



June 2021

Recovery College Newsletter

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Update from our Lead Volunteer Mentor

Sue Ralph - MBE

Hello everyone,

May I firstly thank you for taking time out of your busy day to read my words of thanks especially as I would like to express gratitude to our truly wonderful volunteers here at The Recovery College. As lead volunteer mentor I cannot express how honoured I am to participate alongside all of you with your individual and collective contributions. I hope you realise what a vital role you all play, and have played, especially during the Pandemic which has been an exceptionally difficult year for many people including our students.

I want to assure you all how very much you are valued, soldiering on keeping the flag of recovery college going throughout, from co-designing, co-production, co-facilitating and facilitating so, along with myself our Principal & all our staff thank you all for your dedicated volunteering your time along with your support of myself, each other and in kindness to our wonderful students.

I would personally like to thank Gail Parry from our Trust for giving me the opportunity almost 17 years ago now, I had been ill for some time and felt unable to

leave the house to visit family, GP's, shop to literally make any kind of connections, however through meeting Gail and her encouragement I was asked as someone who had used services, as well as being a carer who used the Trust services, if I would I like to participate in some focus and decision making groups. All of these led to doors opening for Acute Care Forum and various Boards where we were given a title of "experts by experience".

I worked on the document for Volunteers and went on to become a volunteer not only in our Hospitals, but again in various strategic decision making groups, all for the good of people who use services.

Another thank you goes, of course, to Kerry Wilkes our Principal & Dr Anne Crawford-Docherty, who has now moved on to pastures new, both for their morale boosting, inspirational encouragement, support and belief in that I could do the new role of Lead Volunteer Mentor, I give my thanks.

This month's newsletter is dedicated not only to our wonderful volunteers but also to our "Friends of the Recovery College" a small group of students who help co-produce, co-facilitate and represent our student body on various groups within the college.

So I wish you all well, take care and remain safe -

Sue Ralph - MBE

Lead volunteer Mentor



Sue Ralph
Lead Volunteer/Mentor

Sue's volunteer poem

Validated, Valued and Valiant
 Outstandingly, Open minded
 and open hearted
 Listening, lovely and loyal
 Unbelievable, understanding
 and uplifting
 Neighbourly, natural and neutral
 Thoughtful, trusting and truthful
 Empathetic, effective and
 efficient
 Exciting, emerging and essential
 Respectful, responsible and
 reliable
 Supportive, sociable and special

★ FACT

Volunteering can help improve your mental health by giving you feelings of gratitude for what you have in your own life.

★ FACT

Volunteering can lead to job opportunities that you never would have heard about otherwise. It will introduce you to new people, who will look at you in a positive light by knowing you're taking part in a volunteering project or programme.

Meet Jen Farquharson - Friend Of Recovery College



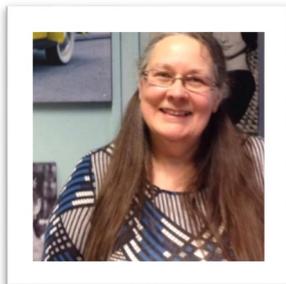
Recovery college has been life changing for me and I am just so grateful that I can give back to the college now, after everything that they have done in helping me with my recovery. I started at Recovery college last year just before the pandemic came into full swing. I remember walking into the building and feeling such warmth off all the members of staff I had come into contact with as well as the incredible energy felt within the college, I knew this was going to be a place that would really help me deal with some of my struggling issues at the time and I wasn't wrong.

I was really upset when I found out that they were no longer able to do physical courses and I thought this would mean no college, I was wrong!

I think the pandemic has actually enabled the college to grow and build an even stronger family. Sometimes they say **when life gives you lemons, make lemonade** and this is exactly what I believe the college have done. Zoom has been an amazing platform that has enabled new connections, more courses to be able to take place and to help students with their recovery. The moment I found out about recovery college I knew this was a place I would not only be able to help myself, but others too. I was so happy when an opportunity became available for me to do so. I really enjoy co-facilitating as well as helping out behind the scenes with the marketing. A lot of people don't realize how hard the college works behind back scenes to make sure us as students get the most out of our time there. I am really proud to be a friend of the college because not only has it helped to boost my confidence and meet some wonderful people but it has also enabled me to share my skill set and bring my positive light to such a beautiful and deserving place.

Jen. x

Meet Teresa Culverwell - Friend Of Recovery College



I happened to be at a Hoarding support group in Sandwell a year ago and someone kept talking about "Recovery College". (Not everyone can talk about hoarding as an issue but I need to as I want things to move on in Sandwell, but more of that later). I discovered the College was based at Quayside so I wandered down and asked to speak to someone. Yay, I got onto the waiting list due to being a carer. My husband and I look after our younger son who is severely disabled which has been stressful a lot of the time and has resulted in me leaving my employment 3 times, either to sort out our disabled son's health and social care issues or to sort myself out.

Since this time I have attended several courses on zoom including things to do with mental health and wellbeing such as Exploring, and Managing Your Emotions, and more arts-based courses such as Journaling for Recovery and Creative Writing which help me relax and help with my mental wellbeing.

The Recovery College have a good way of working with students, totally different to when I was at school where we were told off for not doing things a particular way. With the Recovery College it's ok to be you and both staff and students help you along the way!

