

# NEWSLETTER

2021/22 - Issue 25



## Chairman's Introduction

I start this newsletter at another momentous time, with the tragic war and impact for people, and particularly the children in Ukraine. For the latter it will be such a large part of their young lives and will have long lasting mental health and in some cases physical implications too. Their whole safety and lives have been disrupted. It is great to see the response to helping, though this is really only the tip of the iceberg. There will undoubtedly be both greater economic and social strain here in the UK, and of course in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world as the situation continues to develop.

Just over two years on from the first COVID-19 lockdown I would again like to record our sympathies for those that have COVID-19 challenges and indeed losses suffered by our young people/volunteer families, trustees, operations team, friends, and supporters, and at the same time to thank all those key workers, and life science companies for their ongoing efforts to mitigate and combat the impact of this disease on everyone. It was not really possible or felt appropriate to organise a large event to celebrate our Coral 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year, so let's hope when we get to our Ruby (40<sup>th</sup>) in 2026 the landscape will be so much better for all. There have been times during lockdown that we have had to suspend face-to-face meetings, in accordance with government guidance. We switched to online and postal communications during this time. Face-to-face meetings were resumed following COVID-19 risk assessments

being undertaken once restrictions lifted. I would like to thank our operations team and volunteers for their patience and support with this process so that we could resume the important face-to-face meetings once it was possible.

Our newsletter has some great stories from our volunteers demonstrating the valuable work they do and the fun they have enjoyed despite COVID-19 regulations. There are also some lovely photos of the outside events we were able to hold. We continue to have a waiting list of children needing our support and are actively seeking additional volunteers to meet the growing need.

From a financial perspective we are extremely grateful for the support of regular grant funders, alongside COVID-19 recovery funds, businesses that have supported us, new/frequent donors and fund raisers. Thank you to all, you have helped to keep us going and start 2022 in a healthy position.

For the last two years we have held our AGM and Volunteer's Get-together on Zoom with an encouraging attendance, and it is planned to do this again this year, on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June at 7.00pm. Further details will follow.

I would just like to give a big thank you to our Older Friends, Group Supporters, Operations team, Trustees, Volunteers, Supporters and Funders for their contributions, helping young people improve their self-esteem, confidence and have some fun, when they would not otherwise have these opportunities.

**Cheryll Rawbone – Chairman**

For more information please contact:- [cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk](mailto:cheryll.rawbone@friendshipproject.co.uk)

# The children that we support

We continued to support our Younger Friends through another difficult year, and the challenge of many restrictions meant that we had to continue to adapt. Thankfully, there were many months that our Older Friends could meet their Younger Friends, but during the times they couldn't due to restrictions, more letters were written, video calls made and zoom crafting sessions took place. The children continued to feel that there was someone there to support them.

The **Pen Pal / FaceTime Friendship** that we introduced last year between Younger Friends and Older Friends has continued to be successful, with children already feeling that they know their Older Friend well when they eventually meet face-to-face.



A gift brought back from a Younger Friend's holiday for their Older Friend.

Mum said to the Older Friend that *"M didn't want to buy friends or family anything, just to get this present for you!"*

## Feedback from some Younger Friends and Carers

*"It is fantastic to be able to get such a great Older Friend, as really, apart from one boy at school he is my only friend."*

*"My daughter's friendship with her Older Friend has made her realise that not everyone lets you down and that adults can be trusted."*

*"J loves going out with his Older Friend. He does so much with him."*

*"I think it's great because I have fun. I benefit from it because I have a great friend and she is awesome, cool, sporty, and calm. I think people should do it because you will have fun and you can do loads of things like going to the cinema, tennis, fun trips and cooking. It is great to have an adult to talk to."*



### Younger Friend Numbers

The number of children that we support is constantly changing. As of 1st April 2022 the numbers are:-

11 in North Warwickshire  
14 in Rugby  
12 in Stratford  
35 in Leamington/Warwick





# 2021 Events

We had a full calendar of events throughout the year. It was fabulous to see our Younger Friends in person once again when we started hosting face-to-face events in July!

