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Meet one of our volunteers Terry for whom nothing is too much trouble

This week is Volunteers Week 2021 - the annual celebration of the contribution that millions of people across the UK make through volunteering. Volunteers give their time to every part of our charity - from fundraising to Day Therapy and from shops to our cafe in the hospice in Gravesend. Without the help of our volunteers we could not provide the support we do across Kent and Bexley.

As a charity we have never been more dependent on support from our volunteers than in the face of the current pandemic. 2020 was a year like no other and Terry Ludlow, one of our regular couriers, has stepped up to the

plate magnificently, upping his hours so that vital medical samples can be delivered to hospital, and ensuring donations of everything from food to flowers are collected from our corporate supporters. He explains why he believes his work for **ellenor** is as essential to his own wellbeing as it is the charity itself.

“If I couldn’t get out and about and keep busy during this crisis, I’d definitely have been crawling up the walls,” reflects Terry Ludlow. The energetic, self-effacing pensioner is well known in the Gravesend area for his community work, with us having benefitted from his help for over five years.

How did he come to be involved with our charity? “Various contacts had used **ellenor’s** services in the past – including a relative by marriage with motor neurone disease – so I knew just how good the charity is at helping people when they need it most. But I got involved in 2016 simply because a neighbour was helping on reception in the hospice and wondered if I’d be interested in helping, too. I always like to keep busy, so I went up with an open mind as to what sort of volunteering I might be able to do. It turns out my working background as a private-hire driver made couriership a natural fit for me – I knew where to go and how to get there! We get 45p mileage for every trip we make, but other than that it’s an entirely unpaid role that takes me to all sorts of places.”

Terry - who likens his trusty Vauxhall SUV to a tardis in terms of the amount of stuff it can hold - says his workload varies across the four days a week he helps here. A constant, though, is the taking of medical samples up to the Darent Valley Hospital. Aged seventy-seven - though seeming a decade younger - he himself falls into the category of vulnerable people advised to take extra care when the virus was at its peak, “I had to get out and help people, though. Understandably, when lockdown happened, our numbers of volunteers fell dramatically but I thought, ‘if I don’t keep going, it’s the patients who’ll be affected’ – and I couldn’t let that happen. Staff shortages then meant I was happy to take on five days a week rather than my usual four, which is what I’m back to now.”

Another regular job for Terry is collecting the takings from our Special Treats shop at Darent Valley Hospital and dropping them down to head office, and he also regularly picks up donations from many of our corporate supporters. “I’ve had everything in the back of the SUV from medical supplies to cakes – and flowers, we get lots and lots of flowers,” he says. “It’s brilliant that

nothing goes to waste: it's either used, sold in the shop or passed on to patients and staff."

Covid has made it so much harder these days to build up relationships with people, because we're all mindful of the importance of keeping our distance. Thanks to volunteers like our Terry, however, many of those relationships are solid already. "I went up to the **ellenor** Special Treats shop recently and our manager Sarah was desperate for some loose change for the till. I told her I was on my way up to Bluewater to pick up some donations from Marks & Spencer, and that I'd pop into Barclays to get some change for her. The staff there know me because of pick-ups I've done in the past, which meant they were happy to give me a substantial amount of change then and there, without me needing to pre-book collection. Having good relationships with people just makes things easier. And just being able to have a chat with people anyway makes life more enjoyable for all of us."

Our hospice isn't the only organisation to have benefitted from Terry's commitment to others. Every morning he gets up and litter picks for an hour or clears overgrown pathways in his neighbourhood "I need to have something to do, and jobs like litter-picking, together with my work for **ellenor**, keep me busy and motivated."

Little wonder that Terry was a recent recipient of a Gravesham Community Award in recognition of all he does. He has certainly long been a winner for our hospice charity and we couldn't be more grateful for his support! And in these uncertain times, with Christmas fast approaching, there's one thing we can be sure of: Terry is likely to be even busier than usual, as he couriers the wealth of donations we receive at this time of year to our head office and shop. For some, the Christmas period is one of rest and relaxation and, while we will be doing all we can to ensure Terry gets plenty of both, he assures us thrives on keeping busy. **Thank you, Terry – your energy and commitment are truly appreciated!**

We are **ellenor**, a charity funded by the generosity of our local community, offering the best care and support to families facing terminal illness in Kent. We are the **only** charity in the county that provides hospice care for people of all ages – babies, children and adults - and their families. This includes pain and symptom relief, end of life care, respite, bereavement support and emotional and spiritual care.

Our Children's Hospice Care, formerly known as chYps, is provided in the comfort of the family home and spans across North and West Kent and the London Borough of Bexley. Adults living in Gravesham, Dartford and Swanley, receive care in their place of choice, including their own homes, at our Hospice in Gravesend and in local care homes.

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