

What is Happening in Nottinghamshire

Past Master Dame Elizabeth Fradd writes:

Whilst my Installation wasn't as planned, I was nevertheless proud and honoured by the virtual experience of making my declaration. I look forward to when social distancing enables me to support the County of Nottinghamshire which has been my home for over 30 years. I am looking forward not only to learning more about our multi-cultural, multi ethnic County, but also to highlighting some of the unseen and unsung work of many amazing individuals who help ensure people are safe, supported and cared for, often in a voluntary capacity.

The role of High Sheriff is the oldest secular office in the UK after the Crown. All the historical events leading up to this event are ancient. But, I found it strangely reassuring that they are still in use today, and the role still relevant, despite the challenging and unpredictable times we have experienced recently. During this current phase of restricted movement I am trying to make contact with as many organisations and individuals as possible to let them know I am thinking about them, to offer support albeit remotely, and to thank them for their work.

I decided a while ago my theme for the year would be to support those involved in ensuring health and welfare of staff and clients across the legal system. I made this decision because it binds together my background as a nurse and the role of High Sheriff as the Queens representative for law and order in the County. This year has been designated by WHO as the International year of the Nurse / Midwife, it being the bicentenary of Florence Nightingales birth. Given my background I can't ignore "Nursing's Big Moment". So, the focus of much of my year as High Sheriff will have a health and welfare focus supporting the Judiciary, the Police and Law Enforcement Agencies, and Emergency services. I look forward, when able, to supporting the work of the Chief Constable Craig Guilford and the Police and Crime Commissioner Paddy Tipping, both of whom have a refreshing focus on prevention, reconciliation and victim support. I am particularly interested to support the work of Victim support, the volunteers who act as witness supporters in our Courts and the Mental Health Nurses who work in custody suites. I have begun a dialog in one of the Nottinghamshire prisons about how I can maybe support the difficult task of culture change inside the prison and show case to the public the extraordinary difficult work of prison officers.

I have chosen "Equation" as my charity for the year. It is an Award winning, small Nottingham based charity. Since 1989 it has worked to prevent Domestic Abuse and reduce the harm it causes for women and men. Domestic and sexual violence and abuse are complex worldwide public health issues. Both sexes are affected, although disproportionately women and girls. Recently published research demonstrated nursing professionals are three times more likely to have experienced domestic abuse in the last year than the average person in the UK. The majority of the nursing workforce are women, just 11% are men, which probably accounts for the research findings, but doesn't diminish the impact of the high level in my profession.

The experience of domestic violence can lead to a variety of physical and mental health problems, including, fatal outcomes, physical injuries, unintended pregnancies, mental health problems including depression and post-traumatic stress. 1:6 children suffer or have witnessed domestic abuse. In one pupil referral unit (not in Nottinghamshire) catering for permanently excluded students aged between 5 and 16 more than 90% have domestic violence in their profiles. Children experience the same fear and anxiety that adults feel, and experience the same consequences which if untreated, may last for years. As the consequences of managing Covid 19 become more apparent, Domestic Abuse has emerged as a significant issue causing considerable concern across the county.

My choice of chaplain also connects with my interest in health and welfare. I am extremely grateful to Dean Nicola Sullivan for agreeing to undertake this role, in spite of her considerable workload at the Minster. She too has a background in Nursing and Midwifery, and I look forward to her support during my year, in particular when visiting the prisons, which I have found in the past to be a salutary experience. It is widely recognised a considerable proportion of prisoners have a mental health illness. But what is less well understood is that people with a Mental Health illnesses are more likely than the general population to be victims of violence not the perpetrator. Those working in Mental Health services are concerned the recently released and deeply disturbing film "Jocker", inaccurately legitimises the public to associate Mental Health illness with violence, potentially perpetuating this view.

Nottingham has a wide variety of interesting and beautiful buildings, but I selected to have my Installation at Southwell Minster because it is one of my favourite places in Nottinghamshire. The Minster itself is magnificent and the Archbishops Palace of which the medieval State Room, where my Installation was to have taken place, has an amazing history. It dates back to 956 and was first mentioned in the Domesday book in 1086. The Palace has hosted seven of our early Kings, as well as Tudor Statesmen including Cardinal Wolsey who fled here after failing to secure Henry 8th divorce from Catherine of Aragon. And during the English Civil War Charles 1st used this room as a meeting place while held captive here before his death. Secondly I chose this venue because in 1818 it served as a Courthouse for the "Soke of Southwell", a fitting use given the legal elements of a High Sheriffs Installation.