## January

- Volunteer coffee morning Zoom
- Safeguarding Training Zoom

## February

- **New** Volunteers Zoom
- Volunteer Get-together Zoom
- Safeguarding Training Zoom

## March

- Volunteer Get-together Zoom
- Safeguarding Training Zoom

## May

- Safeguarding Training Zoom

## June

- AGM via Zoom
- Safeguarding Training Zoom

## July

- Den Building Event

## August

- 2 Fishing Events

## September

- Volunteer Zoom Get-together
- Safeguarding Training Zoom

## October

- Volunteer Get-together in person
- Safeguarding Training Zoom

## November

- Volunteer Get-together in person

## December

- Christmas Event at Coombe Abbey

# Brandon Marsh Den Building



On a sunny day in July, we welcomed our Younger Friends and Older Friends to a fun-filled morning of Den Building at Brandon Marsh Nature Reserve. It was the first time that we had held an event since COVID hit, and it was fabulous to see that friendships were still going strong, even after all of the time that they had physically spent apart. The event was sponsored by the Kenilworth Rotary Club. We are extremely grateful for the support that our donors give us, as without them we would not be able to organise events such as this.





## Fabulous Fishing – a surprise success!



Who would have thought that fishing would have been such a great success?!

Fishing was something completely different to try for many of the Younger Friends. Bank Life Fishing were wonderful, and kindly gave us two days fishing. An absolutely fantastic day was had by all. The children and their Older Friends were beaming all day as the fish kept coming! The venues were delightful - Old Oak Fishery in Rugby and Burton Farm Fishery in Nuneaton. The weather was perfect and everyone enjoyed the days so much, no one wanted them to finish!

We have already got a date in the diary for 2022 to continue with our new found skills!



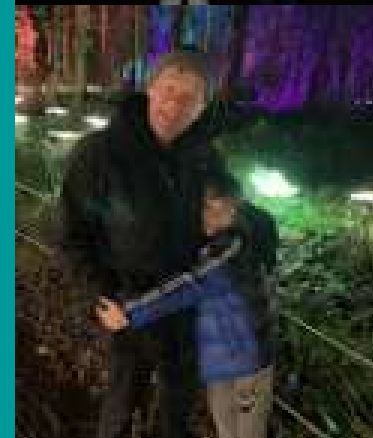
## Christmas Tree Decorating

Once again, we were able to decorate trees this year, with trees at St Mary's in Warwick and St Andrew's in Rugby.



## 'Luminate' Coombe Abbey

With grateful thanks to **CALLUM**, who supported us again this year by sponsoring the event. We had a very 'Christmassy' evening at Coombe Abbey, wandering through their beautiful light display.





## What others have been doing for us



Anne Marie Lambert who runs Get Cooking ([www.get-cooking.co.uk](http://www.get-cooking.co.uk)) offered free online cooking lessons to our Volunteers and their Younger Friends.

Anne Marie's cooking is based on having fun and learning to cook healthy, functional food for everyday living. The aim was for volunteers and their Younger Friends to be able to cook together online and maintain their friendship during lockdown periods.

Anne-Marie explained, "I had a very frugal upbringing and the kind of cooking I teach is trying to make simple ingredients more exciting through good use of store cupboard essentials and cheap, fresh ingredients. I hope Older and Younger Friends can continue their friendship during these difficult times and learn a new activity together, in a safe environment. I hope the lessons provide a bit of light relief and inspire the young people to learn a new skill and experiment with cooking from scratch."

Older Friend Joan took her Younger Friend to a number of face-to-face cooking sessions (pre-lockdown) with Anne-Marie: "My Younger Friend really enjoyed the sessions. She made chocolate brownies and pancakes. We now make cakes and sandwiches together when we meet up".



