

Janine Campbell

Until I was in year 9 (14 years old) I was a straight A student, I am not really sure what happened, I guess I got bored and then I started to mess around. I remember being taken to the Head Teachers office by a teacher and told I was unpredictable. I became the class clown; I enjoyed making people laugh this covered up that I was finding the work hard.



Despite this I stayed in school until I was 18, at which time I became homeless.

During my 3 weeks homeless: I spent one night on the street and the rest trying to find friends sofas to sleep on. To be able to gain a place at a homeless hostel, I had to give up my part time job in a restaurant and claim income support to ensure my place. I stayed in the hostel for 2 years until I gave birth to my first son. I want to say this time in the hostel changed me for the better, I have learnt never to judge anyone and how judging people can have a huge effect on their lives, whilst I was there I felt like I was part of something, a family, a community and I had so many laughs.

When I was 20 I moved into my current house on Church Road, in this time I worked in various pubs and bars. When I was 24 I had my second son and also became a single mum. I spent the next two years raising my sons and loving every second, but there was still something missing.

When I was 26, a neighbour introduced me to Simon and Hazel, two Community Development worker from Communities 1st. Hazel put me forward for many courses like: Food hygiene, volunteering, baby safe first aid etc. And Simon supported me to start up my own community group (UNITY) for the street. He supported me and the group to grow, find funding and run events and trips. As a single mum, my main aim for the group was to give the parents and children on the street something free and positive to do. Every school break we would hold holiday provision and trips, and over time we grew. We had a bouncy castle, shipping container, outdoor cooking facilities and everything we would need to hold events. Sometimes we would use the unused church on the street to hold after school DJing and dance classes. I feel confident in saying every child, young person and adult who has ever attended one of our events can make a Spaghetti Bolognese.

After three years the group took a break, this gave me the time to start looking into what I would like to do with myself. An Assistant Community Development Worker post came up within ACE and I applied for it and got it. I coordinated and planned the UNA Volunteer Exchange Programme in partnership with UNA. During the two week

visit, I arranged for the volunteers to design and make flags and participate in the Ely Festival parade with the flags and visit many of our wonderful local community groups (UNITY, CAER, Mill Park, Pentreban, Escape) to see what great work they do.

After this project I started working on a joint project with People Around Here (artists). This project was a two part consultation with the community around the Hub (ace's new home). For the first part, I worked with volunteers and a local cycling group to design and paint the shipping container outside of the Hub. For the second part, I worked with a local primary school, Pencaerau, to paint a mural on the wall in the park.

While working for ace the meetings with UNITY started again (mainly because people on the street kept knocking on my door asking for events again). At this point, I feel I have gained many skills from my paid work with ace and am using them in my volunteering role of group chair. I feel I have started to empower the street residents to take more of an active role within the group.

I have recently become a member of the Timeplace Steering Committee and doing best practice presentations. I have also joined the UK Cardiff Citizens and am really enjoying attending the meetings and working with them towards positive change. I also have been working with the Community Energy Officer, Sam, to support him delivering outreach energy saving training.

My Current aims for the future are, firstly to tackle my dyslexia head on, I also am booked on to re-do my GCSE Maths and English in the New Year, I am hoping to have a full time job with ace and within the next five years, think about starting a degree in Community Development.

But my biggest goal and aim in life is to be a positive role model to my sons, I want for them to see the good I am doing with my life and know they can do or be whatever they want to be.

Without the help from Communities 1st and their on-going support I truly feel I wouldn't be where I am today. I have a confidence now I never had before and feel part of something big and wonderful.

A quote from an ACE Staff member

"I have had the lucky opportunity over the past 18 months of working with Janine Campbell, she is an inspiration to us all, she is the most selfless person I know, she has an energy which is infectious and radiates off of her on to anyone in close quarters of her. When I know I am going to be working with Janine a smile appears on my face and hope to continue to work in partnership with her long into the future".

Taela-mae Davies

Community Development Coordinator / Participation Officer