



Welcome to the Spring 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...

After what we hope was a peaceful first few months of the year, Spring is now here with its longer evenings – hurrah!

As we chart our course further into 2017, if you are contemplating taking up a new hobby or learning a new skill, volunteering can be a good vessel in which to set sail to achieve these goals. Along what could be quite an exciting journey, you may meet new people, visit new places and map new plans for the future. The Evolving programme is one way Zurich Community Trust (ZCT) can help you to embark upon your new route to make a difference locally as well as to your retired life.

Talking with our Evolvers, it's clear that time at Zurich has been well spent honing skills many of us take for granted. Day to day tasks involving relationship building, PC use, data, communications, presentation, delegation, people management, selling etc, when coupled with life experiences, mean our people are well equipped to go forth and add value to the lives of people in need through voluntary organisations.

Finding the time to set up a volunteering opportunity can sometimes seem like a barrier to getting it done, especially with work pressures. However, this is where Zurich Community Trust (ZCT)'s Evolving programme comes to the fore.

After a chat to find out more about you, including your interests, preferences, skills, and availability, we can find an opportunity near to you that we hope is tailor-made for your needs.

What's more, with 40% of mature people in the UK engaging in voluntary work, Zurich knows how rewarding a fulfilling retirement should be.

That's why the updated 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.

Interested in learning more about Evolving, but your retirement isn't on the horizon for a while yet? Drop me a line and register your interest anyway, then when the time feels right, I hope we'll be able to work together to plan that journey into a new and exciting world after Zurich.

Read on to hear about how a few of our current Evolvees are embracing volunteering as part of their life as a retiree.

I'd love to hear from you. Call me on 07799 656812 or simply drop me a line at wendy.martin@zct.org.uk



Wendy Martin
Evolving Programme Manager, ZCT

Re-Storing much needed support in Swindon

Liz McIntosh retired last April having worked for Zurich for 27 years, most recently on the Switchboard, in Swindon.

'I never imagined I'd be so busy in retirement!' Fitting in exercise classes, seeing friends and visiting her granddaughters in Bristol, Liz also volunteers on Thursday afternoons at Restore; the sister charity project of Swindon Foodbank. The charity aims to help both volunteers and customers by providing a great service and a safe place to work and gain skills. They offer a very low-priced charity shop selling furniture, clothes, toys and books that have been donated. Liz is a vital asset to the charity as not only does she lend a hand to do pretty much anything that needs doing; but she also mentors and reassures vulnerable volunteers as they come to the store and cafe to gain work experience. A grant from Zurich Cares helped set the Restore project up, but they need to work hard generating an income from the cafe and store to cover their running cost, in order to stay afloat. The cafe provides refuge to lonely clients who drop by for coffee or a simple meal, and to see a friendly face.

Russ from Restore says 'I just wanted to say how much difference Liz is making to the team and their efforts with clients and other volunteers in need of some support. We are delighted with her contribution and thank you so much for pointing her in our direction'



'We all have basic core skills to offer'



Having left Zurich last April, after 31 years, Karen Thomas had already started business mentoring Jeni, CEO at Swindon's Mediation Plus before she left Zurich. With much progress to be made, Karen continued building the relationship over the summer, lending invaluable support to the part-charity, part-social enterprise who were to move to cheaper premises, in order to save tight funds.

Karen explains 'At Zurich, we are used to floor moves, but the organisation had been in their previous 'home' for many years and were about to lose parking!' With much negativity in the air, Karen set to work, looking at the floorplan, ensuring that staff were kept informed of the plan, reducing friction by conducting tours of the new set-up, and consulting with staff over what they believed would and wouldn't work. Going from lots of little private offices to open plan was always going to be a challenge, but Karen reassured the staff that with office etiquette (not shouting across the office, but visiting people at their desk etc) normal service could soon resume.

Karen says 'at the beginning when I started mentoring, I did ask myself 'what have I got to offer?'. But I soon realised that I didn't necessarily need specific knowledge, just basic core skills; listening and talking. There is always something someone can benefit from. I understand that our experiences are valid elsewhere and can add value, and I just had to have confidence in my own skills and abilities. It's been good to meet people with different backgrounds, and to understand how different it is in smaller organisations; for example, the number of Os talked about! Smaller organisations count every pound, the scales are so different.

Using her wealth of business skills, to both mentor the CEO and support people through change management, Karen says 'I've definitely enjoyed it'

Retirement has proved to be very busy, but in addition to volunteering, Karen has been able to pursue her bird-watching interests with a trip to Suffolk and a holiday to Australia to visit family.

Thank you for making a change Karen!

Putting engineering skills on the (RE)MAP

The many volunteering activities of avid Evolvee John Graham, ex Senior Engineer in Technical Standards, Birmingham, previously featured in our Winter 2016 newsletter. His great work with REMAP – who design and make aids to help people with disabilities, has come to the attention of the local newspaper the Shropshire Star. John says 'I made this 'mock up' washing machine for DogAid so that they could use it as a demonstrator at talks to show how they can train dogs to assist people with everyday tasks'



Indy the labrador shows owner Joanne Deakin, John Graham from REMAP and Sandra Fraser from Dog Aid how it can load the washing

Collapsible machine trains clever canines to help disabled owners

It might look like a simple washing machine, but this white box is making a huge difference to dogs and the people they help.

