

Volunteers' Week Maureen & Gary



Maureen is 67 years old and lives alone following her husband's stroke. Her husband moved into a residential care setting and prior to this they had led an active life together playing snooker competitions across the country.

She had been originally introduced to snooker by the Chairman of the disability sports group in 1996 and met her husband when his business agreed to sponsor her on the Ladies Tour.

They participated in numerous competitions and this resulted in them winning the 2010 World Championships. The couple had been fortunate enough to meet many of the leading snooker legends along their way. She was a loyal supporter of the World Women's Snooker Tour for over 15 years. Alongside major ranking events, Maureen also competed in several side events including senior's competitions, reaching eight finals.

Known as the 'Gadget Queen' for her wide range of cue adaptations, Maureen also competed on the World Disability Billiards and Snooker Tour.

Maureen appeared in the Evening Chronicle at the time to comment on the fact that some snooker halls would not accept female players. She was runner up in the North Tyneside Sports Personality of the Year award.

During the lockdown period, Maureen had become more isolated from her friends, family and her fellow snooker players and was referred to the Age UK North Tyneside Telephone Befriending service.

The coordinator took great care in matching Maureen with a volunteer befriender who had a personal interest in sport. Although at first their conversations were quite “reserved” Maureen says they quickly struck up an ongoing friendship.

Maureen says “We have a good laugh, Gary’s a canny lad. I look forward to our calls and would definitely recommend the service to others”. She feels as a result of the befriending services that she is becoming more confident again and is beginning now to get out and about. She’s able to visit her husband again and this she really looks forward to.

Maureen’s volunteer befriender Gary is a full-time primary school teacher who relocated to the North East from Norfolk 12 years ago. During the initial lockdown, Gary felt that he wanted to give something back to his local community and so considered volunteering.

He says that befriending fits in with his busy schedule but in the future, he’d consider face to face volunteering too. Gary said, “My befriending coordinator Carole is very supportive of Maureen and me and checks in regularly with us both to make sure that everything is continuing to go well.”

To find out more about the telephone befriending service available from Age UK North Tyneside, or to ask about volunteering with the service, call us on **0191 280 8484 Option 1** or email **enquiries@ageuknorthtyneside.org.uk**.