Vodafone World of Difference UK offers successful applicants the chance to make a difference in their community by receiving a two-month paid placement with a charity of their choice. Gill Harris reports

VODAFONE World of Difference UK is a programme that allows people to work for a UK charity of their choice for two months – and be paid to do so. It is delivered and run by the Vodafone Foundation, which aims to place individuals in charities all over the UK, making a real difference to communities.

Up to 500 placements will be available in 2011, and will allow successful applicants to work in a charity of their choice from March 2011. The scheme is open to anyone who will be over 18 by that time, is resident in the UK, and has the passion, drive and commitment to donate themselves to a charity. They could be a recent graduate looking for a challenge, a professional seeking a meaningful sabbatical, or a homemaker who wants to give some of their time.

Under the programme, the Vodafone Foundation will pay the charity selected by winning applicants a total of £2500. The balance will be paid to the individual once all taxes and National Insurance have been deducted. Winners will also get a new mobile phone and pre-paid credits so that they can contribute to the scheme’s blog and share their experiences via Facebook and Twitter.

The website http://worldofdifference.vodafone.co.uk explains that the Vodafone Foundation aims to raise awareness of the work that charities do, in a way that’s more meaningful and rewarding than simply writing a donation cheque. ‘We want to introduce passionate people to great causes and vice versa. The skills and experience of a World of Difference winner should be of far greater value to a charity than a donation of the same value. We also want to encourage people to think of the skills that they have – even if they aren’t successful in their application; we hope it’ll encourage people to think about volunteering for their favourite charity.’

Finding the right charity

The Vodafone Foundation points out that it is important to find the right charity: ‘If you are thinking of applying you need to consider your interests, skills and experience – what could you offer the charity? Are you an IT whizz? Are you good at building or making things? Whatever your skill set, it can most likely be applied to meaningful charity work. Next, think about what causes are close to your heart. Find out if there’s a charity in your area or nationwide that matches your interest.’

Whether it’s helping to protect abused animals, planting trees in urban areas, working with homeless outreach or providing essential assistance for those with mental health issues, the only criterion is that the organisation has to be a UK-registered charity.

For their applications to be considered, candidates will have to have approached the charity selected by winning applicants to see if they’re interested in being involved with the programme. It’s worth having a chat about how best you could assist them, as well as directing them to the charities page of the website so that they can fully understand the benefits of being involved.

The charities will receive an extra employee for two months – and get the bene-
fit of a skilled person joining their team. For small charities with only three workers, for example, that extra pair of hands could make a big difference.

Benefits
From the applicant’s point of view, the Foundation points out that ‘As well as the chance to enhance your CV with some charitable work, World of Difference offers a potentially life-changing experience and a chance for you to apply your skills and learn new ones in a new environment.’

Applicants will need two referees and must provide their names and contact details on the application form. For applicants who already have a job, it will be up to them to make sabbatical or other arrangements with their current employer.

Applications can be made online and the closing date for entries is November 23. The successful 500 applicants will be contacted by e-mail during the week commencing January 17, 2011. Charity placements begin during March 2011, with an induction day on February 28.

International programme
World of Difference also runs an international programme, where eight people win the chance to spend a year working abroad for their chosen charity. Details are available from the website.

Ten-minute chat

Christianne Glossop recently achieved a lifelong ambition by completing a tandem parachute jump, and took the opportunity to raise money for two farming charities at the same time. She is also Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales.

Your tandem parachute jump was a lifelong ambition. Why now?
There is a lot about the heavens that attracts me. I am inspired by the changing colours of the sky through the day, the cloud patterns, the sunset and the stars. I enjoyed a hot air balloon flight a few years ago, and have also tried parascending (lifting off behind a boat with mini parachute attached). A tandem parachute jump seemed like a natural progression. And, while ballooning is all about going up and along, the jump was all about coming down . . .

Do you have any similar ambitions?
I loved every single second of the tandem jump, and am wondering whether the next step should be to learn to parachute solo – although I am not sure where I will find the time to do this.

You ‘jumped’ in aid of Farm Crisis Network and the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution? Why did you choose them?
I am sure that we all recognise the commitment, dedication and determination needed to face the daily grind of farming. Each of these charities provides support for farming families as they seek to resolve practical or emotional difficulties and I have every respect for the work that they do. I hope that my efforts will not only raise money for them both, but heighten their profile a little as well.*

* There is still time to sponsor Christianne’s parachute jump. This can be done online at www.justgiving.com/Christianne-Glossop

How did you get to where you are today?
I wish I could say that I had planned my entire career from the outset, but that is not the case. Having set my heart on becoming a vet when I was 13 years old, I found a friend and mentor in a local vet, Jim Goodwin. He took me under his wing, letting me spend every Saturday with him. He saw me through college and is still there for me today.

Since then, I have taken opportunities as they have arisen and have thoroughly enjoyed a varied career as a result. I feel that I played my ‘wild card’ in applying for the Wales CVO job, and was proud to take up the challenge in 2005.

What do like about your job?
I love the challenges it presents and the opportunity to make a difference. I love the fact that every day is different, and that the size of Wales allows close working relationships between all with an interest and a passion in raising standards of animal health and welfare.

Why is your job important?
Devolution of animal health and welfare powers in 2005 gave Wales scope to drive forward its own agenda in this important area. It is a privilege to contribute to this work.

What advice would you give to someone considering a similar career?
I always advise vet students and new graduates to gain experience in general practice first before even considering ‘giving themselves up’ to the Government Veterinary Service – or specialising in any other area for that matter.

What’s the best piece of advice you were ever given?
‘Make sure you can look yourself in the mirror in the morning’. In other words, it is essential to believe in what you are doing, to be able to justify it to yourself. This helps me when times are tricky, and also helps me to sleep at nights.

What was your proudest moment?
There are many proud family moments – the birth of my children, Ben and Jess, their graduations, Ben’s wedding this year . . . But from a professional perspective, my proudest moment has to be the day I qualified as a vet – everything else I have ever done has flowed from there.

What do you do when you are not a CVO?
I have to say that there is never really a time when I am not ‘CVO Wales’. The dreaded call regarding an animal disease emergency can come at any time, and often at the weekend. This plays havoc with other activities, although I do walk the local cider orchards with my black labrador, Moses, watch rugby and enjoy good food and wine.

My other hobby is wedding floristry, which provides an opportunity to be creative. There have been moments when my two worlds have collided, such as when a wedding coincides with a disease outbreak, but I am pleased to say that I have never let a bride down.
Putting something back

Gill Harris

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