



**Welcome to the Autumn 2017 edition of 'evolving'.** If you work for Zurich and are considering volunteering (whether after retiring, or by taking advantage of Zurich's updated volunteer policy) or, of course, if you have already retired - this newsletter is for you! We hope you enjoy it...

Here at Zurich Community Trust (ZCT), we hope you've had an enjoyable summer.

We've had a busy season with our annual Challenge extravaganza taking place and seeing a tremendous number of employees across the UK taking up a team volunteering project to help in their local communities.

During the first few years of our Evolving programme, we have focussed on individual volunteering. **But, we'd love to hear from you if you'd like to do something different and join a team of retirees to complete a group project to say tidy up a garden, do some decorating or perhaps organise a party for disadvantaged people who would really benefit from your team spirit!**

As we near the last third of 2017, it's been a period of big decisions all round in the wider world. The ramifications of the choices that have been made are yet to fully take effect, but, here through **Evolving**, we can provide some stability in an environment of uncertainty.

Volunteering can provide a firm routine, a way to stamp your mark; reason for making a difference.

With little sign that Austerity is to abate, charities are finding their services stretched even more with increased demand from more clients, tighter time resource and fewer funds at their disposal.

Heading indoors earlier now after the summer of lighter and warmer evenings, Autumn can be an inspiring season to contemplate learning a new skill or hobby, making plans for the future; a future where you can meet new people, make new friends and make a difference locally. But finding the time to research what's out there can sometimes seem like a barrier to getting it done, especially with work pressures if you're not yet retired.

This is where the **Evolving programme** comes to the fore! If you are still working at Zurich, but retirement is within sight, don't forget the volunteering policy allows those who have given formal notice of retirement, one paid half-day per week (pro-rated if you are part-time) during your last six months of employment, to volunteer in the community. So you don't have to wait for retirement to get involved. You may have a charity in mind already, or perhaps you need help to find a suitable and rewarding opportunity. In all cases, please contact Wendy Martin and I'll run through with you how it all works.

As you'll read below, our current Evolvees are engaged with an interesting range of organisations, doing completely different things, and they all LOVE it!

**I'd love to hear from you. Call me on 07799 656812 or email [wendy.martin@zct.org.uk](mailto:wendy.martin@zct.org.uk)**

**Wendy Martin**

Evolving Programme Manager  
ZCT

### Remembering Tony Martin



It is with deepest sadness that we share the news that our dear friend and colleague, Tony Martin, passed away on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September, in hospital following lung surgery. Tony was much loved and his work both inside and outside ZCT with charities in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire made a huge impact on the lives of so many. We still can't believe we won't see his cheeky smile, hear the infectious laugh or feel the warmth of his kindness and humour again. He was a star and his memory will live on.

## Maddie the whippet (and Tim) making waves at Sailability



This is **Maddie**, she's volunteering for Sailability! Her owner, **Tim McKie**, retired from Zurich Engineering in March. He really liked the idea of the Evolving programme and so got in touch.

Looking at Tim's practical ability, and his enjoyment of the outdoors and nature, we came up with several local opportunities for him. Of all of them, working with Sailability, who enable disabled people to enjoy the water in a safe environment, really appealed as it was only a mile from Tim's house and operates on the lake where he and Maddie walk! Tim soon got stuck in and now volunteers with Sailability two full days a week, dependent on the weather, of course. Tim says 'I help with getting the boats in the water, rigging the sails, helping to man the rescue boat, winching the wheelchair users in and out of the boats and anything else that is needed. I really don't need any training as I spent 2 years in Plymouth School of Maritime Studies in my long ago youth. Maddie also joins in - here she is manning the lifeboat!

Retirement is going great, I don't know how I had time for work. I have also started my Institute of Advanced Motorcyclists training which was a retirement present from my team'.

## Retirement looks good for Graham



**Graham Prior** retired in December 2015. After taking time out to enjoy a wonderful trip to Australia, Graham returned raring to make a difference in his local community around Birmingham. As Underwriting Director for Commercial Lines, Graham's skills were in leadership and finance; it would be a waste not to use these to good effect.

