

Make a real difference



Volunteer Muriel Allen MBE and senior administrator Annarose Hearsum outside the Roberts Centre

SHE has helped disadvantaged families in countless ways – and she thinks you could too.

Muriel Allen, 81, has been involved with the Roberts Centre for more than 20 years. She fundraises, collects books and toys for children and organises an annual pantomime trip for families in difficult circumstances.

She inspires fellow churchgoers and other friends to collect pennies for charity, donate bedding, or pay for Easter eggs for each child at the centre. She was awarded an MBE for her services to charity this summer and will receive it from the Queen next month.

For the Roberts Centre, volunteers like Muriel are a godsend. She is one of around 65 volunteers who help with everything from painting walls to packing Christmas hampers. Many collect household items to help furnish new homes for families who need somewhere to live.

The centre, which is based in Crasswell Street in Landport, helps families across Portsmouth who are homeless, or facing problems with tenancy, anti-social behaviour or relationship issues. It runs a nursery during the week, a holiday playscheme, a contact centre which allows children

to spend time with parents who they don't live with, and a supported housing service – providing flats for those who are between homes.

Muriel became involved after retirement. She had been governor of Kingston Prison in Portsmouth, the first woman to take charge of a prison for adult males.

“My experience of being evacuated from London during the war helped me to understand what happens if family life is disrupted,” she said. “It was the uncertainty of not knowing when we would return to our parents that was hard. That uncertainty is difficult for these families if they are homeless or if their parents have split up.

“I started an annual pantomime lunch seven years ago. We have a fundraising lunch and raffle at the Kitsch’n d’or and the money pays for pantomime tickets for the children. I woke up one morning and thought that we should also pay for them to have ice-cream in the interval, so someone from the cathedral offers to pay for that. And the children get very excited about that each year.

“I ask for donations, so I sometimes get back to my flat to see piles of bedding, crockery and children’s books. The Roberts Centre passes them on to families. And we do ‘Pennies from Heaven’ – I get people

to save up 1p, 2p and 5ps and we donate it to charity.

“People say they have no skills to offer, but anyone can store some books or make a contribution.”

And senior administrator Annarose Hearsum said: “It’s the total selflessness of people like Muriel which is so inspiring. She is part of the furniture here, and is always coming up with new ideas to help.

“It’s the small things that make a difference, like the books at the entrance that children pick up when they come for the first time, or the familiar cartoon character on their pillowcase. By helping children feel at ease, you help the whole family.

“If anyone wants to volunteer, all they need to do is ring us and we can have a chat about their interests. We welcome applications from all backgrounds, ages and abilities.”

The centre was named after an American benefactor, EC Roberts, who left a bequest to the then Bishop of Portsmouth to spend on helping the poor of the city. The Roberts Centre was officially opened by Princess Diana, and is celebrating 25 years in existence this year.

For details of how to volunteer, contact Caroline Bellett on 023-9229 6919 or humanresources@robertscentre.org.uk or see www.robertscentre.org.uk

**“Hi Autosave,
how can I help you?”**

For helpful, friendly, impartial advice, call Autosave, your trusted team with over 25 years experience selling cars to the Christian community.



Hassle free car buying from Autosave

Prices start from £3,999.

- New, nearly new and used
- Any make, any model
- Great prices, great savings
- Part exchange welcome
- Finance available

Registered Office: 1 Oughden Way, Sheffield S4 7DY

CALL: 0845 122 6902
OR VISIT: WWW.AUTOSAVE.CO.UK

autosave
good news for our buyers

What is our legacy...?

WELL, it's finally over! After seven years of planning, £11bn spent, thousands of athletes competing for hundreds of medals, the 2012 London Olympic Games have finally come and gone. And, I wonder, what will be their legacy?

Some fantastic memories, of the incredible opening ceremony and some astounding sporting accomplishments, but a key part of the original bid to bring the Games to London was that they would have an enduring legacy – an impact that will continue in terms of community regeneration, much needed affordable housing and local jobs for one of the most deprived boroughs of London.

The long-term success of the Games will, in many ways, be judged 20 years from now when we see what has become of the infrastructure and buildings of the Olympic Park.

All of which makes me look at my own life and ask that same question of myself: what will be my legacy? And indeed, for each one of us and for our



the last word

by the Ven Gavin Collins
Archdeacon of the Meon

parish churches: amidst all our busy-ness and all our activity, what will be the legacy – the lasting impact – of all that we are and all that we do?

Usually when the church talks about ‘legacies’, we’re talking finance, asking people to remember the Church in their will when they die. But far more than that, I wonder what other legacy we might leave behind us?

I know that in my life I look back to the people who encouraged and mentored me as a teenager and young man – the Sunday School teachers, Boys’ Brigade officers and youth group leaders – as well as the committed people who

faithfully prayed for me and my contemporaries day by day, particularly at those times when it looked as if I wasn’t sticking on the right path! Their legacy lives on today as I in turn seek to encourage others in their walk with God.

So can I challenge you today actively to consider your legacy and to ask God to point you to someone in whose life you could make a lasting impact?

It could be someone you can encourage, support or pray for, who in their turn may go on to help others in their walk with God. A legacy of faith and of faithfulness: now that’s something that’s truly worth working for.