Cumbria CVS

VOLUNTEER

CASE STUDY

St John Ambulance

JEAN MELVILLE

ST JOHN AMBULANCE CADETS

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ST JOHN AMBULANCE CADETS YOUTH HELPER

Jean Melville is a volunteer youth helper for St John Ambulance Cadets' group in Whitehaven. Jean volunteers each week to support the youth leaders to deliver the group which gives young people the opportunity to learn life saving first aid skills, improve their confidence and wellbeing, develop strong communication skills, and make a difference in the local community.

Jean, who has been going through a difficult bereavement after the sudden loss of her husband last year, and after recently retiring from a career in nursing, decided to give volunteering a try as she felt it would help her to cope better if she was able to do something where she was being helpful to others.

"I just thought I've got all this time on my hands and I have got to fill it somehow otherwise what is life all about, I just thought there has got to be more to life than sitting in these four walls on my own, I mean I have got friends and they have given me a lot of kind support but I just want to feel useful and I just wanted to feel like I was of some value and I was giving something that was appreciated and they do make me feel like that."

Jean has been volunteering with the Cadets for a few weeks and is really enjoying her role where she feels very welcomed by all the other volunteers and feels that she is making a difference to the young people who attend.

"So far I am just finding my way I go and support the youth leaders. I just join in and help the cadets as much as I can, I give them encouragement and support and have fun with them because it's not all serious. I am trying to develop bonds with the cadets and be there if they have any problems."

INSPIRING

Jean has been very inspired by the motivation and dedication of the young people attending cadets.

"I can't begin to explain the impact that these young people have had on me even the younger ones who attend as they are so motivated and dedicated and with a long term plan, a lot of those who are doing it they want to go on to be paramedics the motivation and inspiration I get from them is incredible."

As a volunteer for St John Ambulance Jean has been offered the opportunity to expand her volunteer experience by becoming a community first aider. Jean is really looking forward to completing her community first aid training so she can offer hands on first aid at community events but also so she can be more knowledgeable in her role supporting the cadets.

"When I am fully fledged in community first aid I can't think of anything better than offering help when it is needed. I spent my whole life looking after people and I don't want to just stop."

CHALLENGING

Volunteering has made a big difference to Jean at a very difficult time in her life.

"It's really nice they make me feel valued and I think that's made a big difference in my coping strategy that I can be of some worth to somebody. It has enriched my life tenfold It's opened up a whole different part of life and introduced me to a wider group of people with different interests, different backgrounds it has given me a way to fill my time and build my brain as well because I've been learning all my life and I don't think it should stop when you retire. It has completely enriched my life."

Jean would give the following advice to others thinking of volunteering:

FULFILLING

"Do it because what have you got to lose, I mean you can try it, if you don't like it there's always something else out there that you can do. It's so satisfying It gives you a real sense of purpose well, it's given me a real sense of purpose there's something out there for everybody."