

Edinburgh Leisure celebrating National Volunteer Week

During National Volunteer Week which runs from 3 to 9 June, Edinburgh Leisure will be holding a thank you at Meadowbank Sports Centre. On Thursday they will celebrate their unsung heroes for their unwavering commitment and all they do to help create a more active and healthier city.

National Volunteer Week recognises and celebrates the contributions volunteers make in the UK and tries to inspire more people to make a difference.

Stephen Hughes, Volunteer Manager at Edinburgh Leisure said: "Our volunteers play a vital role in making a difference to people's lives, providing the help and support people need to be active.

"In the last few years, our volunteers have grown from 120 in 2022-2023 to 140 in 2023-2024. We've also expanded the volunteering roles from five to nine and include buddy swimming, walk leaders and Instructor Assistants."

Teresa, 66, one of Edinburgh Leisure's volunteers explained why she got involved. She grew up in Craigmillar area and has always enjoyed staying active. She used the old Meadowbank Sports Centre ("going back a few years") for her aerobics

classes, badminton, and also to train for the West Highland Way with her sister-in-law.

She previously took part in Edinburgh Leisure's Steady Steps programme, which is a physical activity referral programme for anyone who has had a fall or is at risk of having a fall. After falling and breaking her wrist, she completed half of her sessions in person and the rest online when Covid-19 hit.

She said: "I worked with Scottish Gas for 36 years and as part of my job I supported community initiatives. We had days where we could volunteer, and I used them to support the Royal Blind School. That was when I first became interested in volunteering.

"When I finished my Steady Steps classes, my instructor Mari asked me if I would like to become a volunteer. I investigated it and was surprised to find out that Edinburgh Leisure has so many different volunteer roles. I decided to volunteer with Steady Steps and another Active Communities class, Get Active, which encourages inactive people to become and stay active.

"Not only does volunteering help me keep physically fit but it's also good for my mental wellbeing. I love the community and camaraderie in classes, getting to know people and learning new things. I like that the participants find me approachable and when they call me by my name it shows they remember me, and I feel valued. The education sessions and the volunteer training days about dementia and visual impairment I've taken part in have broadened my knowledge. I get as much out of volunteering as the participants do.

"I would encourage others who are considering volunteering to give it a go as it's so rewarding. Recently, after my class had finished, a few of us were having a laugh while getting packed up. It was only when we got to the front door of Meadowbank that one of the participants realised she had left her Zimmer frame in the studio. For me this is a good example

of how physical activity can improve health, even in older people, and give them confidence to get out and do more”.

No matter which role you undertake as a volunteer at Edinburgh Leisure, training and support is provided.

To find out more and get involved, click here: <https://www.edinburghleisure.co.uk/work-with-us/become-a-volunteer> or contact stephenhughes@edinburghleisure.co.uk

