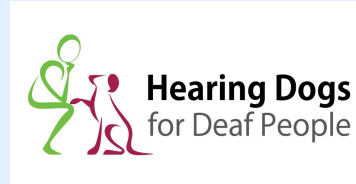




Sue's volunteering story



Age: 57

Charity: Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

Years volunteering: 16

Why do you volunteer?

To give the charity something back. I've been lucky enough to be partnered with two hearing dogs now and they have changed my life for the better. My husband Iain also volunteers. We do talks together.

How did you get involved with Hearing Dogs for Deaf People?

I heard about Hearing Dogs when I was little. We lived not too far away from the first centre being opened. I was in my 30s when I read about how a hearing dog could help a deaf person and thought that one of these amazing dogs could make my life easier. Little did I realise how much easier!

What sort of things do you do?

Over the years we've done bucket collections, dog walks, fetes, meeting celebrities. I was also involved in the charity's BBC Lifeline TV appeal. Now, Iain and I mainly do presentations.

How do you feel when you finish a volunteering activity?

Amazing! People love to hear the story of how my hearing dog Pippa, and my previous dog, Jas, have helped me (as well as some funny stories from over the years!).

Volunteering is a big part of my life. It's very important for us to give back to this amazing charity.

Have you noticed any physical benefits?

Yes, lots of physical benefits. Having a hearing dog keeps me active and has lowered my tinnitus levels.

Has it impacted your mental health in a positive way?

Yes. In between dogs and during Covid, I was depressed. I had toothache that disappeared completely when I got Pippa, and the dentist said it was stress related.

Volunteering gets me out, meeting lots of lovely people, and gives a real purpose to my life.

Your dog becomes your best friend, which leads on to meeting new people and engaging in conversations with them – something that isn't always easy with hearing loss.

Have you made friends through volunteering?

I've met so many people through volunteering. We keep in touch with a lot of fellow volunteers and help each other out if we have any issues.

Do you get to see the impact of your volunteer work? If so, what does this look like?

The impact we see is that the money we raise helps more people to get a life-changing hearing dog.

What's the most rewarding part of volunteering?

I had a very rewarding moment when we went to a school. There was a teenager there who didn't like dogs. After a while, he came over to my hearing dog Jas and stroked her. He was the last person to leave the room and the experience transformed him. I'm friends with a teacher at the school, and even now we still talk about how amazing it was that he overcame his worry and stroked Jas.

The most surprising part of volunteering?

You never know who you're going to meet next. We've visited playschools to probus clubs and everything in between.

What would you say to someone considering volunteering?

It's one of the most rewarding things you can do to give back, meet people, have fun, and know you're doing some good in life at the same time.

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