



opalmatters@opalservices.org.uk

Issue 15 - June 2022



This week is Volunteers' Week when so many unsung heroes receive some of the recognition they deserve. In the case of OPAL, our volunteers are certainly very much a part of this group and should feel valued and special.

As we have asked ourselves many times, where would we be without all of you doing what you do, as part of our OPAL volunteer community? Over the last two and a half years the volunteering roles have extended and changed. You have all been amazing in the way you have adapted and responded in a

flexible way to the requests we have made of you and this has been much appreciated by those you support, their families and by ourselves!

Older people and their carers have been living isolated lives in what must have been such frightening and alarming times. Your input has made such a difference. Thank you. You have offered a lifeline to such people through your contribution providing regular telephone calls, garden and doorstep visits, delivering newsletters and activity packs and just generally being there for them when they are feeling alone and uncertain.

We never cease to be amazed by the way you rise to whatever challenges we present, whether it be related to a fundraising event or a role linked to a new service we are developing. It's all very impressive and we are very fortunate in being able to call on such dedicated people who truly are the backbone of our services.

Thank you for your loyalty to OPAL through such testing times and wishing you every happiness and fulfilment for the future. Happy Volunteers' Week!

Jane Colville
Chair of Trustees

Janet Handley
Volunteer Coordinator



A message from our Chair Elect

I was very proud to be elected to join OPAL's Board in March, and deeply honoured when the Trustees appointed me to be the next Chair. Later in the year I will be taking over from Jane who has been a towering presence in OPAL, going back to its early days as RCS.

Following her is a daunting task but at the same time it's exciting, although I should say at the outset that I'm rubbish at making cakes! Since my retirement I have worked on, and often chaired, a number of Boards in both the public and private sectors and I bring some skills which I think will be helpful to OPAL. I will be ending my term as Chair of Citizens Advice Cheshire West shortly and from my experience there I know what a crucial role

volunteers play, without which charities wouldn't be able to operate. I'm look forward to meeting many of you in the not-too-distant future and I hope you enjoy Volunteers' Week.

Geoff Hope-Terry, Chair Elect



Representing OPAL at the Royal Garden Party

What a wonderful day we had on Wednesday 18th May. The weather was perfect – blue sky and sunshine, but not too hot. The Palace and grounds looked stunning with the guests beautifully attired, the bands playing and the guards in their uniforms.

At 4 pm, the Royal Party, consisting of the Duchess of Cambridge and the Duke and Duchess of Wessex came out on to the terrace and the National Anthem was played. After some official duties, the Party walked down onto the lawns between two separate columns of guests. The Duke and Duchess of Wessex were in our line and a Gentleman at Arms asked if we would like to meet the Duke. We were brought forward into the aisle with another two ladies representing the Royal Dockyard Museums in Portsmouth. Prince Edward was delightful, shaking our hands and taking an interest in all that we told him about OPAL.



After the presentation, we went for the much anticipated 'tea'. There was a beautiful array of delicious finger sandwiches and delicate cakes and pastries. Seating was at a premium so we sat on the lawn to eat whilst listening to the band playing beside us. The Royals meanwhile took their tea in the Royal Tea tent. Afterwards, preceded by the Yeomen of the Guard, the Royal Party made its way back to the Palace through a wide cordon of guests.

This was also our opportunity to see the Duchess of Cambridge close up and Princess Alexandra who had also been in attendance. The Royal family were so gracious, natural and appeared only too happy to stop to talk to people as they made their way along the lines of guests. We followed the Royal Party as they disappeared into the Palace and then made our way out with the thousands of other guests towards the main gates.

What a magical day this was and we feel so privileged and honoured to have been able to represent OPAL in this way. We had such a memorable experience, which we will treasure forever. A big thank you to OPAL for allowing us to represent you at this special event.

Mary Thompson & Lesley Duggan



Manley Spring Fair

The rain held off and at times the sunshine even broke through for the Manley Spring Fair on May Day Bank Holiday Monday. Alongside a dog show, football competitions, choirs, Morris dancers and much more, OPAL volunteers ran a 'Vintage' stall

and our ever popular, and increasingly famous 'Water or Wine' stall. We were lucky to be in the Village Hall – it's never a bad thing to be located close to where the refreshments are being served!

It was wonderful seeing so many people of all ages enjoying the day out – the event has not taken place for the last couple of years due to Covid. Quite a few familiar faces came along, and it was good to see interest in our work. Overall we raised £270 for OPAL, thanks to the volunteers who helped out on the day.

onelottery £1272 raised so far !!

Do you have your ticket yet? OPAL is part of One Lottery. Tickets cost £1 a week and 50% of all tickets sold goes to support our older people and carers in rural west Cheshire communities.

Buy your ticket today and help the OPAL cause! You could win prizes of up to £25,000 at <https://www.onelottery.co.uk/support/opal-services> or call 01865 678679. (Supporters must be 16 years of age or older. See website for terms and conditions.)

Thank you

DATE NEWS!

Wednesday 21 September 2022:

Quiz night. Details tbc.

Saturday 22nd October

(Provisional) : Online Auction.



