

Volunteering is vital

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High Sheriff of West Glamorgan 2024-25

Like many I have volunteered in various organisations since I was a child. From charity shops and fundraising fayres to helping at the Guides as a young leader and, as an adult, a school governor, chair of the PTA and a long serving magistrate. My commitment and interest in giving back has been an important part of my life and I value enormously the contribution that volunteers selflessly make to our society.

The year in office allows you to immerse yourself in the voluntary sector. We constantly hear that volunteers provide the bedrock to our communities and ask where we would be without them. As High Sheriffs we too are volunteers and our aim is to make a significant difference to our community.

I decided that I wanted to recognise the wonderful volunteers in West Glamorgan and to raise as much awareness for the often unsung heroes in our community; so, I set myself a challenge. Namely, to volunteer in as many organisations as possible during Volunteers' Week across the two counties [The City and County of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot County Borough]; to stand side by side with the indispensable people within our vital third sector and to roll my sleeves up.

I contacted both Swansea and Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service and asked them to fill the week commencing 3 June 2024 for me – and they did not disappoint! Six placements and two recognition ceremonies in one week. Here goes!

The mother and toddler group



With young people from the Resolven Youth Forum

at Swansea EYST (an organisation supporting ethnic minority people across Wales) was where I met parents and their babies and toddlers helping to serve refreshments and also taking on rhyme and story time.

At Cwtch Mawr in Swansea I picked and packed orders. Cwtch Mawr is an amazing multibank; supported by businesses like Amazon and run by the Faith in Families charity it provides surplus essentials to those in need.

I played bingo with the ladies at Gwynfi Miners Community Hall in Blaengwynfi, where they hold a long-running coffee morning to combat isolation.

In Neath I packed food boxes at F.A.N. (Friends and Neighbours) Community Alliance and delivered them to those in need.

I helped pupils from Tairgwaith Primary School in Canolfan Maerdy in the Upper Amman Valley to pack food boxes and distributed them to families.

In Resolven I helped restock the food bank at the Building Blocks Family Centre and attended the Youth Forum, an incredible group of young people who



With other volunteers at Canolfan Maerdy food bank

volunteer in their community.

The week also included two fantastic volunteer awards ceremonies where I was delighted to give an address and present certificates.

Volunteers' week was wonderful and insightful. Needless to say, following on from this week I have continued to volunteer in as many places as possible. 'Don't just invite me to shake hands, give me a job instead' is very much my ethos and my past 11 months have been filled with wonderful experiences.

Volunteering is vital and encompasses so many things: empathy, teamwork, kindness, contribution, worth, confidence building, friendship and so much more – and all while making life for others easier. A gift!

Volunteers' Week this year is Monday 2 June through to Sunday 8 June – go for it!



At the Cwtch Mawr multibank – a clothes bank, bedding bank, baby bank, hygiene bank and furniture bank all rolled into one



With parents and their babies and toddlers at the EYST parent and toddler group in Swansea