

# How to put the **fun** into fundraising

*Julie Seymour, winner of Cats Protection's 2011 Fabulous Fundraiser Award gives us an insight to her money making motivation*



I have been a Cats Protection volunteer for about six years now, initially becoming involved with my local branch – Mid-Warwickshire – for two reasons. Firstly, I had hit the milestone age of 40 and volunteering was somewhere on my lengthy list of 40 new things to try before I hit 41. Although maybe I should have said before I hit the Big 50 as I never did find time to try the other 39! Secondly, in the same year, a scraggy stray moggy had been hanging around my garden for a few weeks on and off when he was unfortunately hit by a car. He needed some very expensive vet treatment, having suffered a broken pelvis.

Feeling a little responsible as it was one of my own very-much-loved cats that had chased him straight under the car's wheels, I made contact with Cats Protection to see if they could help. They explained that the rescue pens were currently full and there was a waiting list of cats needing their help, so I agreed to bring the unfortunate home to mend and Cats Protection kindly helped me with the bill. Six weeks later I officially adopted Junior, my first rescue cat and, of course, I was hooked!

It then struck me that it would be a good idea to try and give something back to the charity by helping out where I could. And as any charity volunteer will tell you, a willing pair of hands are worth their weight in gold, so I offered my willing hands and started helping out with branch events at the weekends. Before I knew it, six months had passed by at high speed and I was now officially the Branch Fundraiser and Events Organiser!

I currently work full time but alongside the branch fundraising. I also manage to foster cats and kittens while they wait to find their new forever homes and am involved in many other areas of the branch's work when I can fit it in, but as that well known saying goes "...ask a busy person..."

## Born bossy

In my few short years as a volunteer, I have held newborn kittens; reunited lost cats with their owners; given lots of TLC to a poorly cat recovering from life-saving surgery; been there at the end for those too poorly to save; stood on street corners in the wind and rain with charity collecting tin to hand and my best smile on show; attended outdoor events come rain or shine; dressed up in a cat costume to bring BigPaw, the branch mascot cat, to life, and so much more but I would not have missed a single one of these experiences. As a volunteer, knowing that what you are doing, no matter how little or how much, makes such a tremendous difference to the lives of cats and people in the local area spurs you on each day and, of course, it's great fun too!

I have always been an organised person, plus I am the first to admit "I was born bossy!" so the fundraising side of things suits me totally and, although it is hard work and it probably takes up



BigPaw mans the stall

all of my spare time and more, I won't be stopping just yet. From booking an event right through to sweeping the floor at close of play, I am involved every step of the way. I have great support from the fundraising volunteers within the branch, plus my 'non-volunteer' husband and, between us, we put on monthly Rehoming Days throughout the year, as well as a Spring Fayre, Summer Bazaar and a Christmas Fayre. We also do our best to attend as many as possible of the local events such as village fêtes, town carnivals and other shows. Our approach is very much about raising funds to help care for the cats and kittens that we rescue, but we also use the opportunities that arise to raise awareness of the branch and the work that we do and recruit new volunteers too.

## Five or zero, win a prize!

My favourite fundraising activity of all has to be the Tombola Table. It's a great way to raise money as the prizes are all donated and people love gambling away a pound or two – and sometimes a lot more! – in the hope that they will one of the fabulous prizes on offer. I always try to theme the prizes on the day to match the event, for example easter eggs at the Spring Fayre, cat-related items at the rehoming days and cat shows, dog toys at the Dogs Trust Open Day and even a blue-and-yellow-themed table for the CP stand at the Supreme Cat Show in November! Our tombola table is becoming quite well known in the area and is always well supported, we have even been known to raise £1,000 from one event, so all in all that's just perfect!

As a branch we are very active and always keen to hear from anyone that wants to join us as a volunteer or a supporter. Please get in touch by phoning us on 01926 334 849 or emailing us at [midwarwickcats@hotmail.com](mailto:midwarwickcats@hotmail.com). Visit our website [www.midwarwick.cats.org.uk](http://www.midwarwick.cats.org.uk) for more details. You can also join us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. ●