



Press Release
Immediate Release
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Essex Resident Celebrates Learning Disabilities Week

An Old Leigh House resident has been described an "asset" by the deputy manager of a charity shop in Southend where is now volunteering one day a week.

Old Leigh House, in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, is part of the Cygnet Social Care division and supports men living with a learning disability and complex needs.

In May, Martin, 67, a resident at the service, had his first-ever work experience with the St. Vincent's Charity Shop in Westcliff, Southend.

Joanna Furtak is the Activities Co-ordinator at Old Leigh House. She explained: "This local charity shop was happy to welcome Martin and offer him the opportunity to work there.

"During his time at the shop, Martin was shown around and given various tasks to complete. He engaged enthusiastically in his assigned duties with very little supervision.

"The shop management was so impressed with Martin that they decided to offer him an ongoing position, with the hope of increasing his working hours. This has been an exciting milestone in Martin's life, as he has never been in any type of employment or volunteering position before.

"Such an achievement has significantly boosted Martin's self-esteem."

This week is Learning Disabilities Week, a chance to celebrate diversity and inclusion. This year's theme is "Do you see me?" which is all about being seen, heard and valued. "Do you see me?" is about challenging the barriers people with a learning disability face and celebrate the things people with a learning disability bring to society.

Katie is the Assistant Manager at the charity shop and said that since Martin has started his volunteering shifts, he has already had a huge impact.

She explained: "He is such a lovely guy, and very easy going.

"He fits in so well with all of us and has become an integral part of the team.

"He really is fantastic, you can't fault him. He is an asset and such a hard worker. You ask him to do something and he does it. Nothing is ever too much trouble.

"Martin is a pleasure to work with and in such a short time he has made a huge difference to the shop and to the charity."

During his shifts, Martin helps to sort out the stock including restocking shelves and cleaning the donated items.

Martin said: "I like to help and it gives me a happy feeling. I am able to give back to the community and I like meeting new people.

"I was keen to volunteer because I want to give my love and support to community as I receive lots of kindness.

"I have developed a friendship with a staff members at St Vincent's Shop. It keeps me busy!"

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