Already a School Governor, Graham enjoyed having a positive impact upon the lives of young people. He is now Chair of Focus, a charity supporting people with visual impairments. The organisation has three core areas. Firstly, the Low Vision Unit is where referrals are made and people receive advice and guidance. The Community Support side offers a helpline, drop in centre, home visits where specific help with a task is needed, and clubs and group meetings to combat social isolation. The third area is the Elizabeth Gunn Centre; a day centre for those with complex learning and physical disabilities. The day centre provides a range of activities, meals and access to a physiotherapist. There is also a single supported living unit catering for 14 people with a range of needs. Graham volunteers around one and half days a week for Focus. In his work, not only does he ensure the strategic direction of the organisation, but he also liaises with other local agencies supporting the visually impaired to ensure that the complex needs of this client group is best served.

Graham pictured here about 120 miles into the 193 mile coast to coast walk he completed in June 2016.



## Riding to the fore for Ryder

**Stewart Walton** left Zurich as Head of Operational Finance, EMEA, Life, in February and was raring to share the business skills he enjoyed using over the last few years in his career. Keen to support the Sue Ryder Hospice in Leckhampton, Cheltenham, Stewart soon launched himself into helping them 2 days a week for 3-4 hours each. Stewart's relationship building skills came to the fore as he introduced his contacts at Capita to a welcome opportunity to increase the company's impact in the community (feedback that had come as they earned their 'Investors in People' certification). The perfect opportunity came to sponsor Sue Ryder's Starlight Hike this November, with staff getting involved with the walk and marshalling too. If all goes well, the sponsorship could extend to 3 years and be a massive help.

Spurred on by this networking coup, Stewart is now setting up a Development Board which will give the hospice access to different sources of fundraising as local people and businesses get on board to use their business brains, contacts, skills, and professions to supply marketing, prizes, products and further networking. The other role Stewart enjoys is counselling and mentoring Elise Hoadley, Head of the Hospice. With charities becoming ever more business-like and process driven, Elise was looking for guidance to improve her management meetings. Stewart has given advice about empowerment of the team, good MI, setting guidelines, deadlines and structure.

Stewart says 'I love it! It's keeping my brain ticking over, and gives me huge job satisfaction. The Capita link paid off and next year is Ride for Ryder 30th anniversary, so I'm now looking for sponsors! I've also recently organised the shooting of a new promo video for Sue Ryder'. Again, through marvellous networking, Stewart knew an ex Saatchi and Saatchi film maker, and negotiated his charges at cost - this film maker is the only person in Gloucestershire with a drone filming license! He also secured funding through 'Make' Architects the designers of the Gherkin building in London, and the previous employers of his brother in law (who sadly died at the hospice). The future for Sue Ryder's Leckhampton hospice certainly looks bright, as it does for Stewart, one of our many star Evolvees volunteering in retirement!



Here's Stewart at Anstruther harbour (home of the best fish and chips in the world, he says) cycling the Trail to Crail in Scotland and supporting Sue Ryder at the same time.



## Loving retired life in the open

**Robina Hodgson** is now in her third year of volunteering with the Low Moor Community Allotment Children's group, near York.

Robina says 'Volunteering here continues to give me so much pleasure. This year we have 14 children and we've lowered the age group. This does make it more of a challenge! The children do love it. Here are some of them harvesting fruit we've grown.



We usually have a competition for the tallest sunflower but this year we decided to grow in garden wellies - here are our 'boots'.



In July we were judged by the Royal Horticultural Society. We have been judged as 'Outstanding' 4 years in a row and received a special award last year at the annual presentation. We also submitted entries in various shows around the area.

As always my thanks go to the Evolving programme for arranging this opportunity for me."

**DID YOU KNOW?** Recent studies reveal that over 1.2 million older people in England are chronically lonely which is having a huge impact on their mental health and well-being. Over 9 million people in the UK report they are always or often lonely. That's almost one fifth of the population! Everyone can experience loneliness. Transitions such as becoming a new parent, empty nest syndrome, or retirement can be triggers. Volunteering can be a good tonic to loneliness. Do get in touch, or join us for our next edition to hear more about how volunteering makes a difference to so many lives.

