

Dawn's Story



When my daughter was born 23 years ago we weren't aware of any support groups and felt really isolated, always wondering 'why us'? We had no one to talk to. That all changed 10 years ago when we were visited in hospital by an ECHO ward volunteer and we joined up straight away to give our daughter support and to let her know she wasn't the only child with a heart condition.

Early on, I remember going along to the Christmas party and realising they could probably do with a few extra hands, but didn't want to tread on any toes. I went along to their monthly meetings at Ronald MacDonald House and found out more about volunteering, which I've been doing for at least 6 years now. They couldn't have been happier that I wanted to help, and now the whole family gets involved.

We go along to as many events as possible and love being part of the ECHO family, helping other heart families realise they can live as normal a life as possible with the right support.

As a volunteer, ECHO have been brilliant, providing all the relevant training and backup. I help out at events and projects throughout the year, while making sure I take every opportunity to spread the word about ECHO and the work they do.

2024

It's been 7 years since I spoke about my ECHO journey. A lot has happened in those 7 years for everyone. However, for me the main changes are that I retired in 2022, which now gives me more time to do the activities I like, e.g., exercise classes, walking, swimming and, of course, volunteering for

ECHO.

During COVID I was asked to take on the role of sending out merchandise requested by members - the spare room, which was Charlotte's, is now full of mugs, bears and all things ECHO. I regularly visit the office to support the staff in day to day running of the office, putting supplies away, putting stock together for events, and support them with their work in hospital or elsewhere. **My work has led to ECHO nominating me for Volunteer of the Year for Medway: and I had the honour of winning the award!**

We celebrated our daughter Charlotte's wedding in October 2023: an event we did not think would happen 30 years ago. It was an amazing Sunday. It has now been over 12 years since Charlotte was last in hospital, and we know there may be a time in the future that she will have to visit again. If so, it will be the first time her husband Perry will experience that - but the whole family will always be there to support them both through difficult times.