We were the chosen charity at The Farm in Snitterfield, Stratford upon Avon at their lovely Makers Market. It was an opportunity to mingle with some fabulous local businesses and to spend the day in the beautiful surroundings of The Farm. As well as a shop and café, it has animals and a play area, so may be a nice place to visit with a Younger Friend.

We cannot list everyone that we need to thank on here, but we are grateful to every one of you that helps us out in any way.....



Rugby library donated books.



Leap People Solutions donated £250.



Alsters Kelley Solicitors in Leamington selected the Friendship Project as their chosen charity for 2021. They held a bingo evening which raised £1727.10!

<https://www.froggleparties.com/> selected us as their chosen charity.

Village Voices choir supported us once again



Free Cakes for Kids continue to make many

# Visit to Duchess of Cambridge Carols Service

Receiving an envelope with a 'Buckingham Palace' postmark stopped me in my tracks. I was so excited and am sure that every person that received an invitation must have felt the same. It was an absolute honour to be selected as one of the three lucky representatives for The Friendship Project for Children, to attend the very beautiful Christmas Carol Service at Westminster Abbey in December 2021.

Our day started in Rugby, travelling together so that we could make the most of each other's company. Older Friend Helena's Younger Friend, M, had never been to London before, so it was lovely to be able to show M so many sights, starting with a tube ride and then a nice walk from Green Park. We walked to the front of Buckingham Palace, through St James's Park, onto Whitehall, past the Cenotaph and Downing Street, into Horseguard's Parade and up into Trafalgar Square. We then headed around to Leicester Square and into China Town for a delicious lunch and to rest our legs a while. We then walked along to Covent Garden, which was full of Christmas spirit and fun. And then it was time for us to head to Westminster. We emerged out of the underground station in the shadow of Big Ben, looking over Westminster Bridge to County Hall and the London Eye. As it started to get dark, we continued past the entrance to the Houses of Parliament and then crossed the road and joined the queue for our security searches and ticket checks at 4pm, allowing us a full hour to soak up the increasing excitement outside and then inside the Abbey. There was a real buzz in the air.

Once we entered the main door, we were directed through to the far left of the Abbey, to our seating area in the Great North door section. We thought that we were tucked away behind the side walls of the large Choir section, but hoped that we might still be able to see the dignitaries on the little TV monitor screens dotted around... until we spotted the bright red of the Duchess' coat through the gaps in the heads right in front of us. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge were sitting right there, facing us! WOW! To actually get to see with our own eyes, the future King take the first reading during the service was so special. We were even treated to the lovely strong singing voice of Jason Manford, sitting just to our right! Apart from the Duchess we had no idea who else would be accompanying her and so we were incredibly excited to see Prince William too, along with other members of the Royal family, in such a stunning setting, and in such close proximity.

The carols and readings were delightful, and we enjoyed holding the service sheets and candles left out on our seats, it made the Abbey feel very welcoming and festive as did the Christmas trees and the reindeers outside the main door. After the service, we were permitted to spend a little time viewing the Abbey and taking some photographs too.

This opportunity was a true honour and we will each treasure memories of our day in London and evening at the Abbey in such an intimate service hosted by our future King and Queen. Thank you SO much for this amazing experience, we are truly grateful.

Kathryn, Helena and M (three proud members of The Friendship Project for Children)





# With grateful thanks to those who donated in 2021

All donations are greatly appreciated.

Below are our donations for 2021. We would also like to thank anonymous donors, cash donors and donations via Charities Trust and Just Giving.

