



Thank you for taking time to answer the feature questions below.



For the readers; please introduce yourself with a short biography:

Hi, I'm Sue Greene and I coordinate the Give, Gain and Grow volunteers in Gosport. I am employed by Gosport Voluntary Action and have been doing this for 5 years and I love my job! I have worked in the Voluntary Sector most of my working life and I like the positive and innovative atmosphere and the creative people I meet through my work. Despite the severe funding

cuts, the voluntary sector is still striving to do its best for the local community and there are still so many volunteers who tackle hard challenges and manage to effect great changes for the benefit of others. I try to support volunteers with mental health issues and other personal challenges, to gain confidence and achieve some of their ambitions.

Would you please share how and why you got involved in mental health?

I worked for a long time with people with learning disabilities and then, when my own children were diagnosed with disabilities, I found I needed a break and to do something different. For 10 years I worked in a Volunteer Centre and recruited and placed volunteers in East Hampshire. Some of those volunteers had mental health or physical challenges and it was often much harder to place them in suitable volunteering opportunities. Having had a short experience of mental ill health myself, I was delighted to be offered a chance to work in a more specialist capacity and discover how best to help people re-gain their skills and confidence.

How do you view the journey of recovery?

I had a short, but debilitating 'breakdown' during a time of great stress in my own family life, and my recovery was about firstly taking time off to rest, then taking small steps to recover my energy and zest for life.

Please tell us a bit more about Give, Gain and Grow and your journey in setting it up?

Give, Gain and Grow works by having small groups of people volunteering together in a really wide variety of volunteering roles. This morning we helped at a fundraising coffee morning and raised £70 for Help for Heroes for example. We also have a gardening project at Grange Farm, are working with Splodge Design and the Portsmouth Dockyard to help publicise the opening of the boat called M33 in August and we have a weekly craft group.



What are the different 'spin-off's' that have been created from Give, Grain and Grow?

Each year we hold a World Mental Health Day event in Gosport Discovery Centre which we have planned and delivered jointly with the Good Mental Health Cooperative. We have also recently had Human Library training which was run by the GMHC and I hope we can now get involved with Human Library events this year. I really enjoyed a Litter Bug project we helped with last summer when we were joint winners in a National prize for assisting in keeping our environment clean.

Do you have any current/upcoming events/meetings?

We meet every Wednesday afternoon in Gosport and on Thursday afternoons at Grange Farm. The craft group is on Friday mornings.

Do you have any 'coping strategies' that you use on a daily basis or in your life at all?

For me, I value being able to work part time and in an environment where everyone is determined to maximise the use of limited resources for the benefit of as many people as possible. I learn so much at work from the people I meet and by listening to their struggles and successes.

May I ask what are your personal beliefs surrounding the explanation of mental health experiences?

I try not to judge people and to accept everyone's explanation as being true for them. If we do that, I believe we can help people to take those small steps to recovery and I truly believe that volunteering can play a big role in that recovery. If we think we know how people are thinking or feeling and don't really listen, then it's harder for them to feel supported and to take on new challenges.

What does the future hold for you?

I hope to help my children who are now young adults, to make their own way in life with the challenges they both have to deal with. I hope for me, that I can continue to doing job while the funds are in place, and to see the Give, Gain and Grow volunteers continue to flourish!

Favourite Quote?

'When your values are clear to you, making decisions becomes easier.'

- Roy E. Disney