



Case Study 1

Susanna Webster

I have been helping at the Falmouth Art Gallery since the beginning of 2003.

In 2002 my husband, Mark, and I donated 43 underwater images to the town for the Art Gallery. These were converted by the gallery staff into a marvellous underwater photography exhibition called "A bit of a dive".

During the exhibition I volunteered to help with their education programme and this included giving many presentations on marine life. The audiences ranged from primary and secondary school children through to photography students, the RNLI and various community groups, such as the West Cornwall Fishkeepers Association. It was easy to talk about the creatures and their environment as I have been diving and gaining knowledge about the marine world for many years.

The opportunity which the gallery gave me to speak in public greatly increased my confidence in my ability to entertain and inform people about the underwater world.

With the gallery's encouragement I embarked upon a venture to give professional underwater presentations throughout the UK. So far my engagements have extended to Sussex, Hampshire and Kent, giving talks in the galleries which are hosting the touring, "A bit of a dive" exhibition.

In April 2004 "A bit of a dive" project was nominated for the Museums and Heritage Award for the best Educational Initiative. I was thrilled to be selected by our Director, along with other volunteers, gallery staff, the Chairman of the Art Gallery Committee and our town mayor to travel to the presentation ceremony held at the Café Royal in London. To be able to meet with other members of the museum world at such a prestigious event was a wonderful experience. When we were unanimously announced the winner it was a great honour to give the acceptance speech and receive the award from TV and Radio presenter, Sandi Toksvig.

As well as assisting with general craft workshops delivered by Claire Fuller, our education officer, to the primary school children of the Falmouth area, I have helped at the special needs workshops, which are regularly held in the gallery. My time spent with these very special people has led me to offer my underwater presentations to Children's Hospices around the country. Douglas House, a young person's hospice in Oxford, has a starfish as its emblem, which, of course, is right up my street. Following my visit there I received a beautiful thank you card and a present of their starfish illustrated T-towel - what a generous thought!

Lately I have been helping to hang the new exhibitions. It's hard work but a really good way to "connect" with the new shows as they come along, and a great feeling of responsibility to be able to handle works of such great value.

I hope to continue my long and happy association with the Falmouth Art Gallery where everyone laughs and really values each other as professionals and human beings together.