Alsters Kelly Solicitors  
Amazon  
Aviva  
Bates Trust Claverdon  
BM & SJ Hall  
Bravissimo  
Callum Designs  
Countrywide Builders  
Coventry & District Cricket League  
FC Stokes Trust  
Four Acre Trust  
Freemasons  
Froggle Parties  
Gallagher  
Georgina Rawbone  
Heart of England Community Foundation  
Janine Thomas

Karen Read  
King Henry VIII Endowed Trust  
Leamington Round Table  
Leap People Solutions  
National Lottery Community Fund/COVID-19  
Ralph Heeley  
Rotary Kenilworth  
Ruth Bowie  
Shipston Rotary  
Sophie Parker  
Terry Hague  
Village Voices  
Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner  
Warwickshire Crimebeat

Thanks also to **Gallagher** – Insurance Risk Management and Consultancy, for their ongoing support in providing postage, office services, photocopying, mail shots, printing, plus meeting facilities free of charge.

**Leamington Lawn Tennis and Squash Club** regularly allow us to use their meeting space free of charge – thank you.

Like all charities, The Friendship Project relies on donations from the general public for a significant amount of its income. If you can spare even just a pound or two, or perhaps help to organise a fundraising event to help towards our valuable contribution to society, then please do feel free to contact our trustee Fundraiser, Richard Barrett (richard.barrett@friendshipproject.co.uk).

## Charities Trust

The Friendship Project have partnered with The Charities Trust, a leading donations management company established in 1987, in order to provide opportunities for payroll giving, sponsorship, and credit card payments. Our website, [www.friendshipproject.co.uk/fundraising](http://www.friendshipproject.co.uk/fundraising) includes details of the following, via partner

### **Payroll Giving**

### **Sponsorship – Online Fundraising – Sponsor Me**

### **Match Funding**

### **One off Card donations**

**Shopping on Amazon Smile** and selecting us to receive money on each purchase you make.

**Cheques** can be made payable to The Friendship Project for Children and posted to:

Cheryll Rawbone – Chairman, c/o 20 Northumberland Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 6HA.

# Older Friend Rachel's Story



Over Christmas 2020 I started to think about the year ahead and what it would bring, we had just had a year of the pandemic and like everyone I was reflective on what life was all about.

I am a Marketing Manager of 55 years old and have been very lucky to have a comfortable life. I am single and don't have any children. I have 2 nieces, 2 great nieces and a great nephew, who I love spending time with. I thought it would be great to get involved with other children in the community, so I did a Google search – and found the Friendship Project.

I made contact by email and got a reply very quickly from Fiona Roche (Area Coordinator for Warwick and Leamington region). She was so supportive and encouraging so I thought I would love to become an Older Friend. I sent all my paperwork, had an Enhanced DBS check and attended safeguarding sessions on zoom. Heather Shipley (Area Coordinator for Stratford region) came round to see me – in the garden, as we weren't allowed to go indoors at the time. I was all ready.... then in May I was matched with my Younger Friend who is 15 years old. I am sure this is happening much quicker now, but it was a strange time with COVID. My Younger Friend and I met for the first time on Zoom. Then, my Younger Friend, her Dad, Fiona and one of the teachers at School met in the playground in person and we signed our commitment contracts.

Since we met, my Younger Friend and I have had so much fun, I love our time together. At first, I wondered what a teenage girl would want to do – but we soon got to know each other, and I got a feel for what she likes to do. I think I've got it right as she wants to come every week without fail. We have great conversations about what's been going on in her world and how she feels and most importantly do new fun things together.

So where have we been – well....badminton, swimming, lunches and dog walks are in the always in the mix.

We've also been to Blenheim Palace (at Christmas when the Nutcracker exhibition was in the house) and Baddesley Clinton, Stoneleigh Abbey, the Herbert Museum and The Box at Fargo Village – as my Younger Friend is very interested in history.

We attended a fishing trip organised by the Friendship Project which was a great hit as my Younger Friend loves to fish with her Dad. She earned the silver award with her skills for casting, putting bait on her line and catching fish. The coach she had on the day was so patient and encouraged her no end.



We went to The Coombe Abbey light trail funded by Callum Design which was another great experience. My Younger Friend got to bring her sister with her, and we all had a lovely evening with the other 50 children who attended. It was a very special event.

