



Royal Star & Garter

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Volunteers' Week: 'I like being with residents and meeting new people' at Royal Star & Garter

Volunteers at Royal Star & Garter have spoken about the joy they get from helping others.

Each of the charity's four Homes have volunteers come in to help staff provide support and wellbeing to residents, and there are others that give up their time to chat to veterans on the Telephone Friendship Service (TFS).

The volunteers were speaking ahead of Volunteers' Week, which is running from 1-7 June.

Royal Star & Garter is a charity which provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their families living with disability or dementia, from Homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe and Worthing. It also runs services reaching out into the community including Day Care, Lunch Club and the national TFS.



Penny in the Royal Star & Garter garden in Surbiton, and with RAF veteran Michael

Among the volunteers is green-fingered Penny, who tends to the outdoor spaces in Surbiton and leads gardening activities. Penny has volunteered for many charities and currently splits her time between the hospice which cared for her late husband and Royal Star & Garter. Penny said, "My father was a resident here and died in 2016. I thought the Home was wonderful. They took amazing care of Dad. He enjoyed it here and I loved coming to visit. After he died, I always said I'd come back, and now I have."

Penny believes the role of volunteers is important in the Homes. "I think residents enjoy having somebody different to talk to. Volunteers are a wonderful way to bring in the outside world, to show that there are people who care and who genuinely want to do it. If I were a paid gardener, I'd work my hours and go home. I feel I give



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more because I've chosen to be here. And I think all volunteers have that in their hearts."

Jules Bendell has been volunteering at Royal Star & Garter in High Wycombe since it opened in 2019. The Home has the Bendell Floor named after her husband Bugs, who was an RAF pilot and resident at Royal Star & Garter in Surbiton. She said: "I decided to be a volunteer long before I knew the Home would bear Bugs' name, because I saw the good work the volunteers were doing when he was being cared for at Surbiton."



Jules dancing with a resident during a concert at Royal Star & Garter in High Wycombe



Volunteer Linda with resident John, who served in the Army for 24 years, at Care for Veterans

Linda Cross has volunteered at Care for Veterans – a Royal Star & Garter Home for 10 years, after hearing about its work during a talk she was attending. She said: "I used to work in Adult Social Care and part of my work involved going into care homes from time-to-time. After hearing about Care for Veterans it felt like something clicked so I went to have a look. I found it was a nice environment and really friendly and I thought it would be good

to be part of."

Linda keeps residents company in the Home's Wellbeing Hub and added: "I like having the opportunity to give part of myself. I like being with residents and meeting new people. I'm interested in their lives and what they have done."

In Solihull, Romayne Instone found volunteering as a Lunch Club Host helped with her grief following the loss of husband Paul, who was a resident at the Home for two years before his death in 2022. Lunch Club is one of the Royal Star & Garter services for those living in its community, helping tackle loneliness and isolation over a tasty, nutritious meal and friendly chats. Romayne said: "The food is really good, and I like meeting people



Lunch Club Host Romayne at Royal Star & Garter in Solihull



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and spending time with them. I'm a sociable person and I'm happy talking to anyone. So when someone new joins I make sure to chat to them, make them feel comfortable and make them realise there is nothing to worry about."

Speaking about the loss of her husband, she said: "Lunch Club has helped me grieve. I don't know how long grief goes on for, but I've found coming back to the Home, and being with people who knew and loved Paul, helps me greatly. I always look forward to it."



Roohi is a volunteer phone buddy with Royal Star & Garter's Telephone Friendship Service

Roohi is a TFS volunteer. She is a trained pharmacist who has worked in the NHS, private sector, as a university lecturer and at the Ministry of Defence as a civilian leading the tri-service and pharmacy training. She said: "The role of a TFS Friend appealed to me on many levels. Given my links to the MoD, I thought it might be nice to speak to a veteran. I would be fascinated to know about their military history and hopefully they might be interested to know about mine."

She added: "I've volunteered throughout my life, for no other reason than an ingrained belief in me that if you are able to, and have capacity, you should try and volunteer for a noble cause. From a more selfish point, it makes me feel better about myself."

Volunteers' Week is an annual UK-wide campaign held to celebrate and recognise the contributions of volunteers.

Shirley Hall is Director of Care & Wellbeing at Royal Star & Garter. She said: "Volunteers play a vital role in enriching the lives of our residents. From stimulating activities like scrabble and music to meaningful one-to-one conversations, they help foster wellbeing, independence, and a sense of purpose. The positive impact they have on residents' emotional and social health cannot be overstated."

To find out more about volunteering at Royal Star & Garter go to:

<https://starandgarter.org/how-you-can-help/volunteer-for-us/>



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For more information about TFS, including becoming a phone buddy, go to:
<https://starandgarter.org/telephone-friendship/>

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About Royal Star & Garter

Founded in 1916, Royal Star & Garter provides care, support and friendship for veterans and their families so that they can live well. The charity delivers nursing and dementia care through Homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe, and now in Worthing, having recently merged with the military charity Care for Veterans. It also offers a range of services reaching into the community, including Lunch Clubs, Day Care and a national Telephone Friendship Service.

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