

# Susannah's Story



I've been volunteering with ECHO for nearly a year now and find it really rewarding. I organise crafting workshops at ECHO events, for anyone who'd like to take part.

I've been involved in the world of teaching and learning for 20 years and in that time I've been impressed by the positive attitude and determination of my students with disabilities and health concerns. At the same time, I've witnessed the additional worries of parents who, whilst often receiving excellent medical treatment for their children, receive nothing in the way of pastoral support for themselves or the rest of their families. In particular, siblings can take second place to the medical needs of a child with a long-term illness. The work that ECHO does is a vital part of bridging that gap. It is the whole family, not just the sick child, who is affected by a long-term illness and it is the whole family that can benefit from an emotional pick-up and some genuine support.

It's always a pleasure to introduce children to crafting, and it's a particular pleasure to work with children who are used to hearing what they 'can't' do, showing that they absolutely can, and allowing them the space and freedom to make choices and express their creativity.

Crafting is very much a level playing field: you don't need special skills or abilities, just a willingness to have a go. Even parents, who often see themselves as being 'no good at art' are delighted by what they can achieve. To be able to facilitate a place where everyone in the family can have a great time exploring new skills, being creative just for the sake of it, and make something beautiful is a privilege indeed!

Volunteering with ECHO consistently provides me with opportunities to use my skills, or just to get involved, in a positive environment where my time is appreciated and my input is rewarded 100-fold by knowing that I've made a real difference.