

Diary of a Volunteer

Hello, my name is Emma and I volunteered at the Petworth House *Pink Ribbonwalk* in June 2009. I had never done any charity volunteering before, but I had been convinced to come along with some friends and give it a go!

7.30- We arrived at the venue early in the morning and signed in with the volunteer coordinator and met our team leader for the day, who was a member of Breast Cancer Care staff. She made sure we had our packed lunches set aside, and sent us to get our breakfast, which was a tasty bacon sandwich! We also got a quick tour of the event site and a briefing outlining what we would be doing throughout the day, and important contact numbers. It was a bit chilly in the morning, so we kept our jumpers on under our crew t-shirts.



8.00- We started our first job of the day, greeting the walkers and registering them as they arrived. This was fairly straight forward, but greeting the excited participants was so much fun! We checked off people's names and directed them into the main event site, answering some of the basic questions they asked with the help of our team leader. It was great to see so many smiling faces first thing in the morning!



9.00- We watched the warm-up, which was conducted by Diana Moran and an impressive sight! Then the 20 mile walk was underway, and the walkers poured through the starting

line in the ribbon of pink t-shirts. I took some good photos of them making their way through the lingering morning mist! Our team leader advised us to have a bit of a break before the 10 mile walkers started to arrive, so we went to get some fresh fruit and stretch our legs before the next session began. We soon started to feel at a loose end though, so our team leader set us to work pinning the ribbons with the walkers' messages on to the ropes to be hung at the finish line. It was quite moving reading some of the reasons people had for taking part.



11.00- The 10 mile walkers started arriving, and we resumed signing them in. The morning mist gave way to glorious sunshine! As it was promising to be a very hot day indeed, we made sure to direct the walkers to the bottled water available inside the event site, so they could be sure to stock up before they began.



12.30- The 10 mile walkers started off, and we went to collect our route marshal team kit box from the crew tent. We also collected some crates of water, and loaded them into our car before heading out of Petworth House's gates. Our team leader directed us to the section of the route we were to be marshalling. First we dropped off two of our team at a section of the walk where participants exit some woodland and start walking along a country lane. We left

them with their fluorescent marshal bibs, a bin bag for rubbish and some water bottles, as well as a big pink sign directing the walkers! I was stationed at a junction, directing walkers up the hill and making sure the traffic was aware of their presence with my bib and direction signs. My team leader and our driver took up the last position at a dangerous road crossing, directing walkers and reminding them to keep to the right, and warning traffic of their presence on the road. There was time now to have my lunch in the sunshine, which was lovely! We were stationed near the halfway point for the 10 mile walkers, and just after a series of hills, so I made sure to be very encouraging to keep their spirits up! My team leader had given me a route map, so I could let people know they were not far from the next rest stop.

15.00- When the last walker had come through, my team leader came to collect me and my kit. We picked up the other two members of our team from their section of the route, and returned to the event site to return our kit box and any left over water. Then we went and collected our free bbq meal and enjoyed it in the shade of the main marquee. Afterwards we went and bought ice creams, before doing some cheering on the finish line. It was so nice to see the walkers crossing the line, tired but elated, and receive their medals!



16.00- After we'd eaten, we were on car park duty for an hour to help people leave the site safely. Our team leader provided us with radios so we could keep in touch, and we were stationed at different points along the exit route. Two of my team mates were



directing cars coming back in to the event site to collect walkers. I was directing cars leaving in the right direction, and two more of my team went down to the main gate to help cars leave the site whilst also allowing cars to turn in from the main road outside the Petworth House gates. It was hot, but everyone leaving the site in their pink t-shirts were smiling and waving, and saying thank you and telling us what a good time they'd had, that we couldn't help but enjoy ourselves!

17.00- After an hour we were relieved by another team on car park duty, and went back to the crew tent to return our radios, lanyards and marshal bibs as it was time to go home! Our team leader thanked us for coming along and giving up our day. We were all very tired, but we agreed that it had been a really fun experience and we are all determined to come along next year. We really have caught the volunteering bug!

