

Community Leaders - Case Studies

Case Study One - Sue and her leadership with the music group



“I first got involved with B arts through the bread making course which was really fantastic. I hadn't been going out much due to a serious mental health breakdown and lost confidence in being with people. I found the activity and learning experience useful but what surprised me was that I enjoyed the eating together part and getting to know other people. I brought other people along too. After that I started coming to events at B arts. I did a brief (amount of) volunteer(ing) at the bakery and eventually was asked to be on the advisory group for the community interactions for Space to Connect and I've stayed on for the Climate Cafe.

I like that B arts connect with the community by consulting with them on what events they'd like to see. It's important because even though people are trying to be inclusive they can easily plan something that isn't inclusive just because they don't understand what the problems are for people or even worse talk down to them or patronise. This doesn't happen at B arts, we feel part of the team and no one seems to be under a hierarchy. Because I go to mental health groups I'm aware of what puts people off and what facilitates - not everything of course because I've still got my own biases.

I suggested bringing the music group in to the community connect events because I knew that the atmosphere wouldn't intimidate people and they would enjoy the cafe. The first time they didn't play we just came for the community meal. At first people I knew were

quite timid, I knew to meet them at the door so that they didn't come in to a place with no one they knew. They didn't interact with anyone else at first outside the group and they preferred to eat together away from the main cafe. Over months and many times playing at B arts I find people getting their own coffee and talking to others and joining (in with) the activities sometimes. They like playing to the audience and feel a sense of achievement and pride that people enjoy the music. More importantly they trust the venue.

I've enjoyed being involved on the advisory group and actually made a few friends and I feel listened to and I get to know what's going on. I've sometimes been able to get free tickets for arts events to share with people who wouldn't be able to afford them. Kath does a fantastic job of co ordinating all the various activities, people and events and is always positive and helpful coming up with ideas, facilitating workshops (with) boundless energy. I'm proud to be part of the cultural happy place that is B arts.” – Sue Hacking

Case Study Two - Carol and her leadership with the Space to Connect Advisory Group and running her own knit and natter activities



Carol has been part of the Space to Connect Advisory Group since it began in 2019, and has played an active role in hosting knit and natter activities at Space to Connect events and subsequently in Climate Café events. Carol has developed a series of activities that have taught members of our young community and asylum seeker and refugee community in particular various skills around knitting, from organising and planning what materials everyone will need, creating worksheets for people at home and delivering the activity each month, continually adapting her method of teaching by learning from the various groups she has been working with.

[still need a quote from Carol]

Case Study Three - Selim and his journey as a volunteer performer



‘I have noticed such a change in him since coming here’ – Selim’s Wife

Selim first came to B arts as part of an open call out for volunteer performers for Moontopia. Selim wanted to make friends, improve his English and take part in something performative and fun with a group of like-minded people. Selim created his own character for Moontopia based on his own real-life experiences – someone who came from the Moon, and missed it every day but knew he couldn’t go back there because it was dangerous for him. Selim then also created his own character for Etruria Canals Festival, Prince Charming of the Canals, who was looking for the crown that had been lost (the festival also took place on the Queens Jubilee weekend). Selim was also involved in the B arts open day as a walk about performer, takes an active role in the volunteer performer group and has attended theatre shows around the city as well as taking part in various masterclasses.

“Firstly, I was involved in B-Arts with the Moonthopia project. The show’s slogan was “out of this world”. And it was absolutely out of my world. First time in my life, I watched a theater when I was 28 years old. I had no acting experience but I was involved in an interactive theater in the front and backstage with only a few rehearsals. The Moonthopia was a show that contained so many activities. I couldn’t believe that I took a part in it when the show finished. It was absolutely out of my world but now it became my world. Since I have been a volunteer in B-Arts, I have acted in some other shows such as Canals Festival and had several masterclasses about acting, singing, and writing. And I go to watch so many theater, musicals, and other shows as well. I am so thankful for being a volunteer in B-Arts. It put value in my life.”

– Selim

Case Study Four - Evangeline-Grace and her journey as a volunteer performer progressing into professional work



“My name is Evangeline Grace Cooper, I am a professional actress and model and I am based in Stoke-on-Trent. I graduated from Staffordshire University, Acting and Theatre Arts in 2019. I started working with B arts in November 2020 on the Tomorrow’s Garden Project as a volunteer performer via Zoom. I have also participated in other projects with B-Arts such as The Lost Post Office, Rails to Trails and summer school along with many theatre workshops. Throughout my time with B arts I have had the opportunity to join the volunteer performers group, build on my improvisation skills and work on various outdoor theatre performances. I have recently been working professionally with B arts and ran a workshop for a Climate Café which was helping people to make things out of household waste by repurposing jars into storage containers and old greetings card into tags, which helped me to gain confidence and progress into paid acting work. I have now been asked to work as a professional actress on the Blue Girl Commonwealth project which I am thrilled to have the chance to build on my skills as a walkabout performer and progress to the next stage with my work.”

“It is a truly wonderful and interesting journey performing with B-Arts”

Case Study Five - Jess and her progression from a volunteer performer to a professional performer, as well as leading the volunteer performer group



Jessica has been a volunteer performer for B arts for two years since attending a lantern making workshop with her young daughter and finding out more about the opportunities we have on offer. Jessica began her journey as a volunteer performer for Tomorrow's Garden in 2020 and as a walk about performer for The Boat Gathering at Etruria in 2021 and for Rails to Trails in 2021. Since then, Jessica has transitioned into paid performance work on The Lost Post Office in 2021 and led the volunteer performer group at Etruria Canals Festival in 2022 as a paid performer. Jessica was one of three main professional performers in Moontopia in March 2022, and will also be a professional performer as part of the Queen's Baton Relay Celebrations in August 2022 and will also be a paid performer for The Lost Post Office in December 2022.

"Over the past two years that I've been involved with b-arts, I've grown not only in my place within the company but also on a personal level. I feel like a fit within the B-arts family and have been grateful to take on a variety of work. I've been able to explore roles beyond performance through team leadership but also engage in new areas of art and performance that expand who I am as an artist." – Jessica Simm