Ever wondered what it means to be an OPAL Volunteer throughout the seasons? Here's an insight into what our volunteers have been up to since the last Volunteer's Week.

In June 2021 our face to face services had been closed for over a year, so once restrictions allowed, we were excited to open again. Our carers' volunteers started to return to clients in **July**, allowing the carers to have a well earned break from their caring responsibilities.

Volunteers gathered together in late **August** to fundraise at the Frodsham Festival in the Park raising £260. As COVID restrictions began to ease, our befriending volunteers were able to commence garden visits to our members enjoying the sunshine and chatter about how lives had changed through the pandemic.

After being closed for nearly 18 months, **September** finally saw the reopening of our clubs supported by our fantastic team of volunteers who managed to give our members a sense of community despite the many restrictions still in place.



During **October** the first of our Soup Lunches was well attended, expertly organised by our small team of volunteers who prepared and served guests and raised over £500 for OPAL in the process.

In **November**, our Knit for OPAL group began their preparations for Christmas. Between them they knitted over 200 Christmas themed covers for chocolate oranges. The majority of these were gifted to OPAL Members, with any spares being sold to raise extra funds. Members at clubs were supported to plant crocus bulbs in support of Polio Vaccination. Volunteers also

supported at Ho Ho Helsby again raising £450 of much needed funds for OPAL.

By **December**, preparations were well under way ready for Christmas parties, after missing out in 2020.

Delicious Christmas dinners were cooked and served by our talented volunteers as well as the members enjoying games and entertainment.

With the rise of the Omicron variant, **January** saw us having to close our face to face services to limit the spread of COVID. Yet again our amazing telephone befrienders ensured that all members were called for a friendly



weekly chat. Volunteers helped produce bumper OPAL Reach issues with extra activities to entertain our members during the closure.



A well received return to clubs and especially hot meals in **February**, meant that our fantastic team of cooks were able to serve up delicious two course meals to our grateful members.

Carers and volunteers gathered in **March** to learn about Dementia including information and advice. A second soup lunch in Frodsham organised by our fantastic volunteers, raised a further £500 for OPAL.

In **April**, Frodsham OPAL, our newest club, celebrated it's 7th Birthday. As always volunteers supported members to make brilliant Easter crafts and our Knit for OPAL group produced beautiful Easter Baskets as gifts for members.

First Aid training was well attended in **May** by our Key Volunteers ensuring that they are fully prepared in the case of an incident at one of our services. Members at clubs were supported by volunteers in preparing decorations for Jubilee events.

And now in to **June** we again celebrate Volunteers' Week coinciding with the Jubilee Celebrations where across OPAL, parties on a Jubilee theme celebrate the Queen's 70 years of service.

As you can see our volunteers have many varied roles across all our different services. If you'd like to get involved or know someone who would, please contact our volunteer coordinator, Janet Handley on Janet.Handley@opalservices.org.uk or 07592464856.



It is a joy to see the pleasure on the faces of members as they can safely enjoy socialising with the provision of activities, full of fun and laughter. *Maureen Kelsall OPAL*



Members are always so appreciative of everything you do. It's great to feel you're helping your local community. *Alan, Frodsham*

What do our volunteers say about OPAL?

I really enjoy helping older people to engage in social activities and they are always very appreciative. *Madeleine, Frodsham OPAL*

Volunteering has enriched my life too. *Gill, Telephone Befriender*



Supporting OPAL means becoming part of a team which in turn supports you. *Jo, Breaktime Plus Volunteer*

I get a great feeling of satisfaction (a real Buzz) by volunteer driving for Opal. I feel that with the help of other volunteers I have truly contributed to the enjoyment of others who all so look forward to attending the next one. *Tony, Malpas Opal Volunteer*



OPAL is so flexible, offering a wide range of volunteering roles to choose from. I love taking the OPAL members to the club each week and it makes my day to chat and laugh with them. I'm sure it makes a little difference to their day too. What a wonderful group of people!

I volunteer, because I love it. *Maggie, Frodsham*

I love it and get as much from it as the members do. They are so appreciative of all that we do I go home with a lovely warm feeling. *Chris, Frodsham OPAL*

Jackie, Tarporley OPAL

I have met some unforgettable clients and have made friends with volunteers. I feel that the time we spend together is precious for us all. *Margaret, Helsby OPAL*

Volunteering is a win-win for everybody concerned, that's what makes it so special. *Lynda, Tarporley OPAL*

A sense of worth, making a difference and the enjoyment that comes from belonging to a group of like-minded people *Carole, OPAL Reach Volunteer*

It is rewarding you are able to put something back into society and that just a small part of your day is appreciated by the members. *Jim, Frodsham OPAL*

It's lovely to put something back into society. *Irene, Kelsall OPAL*

Others will tell you about the rewards and satisfaction of working with OPAL's clients, but you will also find that you get to know a great bunch of volunteers and staff. Nice people, with great sense of humour, and many laughs. You'll make some good friends. *Roger, GoOnline*

The people of Malpas are always friendly and welcoming. I love giving something back to the community. Volunteering with Opal means I can make a real positive difference in someone's life. *Paul, OPAL in Touch*

Think about me, not my age