Meet Betty. She volunteers at St Andrews Hospice. Is volunteering for you too?

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“IT brightens my day when I know I am coming here.”
The words of 79-year-old Betty Withers, whose new role as a vital volunteer has given her life a new spark.

Betty is one of an army of more than 500 volunteers, without which St Andrew’s Hospice would not operate in the way it does. While Betty helps a morning a week in the newly-launched Retreat hair and beauty salon, which is open to the public, others man shops, tender gardens, cater and even carry out oil checks on the organisation’s fleet of vehicles.

For Betty, who was put in touch with St Andrew’s thanks to Voluntary Action North East Lincolnshire's Volunteer Development Service, the work has been a lifeline, following the death of her husband of 40 years, Roy, 18 months ago.

Having worked until she was 70, the retired office manager, had always kept busy and found living on her own for the first time in her life, hard to deal with.

“There is only so many times you can clean a two-bedroom house, and I like to keep busy,” said Betty.

It was her daughter June who found a Facebook post offering all kinds of volunteering opportunities, from environment and gardening projects to befriending the elderly and working with young people.

Volunteer Centre Support Worker, Liz Dugard, then found Betty the perfect match, at the salon in the grounds of St Andrew’s, on Peaks Lane.

“This was right for Betty and she loves it. There are so many opportunities out there. For older people, like Betty, who wish to put their skills to good use, and for young people who maybe do not know what they want to do or are struggling to find work – volunteering gives them experiences that they can add to their CVs and references. It also enables them to improve and update skills and learn new ones, giving them perhaps an opportunity to try something that they had never considered before,” said Liz.

And, as the Hospice’s Deputy Chief Executive Lesley Charlesworth-Browne, explained, people like Betty are essential.

“Liz and her team have referred between 20 and 30 people to us here at the Hospice – these are people we could not do without, they are our lifeblood and the possibilities are endless, we even want people to come along and play music or get involved in crafts with our residents here,” she said.

As the Hospice looks to offer more services, to the public as well as residents, it is looking for more volunteers. For example, Retreat currently opens on Mondays and Wednesday, but is looking to extend that.

Salon manager, experienced stylist Nicky Chaplin, has worked at some of the top UK styling and beauty shows and is a former head of department for hair and beauty at the Grimsby Institute.

“Volunteers like Betty are a huge support to me, allowing me to concentrate on the hair and beauty side, this is a wonderful place to work, and we would highlight what a safe and friendly environment it is for the public to come along,” said Nicky.

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