Craft is something my Younger Friend loves, and she has made cakes, lunches for the two of us, baubles for the Christmas tree at St Mary's Church, a Christmas wreath, a silver ring at a ring making workshop and painted stained glass.

One of the highlights for my Younger Friend recently, has been going to Six the Musical in Wolverhampton. She knows all the words to the songs and was beaming the whole time we watched the show. We booked in September and went in February – she looked forward to it and gave her something to spur her on during her GCSE mock exams.

One trip I really enjoyed was taking my Younger Friend to Warwickshire College to the open evening, so she could learn about the hairdressing course. She was so animated and excited about the course, it's given her a reason to get her GCSEs, as she wants to do an apprenticeship. She has been working on Saturdays in a local hairdresser since she was 13, so she has a real passion for hairdressing. I am sure she will be a very talented hairdresser.

I have enjoyed every outing with my Younger Friend, she is great, and when people say 'ooh you are good for taking her out' I say 'no I love to see her, we do some great things together.'

I am so glad I found the Friendship Project and I would recommend anyone who has some spare time to join.



## Could you be an Older Friend?

*We have many more children on our waiting lists needing an Older Friend. It could be you helping one of them!*

*If you are thinking of volunteering for us, here are some words from current Older Friend Clare to inspire you:-*

*"I find the Friendship Project such a professional charity to volunteer with. The support they offer to volunteers and the systems they have in place are really second to none. Given the nature of the work with young people, this gives me so much confidence to get out there and have fun with my Younger Friend."*

*Please contact: [Karen.Hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk](mailto:Karen.Hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk) for more information.*

# Older Friend Gary's Story



I am a 46-year-old man with one son (6yrs).

I have always enjoyed a simple life, a gifted life really. I had a great home life growing up, I had a good school life, a fun teenage time, an action-packed 20s, an adventurous 30s, and then hit my 40s and realised I could give more to others as I had been focusing on myself for so long. Actually, I really enjoy helping others and realised that it was not a weakness as I had thought for 40 years, but a strength, so maybe I could do it in a more useful way than just doing some DIY for a friend, or picking up some shopping for a neighbour.

I saw a post on [Neighbourhood.co.uk](https://www.neighbourhood.co.uk) not long after a charity walk. I completed it and it really hit home for me that I could support a local kid that for whatever reason needs a helping hand through their school years.

My first meeting with the Dad of my then possible friendship match was a nice meeting in the Younger Friend's school and it went well. The Dad was behind the project and could see how it might help his son. When I think about it, I would have loved having a friend with a car that wanted to do fun stuff with me one day a week too!

So, 6 months into the friendship and it's going great. We have walked, talked, swam, explored, jumped, paddled, created, bowled, sewn, built, ran, dined, shopped and had Birthdays.

I thought it would be a hassle and that I would not have time, I mean, one night every week, that's a lot to ask, isn't it? I have a son and run my own business, how will I be able to make the time? But actually, when it's in the diary, you just make space for it and it becomes the new normal very fast and easy, just like a 'curry night' or a weekly meeting at work. The difference being, you have someone who is really looking forward to seeing you and spending time with just you and you are making a positive difference in their lives and your life at the same time!

They say "givers gain" and I totally get it now.

I have learnt so much about myself and my Younger Friend who is a wonderful kid, with a real passion for creativity and storytelling, so much so that we are trying to make a comic together when we have quieter meetings and don't go and do the bigger stuff. We have a great time planning, drawing and writing sat on a park bench looking over the river which is one of our favourite places as there is always something going on which helps the creative cells keep flowing.

The Friendship Project is a gift for a younger person but also for you, their family and the community, all rolled into fun times out!



# Older Friend Chris's Story

## The start of a beautiful Friendship!

I have been asked to share my experiences as an Older Friend (OF). At first I thought to decline but after more thought decided "why not!"

I first became aware of the Friendship Project for Children (FP) back in 2006 when I saw an article about the charity in my local newsletter. At that time I could not commit to a regular weekend day so decided it was best not to take it further.

