



VOLUNTEERING WITH  
**THE NATIONAL TRUST**  
EVA-MARIA LENZ'S EXPERIENCE

At Birmingham Business School, we are continuously proud of our staff and the work that they do. We know that our colleagues are contributing to wider society outside of their working lives by volunteering for good causes. We're documenting the volunteering experiences that our staff share with us to celebrate how they are giving back to the community.

*“Volunteering is absolutely great, it’s just about getting the right thing for you.”*



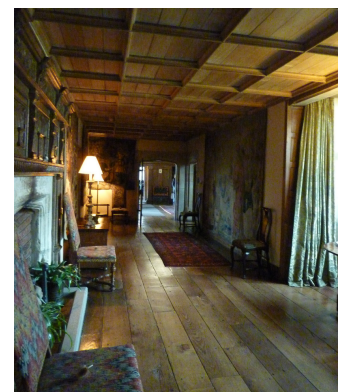
Back in 2011/12, Eva was taking evening classes in creative writing at Solihull College, where she met plenty of like-minded people to talk to and learn from. One of them – an older man who she would speak to in coffee breaks – mentioned that he did some volunteering on guided tours with the National Trust and suggested that Eva did the same.

Eva, PA to the Dean of the Business School, is a keen history enthusiast and was interested in getting involved. After emailing the National Trust, Eva started a role at Clent Hills as an event volunteer for celebrations like Easter, the Queen's Jubilee, and events organised by the Royal Astronomical Society.

“It was really enjoyable stuff, but there weren't that many events throughout the year to keep me busy. So, I went back to the National Trust and asked if anywhere else would need volunteers. They came

back to me with a role as room guide at Packwood House. This fitted my interest in history and my availability at weekends.”

Eva started working Sundays at Packwood House as a room guide, telling people about the rooms, what's in them, and the history of the house. A couple of years ago, Eva stopped her work with Clent Hills to focus on her work with Packwood House.



*“There are about 15 people on the team that I work on. It’s such a close-knit team and you’re able to learn on the job. Even after seven years, there are still things that I’m learning.”*



"It's quite interesting, as there are always people with specialisms coming through, like carpenters and people who do tapestry work. They'll obviously know more than I ever will about these topics, but it gives me the chance to learn about things that I might not have otherwise."

At the house, Eva enjoys meeting people from all walks of life, "from little old ladies to families with young children". Packwood houses some wall hangings depicting Aesop's Fables, and Eva enjoys telling the story around the Fox and the Crow to the children that come with their parents.

When asked what her favourite thing about volunteering is, Eva said she loves the teaching and learning in equal parts. Packwood is always celebrating events during the year, including the 2018 centenary of the end of World War I, which was marked with an exhibition event where volunteers made crochet poppies, paper models, and showed a diary kept from the time of the war.

She also enjoys being around the other volunteers (especially Zack (pictured below), Business Support Assistant in the Packwood office), saying,



"Although the volunteers come and go, there's always someone there that can help you if you need it, so you're always learning on the job."

"We have volunteer get-togethers too, like a summer party, a Christmas do, film nights. These social events are great, because although I only work with 15 or so volunteers, there are actually closer to 300 volunteers at Packwood."

Through volunteering, Eva has had the chance to learn new skills that she applies to her job - within her role, she gets to do work with Packwood's outdoor theatre events, which often attract over 400 visitors. This opportunity has taught her skills in team work, working under pressure, and time/event management.

How does this impact the life of others? Eva recalls one of her fellow volunteers who suffered a car crash and how she saw him grow in confidence as she had the chance to mentor him. Considering the huge age range of volunteers at Packwood, Eva feels that she's had chance to touch a lot of people's lives, and they hers.

For others considering volunteering, Eva puts importance on finding the right path and right kind of volunteering for them. Looking back at her time volunteering, she says, "Volunteering is absolutely great, it's just about getting the right thing for you."

If you're looking to volunteer with the National Trust, visit: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/volunteer>. If you want to share your experience of volunteering, please contact Chelsea Wood at [c.m.wood@bham.ac.uk](mailto:c.m.wood@bham.ac.uk).