

Welcome to the first edition of the Volunteer Voice of 2024. With January having about 32 weeks in it, New Year celebrations feel like they happened months ago. However, Happy New Year to you all!

In this edition, you can learn about how the StEP (Steps to Employment Project) is progressing, read about how Clever Betsy are settling into their new venue and details of save the date events.



Steph and Sally don't mind where they are as long as they're together!

## StEP Update

On the 8th of January Roz (Volunteer Manager) welcomed Sue Palliser (Volunteer Coordinator) and Frankie Farrell (Outreach Officer) to the Steps to Employment Project staff team.

Sue is responsible for the active recruitment of volunteers to be placed within ECHO projects. She trains and inducts new volunteers, and works with Roz to support all ECHO volunteers.

Sue started her career at ECHO as a volunteer at Eaton Barn. After 2 months, she was employed there as a support worker and has recently joined the StEP team in January 2024. Previously, Sue has worked mainly in childcare, based in nursery environments.



Sue's husband Mark is an ECHO volunteer and has spent time running workshops from the green woodworking area at Eaton barn. She was born in Birmingham and moved to Herefordshire in 1994. She has 3 children and 4 grandchildren. Sue enjoys cycling and sewing.

You can contact Sue via the office on (01568) 620307 or email her at: [sue.palliser@echoherefordshire.co.uk](mailto:sue.palliser@echoherefordshire.co.uk)

Frankie is responsible for recruiting, training and supporting StEP beneficiaries with disabilities and other support needs into work experience, volunteering opportunities and paid employment in the community.



Frankie was born in Rotherham and moved to Herefordshire in 2002. She lives with Dave and his obsession for restoring classic cars and 2 dogs who keep her very busy. She gives talks on photographic history and the dating of family photos, advising a variety of organisations for example the National Trust. Frankie brings a wealth of experience to ECHO, through having worked in a variety of sectors, to include local councils, policing, the NHS and private sector.

You can contact Frankie on (01568) 620 307 or email her at [frankie.farrell@echoherefordshire.co.uk](mailto:frankie.farrell@echoherefordshire.co.uk) to find out more about the StEP.

And for any new volunteers, the StEP is overseen by Roz Johnson, our Volunteer Manager who is highly experienced in working with our participants and volunteers.

Roz was born in Birmingham and moved to the Black Country in 1997, until relocating to Herefordshire in 2015 with her daughters.

Roz started working in the education sector in 2002 and has been a Higher Level

Teaching Assistant and an Assistant SENCo in primary schools until she joined ECHO as a Volunteer Coordinator in August 2021. She has a BSc (Hons) degree in Child and Adolescent Mental Health, and a master's degree in Psychology. Roz is passionate about the work she does with ECHO and is enjoying the challenges being a manager brings.

You can contact Roz on: 07719 023534 or (01568) 620307

Or email: [roz.johnson@echoherefordshire.co.uk](mailto:roz.johnson@echoherefordshire.co.uk)





Three weeks in and the StEP team are mega busy. Sue and Frankie have settled into their new roles quickly, and you will be seeing us out and about.

Sue is shadowing Roz to learn how to recruit, induct and train volunteers. We are currently placing 9 new volunteers into projects, 4 of whom are work experience students.

Frankie is working with 6 StEP beneficiaries, supporting them into work experience opportunities and paid employment within the community. These range from office and admin work, to furniture removal, to hospitality and retail. This means making new connections with organisations and businesses in Herefordshire and we are getting the word out there about the StEP, and about ECHO.

Dan Wall has already completed a successful work experience placement at Brightwells Auctioneers in Leominster, where he enjoyed “sorting stuff out for sales and doing a lot of admin work for the car lots going into the auctions.” He would love to return and do some more work.



## The Return of Clever Betsy

The Volunteer Voice were pleased to pop down the stairs to interview participants, volunteers and staff at Clever Betsy, rather than driving to Unit 7!



Thursday's group were happy to chat about returning to West Street or for some, being here for the first time. The general consensus is that they miss the space they had at Unit 7, but are enjoying having a public presence in Leominster, and the freedom and benefits being in town brings.

Sally (CB participant) has not been at West Street before, and misses being at Unit 7 as it was quieter there with no passing traffic, but you would think working with the Clever Betsy staff would mean she is quite used to noise! However, she conceded that "it's not too bad here"! Thanks Sal!





Steph (Clever Betsy participant) is used to being at West Street as she is part of ECHO Weavers, who work there every Friday. Steph was here from 2009, before the project had to move due to COVID-19, and said “It’s nice to be back.” She loves the fact that “it’s handy for me to get here rather than going all the way to Unit 7. I remember the first time we opened here. We had belly dancers opening the shop for us.”