## Still making a difference, 13 years on from his first visit!

**Tim Culling** first visited Swindon Therapy Centre for Multiple Sclerosis (STC) in 2004 as one of two charities for which he was hosting a Zurich Cares 'Seeing is Believing' visit for colleagues from Swindon. Tim says 'The second I set foot in the Centre that day, I knew there was something incredibly special about this wonderful charity.

I could feel that here was a place where people whose condition must often have seemed hopeless could find **hope**. Where they genuinely seemed to share a **belief** that, through self-help and the community of people coming together to form the Centre, there was hope of a better quality of life than they'd otherwise have.

Multiple Sclerosis is a lifelong, incurable neurological condition. Imagine feeling as though you are being stung by a thousand jellyfish, in the same place and at the same time. Imagine feeling extreme fatigue, not even being able to stand up sometimes, at some stage during each and every day. Finding that you can't walk in a straight line anymore. Hearing people say "but you look so good" almost every day – when you feel the complete opposite. **Losing belief** that there can be any kind of quality of life. Feeling isolated and alone because of your MS. **Losing hope**.

These are just a few of the answers I've heard from my friends at the Centre when I've asked them to tell me what it's like to have MS. And yet – despite having to live with a condition that literally turns your life inside out, everyone I know at STC is just so positive and such an inspiration.

I visited STC many times over the years, and I was able to get to know the staff and members quite well. In 2014, I was invited to join the Board, becoming Chair in 2015. I did my best to balance a trustee role with the job I was doing at Zurich at the time, as Head of Customer Care for Global Life which involved a fair bit of travelling – and meant I often needed to be a 'virtual' Chairman for the Centre.

Then I retired. In November 2016, the chance came to 'toddle off and relax' (not my words – those of a couple of wise friends I'd worked with for most of my 34 years at Zurich in my leaving card). Contrary to what they led me to believe the 'sunny uplands' would be like, I don't think I've ever been busier since doing that toddling! But a great kind of busy. I loved my career at Zurich (well, mostly!) and I thought it would be very hard to follow.

Being able to get closer to a cause that means a lot to me is the most amazing feeling and I almost feel as if the volunteering I do with STC (and two or three other not-for-profit organisations) have become my second career!

At STC, we're expanding what we do, thanks to a five-year grant from the Big Lottery. We've acquired the freehold of the building in which we previously rented just the ground floor of the two it contains.

When we completed our purchase, we ran an eight-month project to refurbish and remodel the entire interior of the Centre. The grant is also helping us to expand the range and reach of the support we provide, not only to people with MS, but to an extensive range of other neurological conditions.

We're building relationships with many 'stakeholders' who we think can help us deliver what we want to do for the people who depend on us. These include the neurology team at the Great Western Hospital, our two local MPs, local businesses, other charities, Oxford Brookes University (whose faculty for training nurses is housed in the Joel Joffe Building about 500 metres down the road) and many more. I bumble around in these relationships, and am loving every minute!



Best of all though, aside from all the stuff we do in the background to move the charity forward, is that I now have a proper chance to spend time with our members. Getting to know them, finding out how we can better help them and trying to act on what they say. And being moved incredibly by people whose lives have been turned upside down by the diagnosis of an incurable and lifelong condition – but who are the most inspiring, happy, optimistic and caring people I've ever met.

Although I've retired from my business role at Zurich, I am still lucky enough to be able to continue as a 'retiree trustee' for ZCT (it'll be ten years in November since I attended my first Trustee meeting) and so I stay in touch with all that ZCT are achieving.

It was ZCT that gave me the chance to get to know STC. At the Centre, we remain proud to call them one of our key and regular donors and the £10,000 per year 'Local Partnership Grant' that we receive is just an amazing support. But even bigger than that are the huge numbers of hours of volunteer time that Zurich people give to us; and the hope and belief this brings to our members. The same sort of hope and belief I felt on the first day I visited in 2004."

**Thank you to Tim and to all our wonderful Evolvees for sharing their volunteering in retirement stories. Do get in contact with Wendy Martin at [wendy.martin@zct.org.uk](mailto:wendy.martin@zct.org.uk) if you too would like to start evolving.**