I started off taking a few courses. I was then asked to help on an upcycling course where I presented a rag wreath and a folded book. I then actually offered to sit in on and help out with their English course and I really enjoyed it! Everyone should do this course as I learned things I never knew, and it's helping with the Creative Writing course that I am currently doing as well. In fact, all the courses cross over in some way either in the way they are run or the information they provide – they all seem to interlink, like the roots and branches of a tree (which happens to be the College logo)!

Taking some of the courses has helped me in many ways - it has reduced my anxiety, given me opportunities to hear other people's stories, share my thoughts and helped to give me ideas as to my future direction such as should I do Art Therapy or help in other ways towards my new 'mission' of helping people like myself with hoarding issues.

I have sat on a few of the College Development Group meetings and the Marketing meetings. Staff and students work together to co-produce, an example of how everyone should work together. I thoroughly recommend the courses but also volunteering some of your time or simply helping out on the courses. You could also help by attending meetings to offer advice of what you personally want to see. I have grown even more from the experience of helping, and even running some of the course sessions I was interested in. But you are never alone – there is always someone there with you! What a great way to run a College! - Teresa Culverwell



Hope. Opportunity. Choice.

Meet Bal Singh - Volunteer



Hi, my names Bal and I would like to share my journey through the recovery college with you . I was working in my dream job with the Aviation service, which is run by the CAA, when in 2012 I was diagnosed with renal failure. From there my health went downhill which had other complication's , I was constantly in and out of hospital which had an effect on my career and at the time I was in a very dark place. I didn't know where to turn, my mental health was taking its toll and eventually in 2014, I eventually made a appointment to see my GP'S Practice manager. At this time my self-esteem was very low, she took notes for two hours (which looking back now I feel I was very lucky to be able to explain every issue to her of my personal health and my employment with civil service. I had to leave CAA service in 2015 as my health was more important and I was on various tablets for my heart, kidneys etc. At this time , early 2015, I didn't know where to turn to I had worked all my life firstly

for MG ROVER as a Quality test engineer until 2005 when the company collapsed . At the time was a huge blow to the West midlands but in June 2005, I was recruited by CAA Service after passing all the exams and checks to the highest level. Coming back to 2015 I had a meeting with Gwen Thompson who was the retention officer at SMBC, I bless her even to this day and thank her for signposting me to the recovery college.

I had never heard of recovery colleges before and I was anxious and didn't know what to expect. I joined the recovery college in September 2015 as a student and the approach from staff and other members of the recovery college was amazing calm and collective. The relaxed atmosphere was unbelievable . My mentor was Sue Ralph and the support she gave me at the college including the time she spent listening to me is priceless. It gave me hope, a vision and confidence which I had lost some time back. At the college I have uncovered skills I thought I had lost; found a new life of purpose and satisfaction; discovered a great group of supportive people from admin staff to manager, deputy managers and facilitators. With Sue's support I was soon facilitating Information and Guidance Sessions, introducing new students to the college. I have attended various courses to help with my own wellbeing and I have co-produced and co facilitated other courses. I am now very happy to be part of a team of men who are co-producing and co-facilitating a Men's Well Being course. The Recovery college has inspired me in my journey, and I now have the potential to help other students on their journeys. Most Importantly, being part of the recovery college has given me the confidence and hope to look expectantly to the future, wherever it may lead .

Bal Singh

★ FACT

The use of the verb 'to volunteer' was first recorded in 1755. It was derived from the noun 'volunteer' meaning "one who offers himself for military service", and came from the Middle French word volontaire.

What is a friend of the Recovery College?

Friends of RC is the step between being a student and a volunteer. There is a small level of commitment, usually to get involved in the co-production and/or delivery of a course that the student identifies and to a level that they feel comfortable with. It's a chance to get involved, to give something back, with the support of staff and volunteers at the college and a chance to put the feelers out and see if you enjoy it enough to take the next step and apply to be a formal volunteer (which is a bit more commitment).

FACT

- ★ *Amazingly, volunteering has shown in different studies to lower levels of depression.*
- ★ *It's estimated that 15.2 million people in the UK volunteer at least once a month. That is a lot of positivity passing around the world!*



Thank you

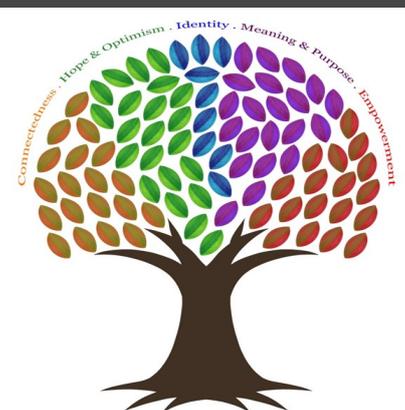
Volunteers'

Friends Of Recovery College

Your commitment and contribution as a volunteer really makes a difference to

Our organisation

THE RECOVERY COLLEGE



Hope . Opportunity . Choice

CONTACT US

www.therecoverycollege.co.uk

Email: Info@therecoverycollege.co.uk



Facebook



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Don't forget to join our Facebook [group](#)

*Volunteer facts referenced:
www.volunteeringjourneys.com

Newsletter designed by our Friend Of
Recovery College Jen Farquharson