In January or February 2018 I saw another plea from FP in my local newsletter and thought, "I now have the weekends free" and decided to enquire further. Before doing so I had noticed two references were required which wasn't a problem. So, I phoned the number, spoke to a very nice lady and arranged for her and another lady to come round to my home to have a chat about the charity and its aims. It was also a check by them to see if I was suitable.

From that chat I decided to go ahead with the training and hopefully become an OF.

The training, a safeguarding course, was very informal but very thorough and, surprisingly, enjoyable. Meeting fellow, prospective OF's and experienced OF's doing a refresher course gave me the chance to chat and learn more about the charity. The next step was an Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check. This is a necessary check to make sure I have no criminal record. The check is also done on people living in your house too.

So, having passed the DBS checks in early April I was sent an e-mail with three children's names and a very brief history of their life and situation. I was to choose one from the three which was extremely hard to do. I finally selected a thirteen year old boy.

The final stage was to meet the parents and the boy in mid April to see if they and he were okay with me being his OF. I was glad that a representative of FP was there and she knew all the right questions to ask. All went well at the meeting and, as normal, a six month probation period was set to see how things would go.

In late April 2018 I took my Younger Friend (YF) to Astley Book Farm. It was a little awkward, but we decided to continue. It is now nearly four years since that first meeting.

From that day onwards we have been the best of friends.

I can honestly say that we have never had a cross word and the fun and enjoyment we have both gained with our friendship has been wonderful.

Some of our adventures include Frisbee Golf, Ten pin bowling, Snooker, watching football and during the lockdown period lots of walks. Also visits to Bosworth Battlefields, The Space Centre, The Black Country Museum, Hartshill Hayes Country Park and many more.

He has achieved ten GCSE's and is now in his second year of 6th form studying for three 'A' levels. He has been provisionally accepted by five universities, provided he gets the grades of which I'm sure he will. Now that he is seventeen and doesn't qualify for FP I hope to be looking for another YF when he finishes 6th form this summer.

The pleasure of seeing a young, troubled boy developing into a pleasant, kind and respectful young man is something I can't put into words.

I would say to anyone thinking about becoming an OF, if you can give the time then do it.

The sense of pride in helping a young person turn their lives around is priceless.

My thoughts now go out to the children of Ukraine.

***Here at The Friendship Project we are always on the look out for new volunteers, and in particular we would love to have more male volunteers! Please contact [karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk](mailto:karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk) for more information.***

# Older Friend Katrina's Story



I heard about The Friendship Project through a family member who thought it may be something I would be interested in. I was working in a childcare setting and have always been passionate about working with children and helping others out, so I applied straight away. I had a meeting with Kelly (who was the Rugby Area Coordinator then) and Cheryl (the Chairman). They said they had found me a match with a little boy who needs someone who enjoys being active and can keep up with him. Initially I was a bit worried but once I met R who was 8 when we first met, I knew we would be a great match just as they had said.

My first meeting with him was at his school, I got to meet him and his Mum and some of his siblings. He seemed quiet at first but also really keen to be part of The Project himself.

With R being the eldest of 5 it was great for him to be able to get out and have some time for himself and enjoy things without the responsibility of being "big brother".

For our first few outings we went to the cinema and swimming. R likes films, and being active so we always try to do something that will keep him busy and entertained. That was in 2018. I would try to have R every weekend. We would either go to the park, soft play, swimming or a planned event provided by The Friendship Project. In Jan 2019 I fell pregnant with my son but still continued my outings with R. He was so excited and happy for me to be having a baby and both him and his Mum were so understanding. I was certain I wanted to continue with The Project both during my pregnancy and after. When my little boy was born, I took a little break while I settled into the life of a parent. R came to visit me and my little boy and I was relieved at how happy he was for me. I continued taking R out, going swimming, taking him to the park and soft plays and then Covid hit. I was in regular contact with R and his Mum and ordered a sunflower growing kit for something that we could both do together whilst being apart. This was a great activity as it gave R something to focus on during lockdown. R is quite a reserved boy and doesn't really talk much about himself or any worries he may have, so I always like to make sure that he knows where I am should he need anything. R's Mum on occasion has asked me to speak to him regarding his behaviour as she feels that he listens to me more, as when we go out, it is a treat for him and he needs to behave for these to continue. During the lockdown I welcomed my second child and again R and his family were happy for me. I went and visited them on the door step a few times once we were allowed just to catch up and see how they were getting on and took him a present for his birthday.

