

What being a Trustee of the Olive Tree Meant to Me (1)

The notice to recruit trustees arrived through my door. My eldest son was going to be away for a year and I had thought in passing about giving something to my local community but was not sure what. I had no corporate skills and had always worked with children and as a carer for a lady with MS. However, this appeal seemed to be directed right at me, it involved a cause that was close to my heart (both parents had died from cancer) and so I bravely made the phone call.

Being a trustee has certainly changed my life. I have achieved things I didn't even know that I wanted to do! I became secretary for 3 years without having had any previous experience. The opportunity came up, I was fully supported by my fellow trustees and the position reflected my strengths. There were no hard and fast rules and I gave what I could. There are no doubts that I also gained, growing in confidence, having an opinion that was listened to, learnt new skills and received commendations for my efforts.

Whilst being a trustee, two experiences come to mind which were way out of my comfort zone. One was a walk up Mount Snowdon, travelling there in a mini bus with 11 strangers. It was to raise funds for the Olive Tree which was good. The bonus was awesome. I achieved it, made some new friends and literally felt on top of the world!

I also met my all time favourite radio presenter. Marilyn and I were invited to Radio Surrey and Sussex studios to talk about the Olive Tree. And I spoke on the radio! They say it is never a good idea to meet your heroes but I would not have missed this for anything.

There are so many positive reasons for becoming a trustee. Everyone involved is there because they care. Bringing to the role past experiences is good and can contribute greatly to the charity. Personally, the sense of achievement, fulfillment and acquisition of new skills cannot be underestimated. It's a win win situation!

What being a Trustee of the Olive Tree Meant to Me (2)

I chose to become a Trustee for the Olive Tree after working with them as a volunteer coach for women returning to work after cancer. I liked the professional disciplines that were used to supervise those of us that work as coaches and counsellors with cancer patients and their families plus I was aware that the organisation was in a period of growth and change.

With my organisational development background as an HR Director and as a management consultant in change management combined with my therapeutic skills with cancer patients I wanted to be a part of the Olive Tree's future.

Looking at the Trustee Application Form, I see responsibilities like duty of care, avoid any personal conflicts of interest, control the management and administration, delivering

services, fostering relationships, previous experience of working in health/working in a charitable environment plus using personal skills and experience. To illustrate what this means: typically, we meet for 3 hours once a month as a Trustee Committee. Recently, we discussed and signed up to a strategy paper that I co- produced to agree the direction of our CIO charityto grow or to stay the same. The Trustees all agreed to grow, and in order to do that we need to move on in the way we approach our fundraising, the space we require, our relationships and the services we provide plus look at the staffing of the centre as we expand our reach. As part of the Trustee role we work in close partnership with Marilyn Drury, our Centre Manager to ensure all operational policies and processes are effective....so day to day decision making combined with future planning.

If you are interested in discussing and then applying to join us as a Trustee, please call me for an informal chat or email me on ann@ann-edwards.co.uk or 07815883152. Experience in charitable fundraising would be particularly useful at this time or if you are looking for management development outside of your corporate role in a growing local business we would like to hear from you as well.