REMAP, based in Shropshire, designed and made a collapsible washing machine for Dog Aid, which trains dogs to help clients with special needs.

Now, the finished product is travelling round on demonstrations to showcase what the clever canines can do.

Steve Bloor, Shropshire REMAP project secretary, said: "Dog Aid approached REMAP to manufacture the lightweight collapsible washing machine to use for

Report by Sophie Madden
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demonstrations and displays to enable it to promote its services.

"The charity has trainers to train dogs to assist disabled folks in a huge variety of tasks. One task is to load and unload a washing machine, a huge help to her owner.

"Like any charity, cash is vital as is publicity and as a result the charity runs demonstrations to clients and potential funders. To demonstrate on a washing machine is impossible – as you know if you've

ever lifted a machine. John Graham, Shropshire REMAP's chairman, worked closely with Dog Aid's Sandra Fraser to make the device.

"We made it and it seemed so unique that the idea would interest the community and encourage both our charities' profile and show that engineers can help the disabled.

"Like all charities, money is vital to allow them to build and develop, and this device should assist in doing this."

For more information or to discuss getting involved with the charities, call Steve Bloor on 07980 586617.

Looking for a well-being boost for 2017?

As we emerge from Winter, the recent months can be tricky for many people; contending with low sunlight levels, fewer hours of daylight to get out and about, cold, damp weather, and a long stretch to go until the Summer something to look forward to.

Many people give to charitable organisations throughout the year, but giving one's time has positive mental and even physical health benefits. A 2013 study by United Health found that 94% of people who volunteered in the 12 months prior to the study, said that doing so improved their mood. In addition, 76% said it made them feel healthier. A study published in the June 2013 issue of Psychology and Aging found that those who had volunteered at least 200 hours over a period of a year were less likely to develop hypertension than non-volunteers.

Getting out and about also helps. Take a walk in the park. Sit by the water. Get a little fresh air. Being out in nature has some science-backed benefits. Whilst it's sometimes easy to resist this recommendation because we might not consider ourselves 'outdoorsy', or don't believe we have the time, we can feel happier once we've made the effort and done it. One study published in the March 2012 issue of the Journal of Affective Disorders found that people with major depressive disorder showed improvement in mood and short-term memory after taking a walk alone outside. Another study found that participants who took walks in the forest had better moods and lower heart rates than those who walked in urban areas.

So, pull your coat on, step outside, or get in touch and we'll find a rewarding opportunity to help lift your spirits!

If I don't speak with you, or hear from you, in the meantime, enjoy Spring and I look forward to sharing more good stories with you in our Summer/Autumn 2017 edition of evolving!

Bus-man's holiday for Birmingham's Dawn

Dawn Weale's work as Secretary for Birmingham's Charity Committee, in addition to numerous Challenges, meant volunteering in retirement would come as no surprise. What did come as a shock, says Dawn, is that she thought she'd have loads of free time, but she's always busy! Already familiar with the great work of Queen Alexandra College, who offer courses to young people (16-25) with disabilities, Dawn fancied helping out at their Umberslade Nurseries 'It's such a lovely place where students come for preparation for life skills. They plant, care for and harvest vegetables grown from seed and learn skills that they can't practise in a classroom. The students also assist with the events and groups held at the Nurseries'. Along with helping out in the Potting Shed tea room and gift shop, Dawn's main role would be to plan and run the Over 55's group. 'Patients from a local hospital join in and plant hanging baskets or paint and decorate bird boxes. I've met some really lovely and interesting people. They take home their creations as a reminder of a great afternoon'



Here's a photo of Dawn's favourite day so far. 'My Over 55's were joined by a couple of gentlemen from the Dementia Group. They had had such a good time at their group the previous day they wanted to come along to this group as well. They were absolutely delightful, enjoyed themselves so much and we had a good old sing song with our coffee and cake after our crafting. You can see from the photo they were very creative too! The great thing about the Dementia and Over 55's groups is that they are funded by a Zurich Cares grant, agreed by the Birmingham Charity Committee. Thank you, it has made a massive difference to so many people!

As a total contrast, another wonderful day was the Forest School taster session. Dawn made pizza dough with a former QAC student who comes along to volunteer. 'The children helped create some very tasty pizzas which were cooked in the earth oven, where the children also toasted marshmallows after their exciting activities. It was wonderful to see the children playing so happily with sticks and leaves, clearly having a great time'. 'Here's Buggingham Palace, created by a student group to give a safe haven to some of our bug friends.



Summing up, Dawn says 'I recall saying to Wendy, a couple of years ago when discussing ideas about volunteering and the various type of people needing support, 'I don't do old people', oh, how I've eaten my words! Also, whoever said retirement was boring and restful, was joking! I would highly recommend volunteering in retirement, it is a great experience that I am enjoying, and I really feel I'm giving something back. I am fortunate to have chosen such a great organisation to get involved with'.



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in
touch!