Once the lockdown had been relaxed, The Friendship Project organised a fishing activity. R had often spoken about fishing with his Dad and I saw this as an opportunity for him to really do something I know he feels passionate about. He was really hands on and wanted to get involved straight away and was a lot braver than I was when it came to handling maggots and fish! We can't wait to attend another outing like this and it is lovely to see him come alive in a situation like this, and I also realised that it was something I enjoyed too.

Over the 3 years that I have been R's Older Friend I have seen him grow and change in himself. He is a confident and fun loving little boy who has a lot of love for not only his own family, but my 2 boys that he has got to know throughout our journey. I enjoy the time we spend together, and he will always hold a special place in my life as I hope I will in his.



# Trustee and Operations Team News

Our volunteer numbers are constantly increasing, and this has been supported by our Operations team. Sarah Edge, Ruth Blunt and Pat Miller are valued new members of the team.



## **Sarah Edge – Rugby Area Coordinator**

Sarah lives in Rugby, and has worked hands on with children with challenges including ADHD and autism whilst with Summer Camps in USA. She was a Camp Counsellor/Lifeguard there, and has also been a swimming teacher and gym instructor where she received both safeguarding and first aid training. Additionally, Sarah has worked in administration roles in a sales environment, and for the 2 years prior to joining The Friendship Project, as Marketing Assistant. Sarah has an active skill set in social media and is very enthusiastic to work and be involved with a charity helping children in need locally.



## **Pat Miller – Older Friend Representative**

Pat is a native of the United States, but has been a resident in this country for over 30 years and is also a British citizen. She joined the Friendship Project as an Older Friend in 2019 and has been enjoying the experience of being an Older Friend. She became a Group Supporter in 2021 and is now joining the Trustees. Whilst living in the United States Pat was a volunteer with Big Brothers/Big Sisters for eight years (this was the inspiration for The Friendship Project), finishing when her 'Little Sister' graduated from high school and left the program. She is passionate about the Friendship Project and keen to represent the views of the Older Friends.

Professionally she is a trainer/facilitator with qualifications in training, management and coaching. She is also a qualified Myers-Briggs assessor and facilitator, and licensed Springboard Facilitator. Since semi-retiring from being a leadership coach and trainer with Thames Valley Police in 2017, Pat has continued coaching, mentoring and delivering the Springboard programme to domestic abuse survivors. In her spare time she enjoys jewellery making and cooking, and is currently delivering jewellery making workshops as well as her other work. She is also a keen cook, and loves to travel.



## **Jon Gibbons – Honorary Secretary**

Jon was previously an Older Friend and our Older Friend Representative. He now holds the reins as our Honorary Secretary.



## **Ruth Blunt – Operations Team Leader**

Ruth's professional background has been in both customer-facing and sales delivery in various sectors including exports, retail, and legal profession. Additionally, she has had multi-site management responsibility, and more recently office manager of a small charity. Her strengths are building and sustaining relationships. Ruth is a volunteer fundraiser with Cancer Research UK, PTA member, and has been a regular volunteer supporting literacy in a local school too. She has lived in Kenilworth since 2014, having moved from Bristol, and is married with two daughters at school. She enjoys cooking, walking, swimming, and camping – though the latter only when the

**Michelle Machin** was a valued member of our Trustee Team for many years. With outside work commitments keeping her very busy, she has said farewell to The Friendship Project.