Sadly, no belly dancers heralded the return of Clever Betsy.



Clever Betsy's Thursday Group

Jeanette (Clever Betsy volunteer) started at West Street with Clever Betsy in 2014. She loves it so much she has upped her volunteering from 10am to 2pm once a week, to 9am-3pm twice a week, and still takes projects back home with her. Jeanette said “space is an issue here, plus paying for parking” but luckily the StEP can refund that through volunteer expenses! She said the best thing about being at West Street is the amount of natural light that comes through the windows.

Linda (Clever Betsy participant) said she likes being here and watching out of the window at the people and dogs going past.



Linda and Jeanette taking advantage of the natural light



Lyndsay (Clever Betsy staff) is very excited about all of the cake shops in town and is looking forward to trying out 35 West, Central Bakery and the new cake shop due to open soon. Steph also recommends the cakes from the Polish shop Gabi, also opposite Clever Betsy.

Lyndsay was working at ECHO's LifeLinks project the last time Clever Betsy were at West Street, so



she has only ever known Unit 7. She said “it’s a big change for me. I think we are all going to miss the space we had but I am enjoying us having a presence in town and people walking past watching us work, looking in the windows and grinning at us is great. At the moment we are really energised with setting up the new space and creating new window displays, but not having a shop is strange. I’m enjoying being in town though, and it’s less isolating being in town. It feels more like a group here too, with all of us sitting together.

Stephen (Clever Betsy Participant) said “the thing I miss is selling to customers. I miss having the shop like we used to. But I like seeing my friends and I can see lots of things outside.”

Liz (Clever Betsy staff) told the Volunteer Voice how it is “good to be back in the community. People can go out and get the things they need, and having a presence in town is great. The downside is having no shop but we will be proactive about different ways of selling, which is an exciting challenge. Watch this space—online Clever Betsy may be on its way. It’s good to be able to visit the library as a group for their exhibitions and to be able to visit coffee shops. We have already had a trip out to Betty Freckles in town.” Liz said a real positive is feeling like part of the whole organisation as they have ECHO staff and participants passing through on their way to the office. The best thing though Liz said, is being able to see Larry the dog when Mike takes him out for a walk.



Liz and Stephen enjoying being opposite the window where they can watch the world go by

And finally, the Volunteer Voice interviewed Sam (PA to Bee) and Bee about the new experience of being at West Street. Sam talked about how being at Clever Betsy can be a very sedentary activity for Bee, and therefore being able to walk there in the morning is a real bonus for health and wellbeing, as is being able to go for walks during the day. Sam said “the natural light here is better and people are interacting more as we are in closer proximity to each other. It’s much easier for people to find us here than it was at Unit 7 as well, and it’s great to have the people we support getting out into the community too.”





## Save the Dates

Eaton Barn are having another volunteering day on 10th Feb if you would like to go along and help out. These are always really successful, and a nice lunch is provided.

Please let Cath Warren (manager at Eaton Barn) know if you would like to attend.



# Eaton Barn Community Garden Volunteering Day

**Stoke Prior Lane, Near Leominster. HR60NA**

**Sat. February 10th, 10am -3pm**

**Could you help out for a day with some manual, building,  
gardening or DIY skills?**

**\*\*Free lunch and hot drinks provided\*\***

Eaton Barn supports adults with disabilities to do horticultural activities. We are looking for help with digging, path laying, fitting veg bed edging & compost heap turning. Turn up on the day or contact us for any enquiries.

01568 614748 [cath.warren@echoherefordshire.co.uk](mailto:cath.warren@echoherefordshire.co.uk) THANK YOU



We now have the dates for the much anticipated 3rd ECHO ColourFest. Save the date of the 8th June 2024!!! It will be happening at



10.00am until 12.30 around Leominster Town again. The theme is ECHO Hawaiian Beach ColourFest to fit in with the Leominster Festival theme of Leominster By The Sea. We need volunteers to help with registration, merchandise, stewarding and throwing paint, so if you would like to do any of these jobs, please let Roz know.

Fundraising are also holding an Abseil event at St Peter's Church Hereford, on Saturday 7th September with slots available all day. The tickets will be on sale shortly at a cost of £25 each. In addition, we hope that abseilers will raise sponsorship on top of that. Anyone raising over £100 will get a special edition T-shirt with their photo on at the top of the tower. We will need volunteers for registration, so if you would like to take part, let Penny know at [penny.weir@echoherefordshire.co.uk](mailto:penny.weir@echoherefordshire.co.uk) and if you would like to volunteer, let Roz know.

Finally, the Big Quiz is set to return on 9th September.