



Kerrie's volunteering story



Age: 42

Charity: The British Heart Foundation

Years volunteering: 10

Why do you volunteer?

I was born with congenital heart disease, so from the very beginning, my heart story was different. At just five months old, I underwent my first open-heart surgery at The Royal Brompton Hospital in Chelsea, London. That hospital quickly became more than a medical facility. It became a second home to my family, a place filled with hope, healing, and resilience. Over the years, I've had seven open-heart surgeries, and each time, the hospital and its staff were there to carry me through.

Volunteering became my way of giving back to the place that quite literally kept me alive. It's about honouring that journey and using my story to inspire and give hope to others who are navigating similar paths. It's also a way to remind others that even in the hardest times, there is still community, strength, and love, exactly what I've always felt through the support of the British Heart Foundation.

How did you get involved with the British Heart Foundation (BHF)?

It started small with just me, a JustGiving page, and a drive to do something meaningful. I began hosting fundraising events at home, and the response was humbling. Over time, the BHF reached out and invited me to become a Brand Ambassador. That support gave our grassroots efforts a bigger platform and access to resources, branding, and guidance that elevated our work.

It's a partnership that feels deeply personal. The BHF has had such a profound impact on my life. Being able to advocate for them and contribute to their mission is an honour I don't take lightly.

What sort of things do you do?

Our fundraising efforts are creative and community-led. I've formed a fundraising team for the BHF, and together we've hosted everything from beauty tombolas stocked with generous donations from beauty influencers to pop-up tea rooms at local ceramics fairs. One of our more unique events is a dragon boat race, which not only raises money but brings people together in a joyful, high-energy way. Each event is built around connection, fun, and awareness. It's a way of turning passion into real-world impact.

How do you feel when you finish a volunteering activity?

Exhausted, but in the best way. It's a full-on emotional and physical effort, but I'm always left with a deep sense of fulfilment. Seeing the donations come in, watching the community rally around a shared purpose, and knowing we're making a tangible difference brings a sense of real purpose.

What has volunteering taught you? Or changed about you?

It's taught me that impact doesn't always come from grand gestures. Sometimes, it's the small, consistent efforts that change lives. I've learned that giving your time, your story, or your energy can be just as valuable as donating money.

Volunteering has also reshaped my day-to-day thinking. I wake up and go to sleep wondering how I can do more, reach more people, and build more awareness for the cause. Since 2023, my team has raised over £20,000, and it's only motivated me to keep going.

Does it change how you look at other parts of your life?

Absolutely. It gives everything more perspective. Volunteering reminds me of what truly matters: connection, community, and compassion. If I could volunteer full-time, I would. It's one of the few things that truly lights me up.

How often do you volunteer?

We aim to host an event every few months, often in partnership with a local business that generously offers space or support. The local community has been incredible. People really do show up when you're doing something with heart.

Has it impacted your health in a positive way?

Mentally, it's been a huge boost. Living with heart disease can be incredibly isolating at times, but volunteering has created a space where I feel understood, valued, and empowered. Physically, it motivates me to stay active, engaged, and positive.

The best part is knowing that you're part of something bigger. Something that can actually change lives. It's also therapeutic. It brings me joy, purpose, and a reason to keep pushing forward.

Have you made friends through volunteering?

Yes, although many of my volunteers are already close friends and family. Each of them is personally invested in the BHF with their own reasons and heart stories. That shared commitment has only deepened our bond, and it's such a gift to spend more meaningful time together in this way.

Do you get to see the impact of your volunteer work?

I see the impact every single day, starting with my own health journey. The BHF's research has helped save my life seven times. Their information, support, and resources have empowered me to live with more confidence and clarity.

I also see it in others, in the stories people share at our events, in the donations from people who've lost loved ones or are fighting their own battles. Sometimes the most powerful moment is a quiet conversation with a stranger who says, "I'm here because my dad had heart disease too." Those connections are everything.

What's the most rewarding part of volunteering?

Knowing that I'm turning something that was once a painful part of my life into a powerful, hopeful one. Helping someone else feel less alone, or funding research that may save another child like me, is the most rewarding feeling.

The most surprising part of volunteering?

The conversations. People are so willing to open up and share their heart stories when you give them the space. It's surprising how connected we all really are and how often heart disease touches lives in ways you'd never expect.

What would you say to someone considering volunteering?

Go for it. You don't need experience or a huge platform, just a willingness to help. Whether you raise £10 or £10,000, your time and energy matter. You'll meet incredible people, make real change, and likely discover something new about yourself in the process.

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