2022-23), Clare Sawdon JP DL and Eric Wood OBE

Another proud moment was the success of the Young High Sheriff competition, which gave young people a voice on the issues that matter to them. After

announcing the winner, we went further, delivering workshops where young people shared their concerns about crime and safety. Their message was clear: they want safer streets, better education on crime prevention and real conversations about the challenges they face. It reinforced my passion for educating young people about crime and personal safety – empowering them with knowledge to protect themselves.

A personal highlight was celebrating International Women's Week. I was honoured to be invited to deliver speeches aimed at empowering and supporting women today. Each event reminded me of the importance of lifting one another up, whether in leadership, community work or personal growth. There is so much strength in unity and I hope my words encouraged others to push forward, support one another and continue breaking down barriers.

As High Sheriff one of my most significant responsibilities was to mark the start of the legal year. This year, I had the honour of hosting two very special legal services, each reflective of our shared values of inclusivity, justice and community.

The first service was held at St Mary's Church in Warwick, a tradition that has



With diplomats from China, Penny and Tim Cox (Lord-Lieutenant) and Lord-Lieutenant's cadets for the 460th anniversary celebrations of William Shakespeare's birthday in 2024



At the Old Shire Hall in Warwick for my Declaration with, among others, Sophie Hilleary (2023-24), Giani Surjit Singh (High Sheriff's chaplain), the Honourable Mr Justice Saini (in red), Jagtar Singh Gill OBE (husband), Tim Cox (Lord-Lieutenant), John Rouse (Under Sheriff) and His Honour Judge Lockhart

continued for the past 20 years. It was a truly special occasion with speakers and readings from multiple faiths, as well as music that echoed the diverse cultures within our county. What made this service particularly meaningful was the inclusion of 'Langar', a Sikh tradition of serving free food to all, which was offered to everyone in attendance. This act of hospitality and unity was a reminder of the importance of coming together as one community, regardless of our differences.

The second service was held at the Sikh Gurdwara of Leamington Spa & Warwick, marking a historic moment as it was the first legal service to be held within the Gurdwara. This service was attended by judges, civic leaders, magistrates and members of the wider community, symbolising the unity and respect we have for all members of society. It was an incredibly moving event, reinforcing the

vital role of our diverse communities in shaping the legal landscape and promoting justice for all.

This year has been a privilege, but my journey doesn't end here. Crime prevention and awareness remain my passion and with the connections I have built, I will continue working to educate, engage and drive action. There is still so much work to be done and I remain committed to making a difference – ensuring young people feel safe, that communities are supported and that those in need know they are not alone.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this role has been meeting so many incredible people: from those working behind the scenes in our justice system to community leaders and volunteers who give so much of their time and energy. We are truly fortunate to have such dedicated volunteers who carry out vital work to support and uplift our communities. Their selflessness and commitment remind me that change happens when people come together with a shared purpose.

To everyone who has supported me on this journey – thank you. It has been an honour to serve Warwickshire in this historical role. I have witnessed first-hand the dedication and the strength of community spirit. Your encouragement, collaboration and belief in the work we've done together have made this role an unforgettable experience and truly special. Warwickshire will always hold a special place in my heart and I look forward to continuing this work alongside all the remarkable individuals who make this county so strong.



At Chesford Grange Hotel, Leamington Spa, for a Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship passing out ceremony