

Two minutes with... **Jakki Seaman**

# Good volunteers get the good jobs

Jakki Seaman, aged 55, manages the Women's Rape and Sexual Violence Centre in Hanley, where they offer counselling for victims, train counsellors and work to raise awareness

By **LORNA DEAN**

#### How did you get where you are now?

Quite tortuously! I started off life in secretarial work and quickly decided that I didn't like people telling me what to do. Then I had admin jobs where I had autonomy, and then I did a degree course that bit me hard, raising my social awareness.

#### Education and training?

My degree was in environmental studies, which I chose as I found the subject interesting.

I got involved with the voluntary sector almost by accident, while looking at jobs, then my interest grew as I started part-time work and volunteering.

It gave me the experience I needed to continue my career and to prove my worth.

#### How many hours a week do you do?

35 hours.

#### What advice would you give a woman wanting to follow a similar path?

Think about the things you're interested in and try to do volunteer work if you can. Look at the opportunities and people around you. When we're recruiting we always look for this type of applicant, as it shows that you have passion for the job.

Also, do as many courses as you can. My training is lifelong and I have been on many courses, including counselling, supervision and management training.

#### How do you balance work commitments with family life?

Family is always the most important thing to me. Somehow I don't take my work home. I spend time with my family and have a great group of friends. I visit the theatre, go out for meals, take exercise, and so on.

These things are very important to me, and without them I couldn't work.

#### Who has been a good role model for you?

My dad was a big role model. He was very accepting, and always said that if you work hard you will get something back. It was his acceptance of others that has helped me in the work I do.

Two women that I have always held in high esteem are Jude Hawes of the Citizens' Advice Bureau, and Linda Thomas from ARCH.

#### What is the most memorable moment of your career?

All of the clients are wonderful, but there was one I saw fairly early on. Her life had been one with a lot of violence and abuse, and after she had been with us for a while she had got on track to her own career, so that was really quite a moving time for me. Also, the Criminal Justice Department of the Home Office has just given the centre £35,000, so today will be quite a memorable one too.

#### Have you ever encountered any prejudice for being a woman?

Not in my job as it is a women-only organisation. I think there are times when people don't take you seriously, but I don't see this as being prejudicial.

#### What are your ambitions?

Once I retire I want to go back into volunteering, perhaps acting as a mentor for young people. I would also like to volunteer in the arts sector, either in a theatre or an art gallery.

#### What would your motto be?

It seemed like a good idea at the time!

■ **If you want to contact the Women's Rape and Sexual Violence Centre telephone 01782 221000 or email: info@wrsvs.org.uk**



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