

Getting creative

Sue Elton

High Sheriff of Hampshire 2025-26

In my role as High Sheriff of Hampshire I have worked to shine a light on and encourage positively the work of the judiciary, police, fire and rescue, police and crime commissioner and the prison. I have been particularly keen to promote art to showcase how creativity can serve a broader social purpose and at my High Sheriff's summer party I curated a special exhibition titled Art with a Purpose, to show how charities are using art as a force for change to support both individuals and the judicial system.

The exhibition included a diverse and powerful collection of work from charities including BearFace Theatre, Spurgeons, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Youth Commission, Trinity Winchester, The Winchester Beacon, Monty's Community Hub, Pottery In Prison, Friends of the Family, Spud Works, Know Thyself and Southampton Forward.

Below is a collaborative poem written and performed by prisoners during BearFace Applied Theatre Project at HMP/YOI Winchester and exhibited at my summer party:

Freedom is...
I think...
Freedom is
Seeing the potential and being able
To be comfortable within yourself
It is care
It is laughter
It is running carelessly laughing down hills
Freedom is being free from one's own thoughts

Display of work from Monty's Community Hub



To own them
And adjust them
We will never reach perfection, but don't
give up, keep trying
Freedom is not having a key worker
scratching down on her clipboard
In front of me
It's a walk across the park
A walk outside to a friend's house
Watering the plants
A cup of tea in the garden first thing
Freedom is better health and finding our
calm
I think being free from addiction
Free from prison
Free from past mistakes
That is freedom
I think...
Freedom is seeing the potential in things
Seeing my potential and being able to be
comfortable within myself

There have been many other highlights from my year so far. My Declaration took place at the Great Hall in Winchester on 26 March and since taking on the role of High Sheriff of Hampshire it has been an extremely busy year, travelling around to visit many incredible organisations and charities that make this county a better place to live and work.

I was delighted to have an opportunity to visit the inspirational Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance (HIWAA) at their airbase in Thruxton, Andover. The team had just returned from two major call-outs and I was fortunate to have a close-up tour of the helicopter and equipment. What struck me was the level of medical care the paramedics and doctors



With some of the star guests at Winchester Prison family farm day

can administer to patients at the scene, thanks to the state-of-the-art technical equipment onboard and the vital skills of their extremely dedicated team.

I particularly enjoyed meeting with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary's Dog Support Unit, to hear all about the intense training required to enable the dogs to locate a missing person, assist with arrests, and to detect drugs, blood and even SIM cards.

It was a pleasure to support the Big Sleep Out Event in support of Trinity, a charity addressing homelessness and vulnerability in Winchester.

After spending an eventful afternoon with the police in Basingstoke, I saw first-hand the intricacies of effective policing, involving a diverted call to respond to an incident: calm policing in action, handcuffing of suspect, review of CCTV and a visit to custody.

I also spent some time with Spurgeons at HMP Winchester to see how the charity supports families; their farm fun day was a brilliant way to bring families together.

Finished pieces from Pottery In Prison