# Social Media News

**Sarah Edge (Area Coordinator for Rugby)** has taken on the role of our social media posts, but you can help us too?

We recognise the importance of social media. If you're not already, please help us grow our following and spread the word on the social media channels. This will help us recruit new volunteers, and to attract new sponsors and donors.

Like, share and follow us at:-

 Facebook /  Instagram /  Twitter @friendshipproj /  The Friendship Project

SUPPORT  
LOCAL  
CHARITIES



the friendship project  
for children

LIKE, SHARE & FOLLOW @FRIENDSHIPPROJ



The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service



# Safeguarding

The last year has flown by and I continue to feel privileged to be involved with the Friendship Project as Trustee with responsibility for ensuring the welfare and wellbeing of our Younger Friends is at the heart of everything we do.

The Operations Team continue to be our first port of call where there are safeguarding concerns and I remain impressed by their dedication to refining and continually improving how we do things. Where concerns have occurred, we always use it as a learning opportunity and reflect on what we could be doing better and how we might have prevented it. This has led to the changing and tweaking of procedures and the development of some brand new guidelines. We introduced new guidance on mobile phone use between Older and Younger Friends in recognition of the fact that mobile phones are now the primary method of communication for most people. If you are a current volunteer and haven't read these guidelines yet, please do! They are available on our website under Documents / Older Friends.

An aspect of my role that I particularly enjoy is the delivery of the Safeguarding training to our Older Friends. It is the responsibility of all organisations working with children to ensure that their staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities with regards to safeguarding but we can only truly do this if our volunteers engage on this topic. I must pass on my thanks to our volunteers for not just giving their time to simply attend the training, but for truly engaging in it: I really enjoy answering the questions and engaging in discussions.

Over the next year I plan to review our recruitment procedures to ensure they align with best safer recruitment practice. I'm particularly interested in how induction processes prepare our Older Friends for their role. If you have any thoughts or feedback do get in touch!

Esther Jones – Safeguarding Trustee.

## COVID - 19

We have continued to work together and adapt over the last year, so that the valuable work that we do supporting children in the Warwickshire area has been able to carry on. We continued with our newly introduced **Pen Pal / FaceTime Friendship** which meant that we were still able to match children in need during lockdown periods. We have followed government guidelines throughout and this has meant that friendships have had to pause with face-to-face contact at times. Risk Assessments have continued, and we issued 'Emergency Packs' which include face masks and the option to purchase and claim for hand sanitiser for use on outings.

## Future Events

We really hope to see you at some point this year!

We are always adding new events, so we will be sure to communicate these with you when we do.

If you have any ideas for future events, please feel free to contact:-

[karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk](mailto:karen.hoy@friendshipproject.co.uk)

### Younger Friend Events:-

23 February – Childrens Forest Tree Planting

23 April – Fishing Trip in Rugby

7 May – Moreton Morrell Animal Welfare Unit visit

25 June – Pony Event, Shrewley

24 September – Craft Event, Coventry

We hope to hold a Summer outing, plus a Christmas Party of course! All dates will be communicated as soon as they are booked.

### Older Friend Events:-

27 January – Zoom Get-together

3 March – Safeguarding Training

10 March – Safeguarding Training

17 March - Safeguarding Training

9 June – Safeguarding Training

16 June – 7pm AGM (Zoom)

23 June - Safeguarding Training

30 June - Safeguarding Training

We will hold Volunteer Get-togethers every few months throughout the year. We will communicate dates as soon as they are booked.



the  
friendship project  
For Children

# Volunteers Wanted

Would you like to be an Older Friend  
to a child for regular outings of just 2-3 hours?

For more details and an application form, please contact:

**0845 838 2098\***

email: [info@friendshipproject.co.uk](mailto:info@friendshipproject.co.uk)

[www.friendshipproject.co.uk](http://www.friendshipproject.co.uk)

 Facebook/  Instagram/  Twitter@friendshipproj



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