

12th May 2011

Dear

I am 96 years old and with the help of my garden, I have raised over \$63,000 for 30 different charities over the past couple of decades. *How have I done it?* Through selling gift cards that I proudly craft by hand. It is a lucky thing that I still have very good close-up sight to do this, in fact I have to take my glasses off for it.

For those of you who do not know what my cards look like, let me describe them. They are plain white with pressed flowers in the middle. The white cards are given to me by Dunedin Print and the flowers are from my own garden. I press them using a pile of Listener magazines.

I will put all of my violas in one Listener and my verbenas in another, and then load more Listeners on top of them. Once pressed, I glue them to the card with PVA and toothpicks. I then package them up in clear plastic, in groups of 3, always making sure I put the most attractive card on top of the pile, (a little marketing trick I have picked up along the way!)

They are then sold at different shops, organisations and Medical Centres for \$5 a packet, (much cheaper than Hallmark might I add). I like the thought of my garden flowers travelling all over the world to the different people that receive them in the post from loved ones living here.

Recently I decided to make the Otago Community Hospice the designated recipient of my gift card fundraising. I chose to do this because of everything the Hospice gives to our community. The way they make people's last days so much easier and less something to be feared. They do this, not just through their services, but their warmth and compassion. I believe without Hospice our community would be a lot poorer. I also appreciate the way they give back. Every year I enjoy outings with the Hospice, the most memorable for me was a couple of years back when I joined them on the Monarch Wildlife Cruise. It was also the day I celebrated my 93rd birthday!

Before my years as an avid gardener and fundraiser, I obtained a Home Science Degree from Otago University and taught for 1 year, before marrying. In those days you gave up work once you got married, although I didn't do this immediately after the fact. At least, not until I received an anonymous letter at my work telling me I "should give up my job and let a single person have it".

So I guess you could say marriage was the beginning of my voluntary work career! As well as supporting and fundraising for various organisations, such as the Hospice and Amnesty International, I have also worked for the National Council of Women, the Polytechnic Council and the Knox Council. I was nominated the first woman on the



Dawn Ibbotson enjoying the sun in her beautiful garden.

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Polytechnic Council and also became the Deputy Chairman of the Knox Council. In 1978 I was awarded the CBE.

As I am a fan of quotes I will use one of my favourites to describe what inspires me to do this work: *"to whom much is given, much will be expected"*. I have been blessed and fortunate within my life and I view my contribution as both my responsibility and my privilege. I believe that we are all connected in the world and that we also have the power to touch other people's lives without ever even meeting. Within a small community this is even more so true and contributing to local causes allows me to feel a deeper sense of belonging. As a cross-stitched quote that hangs in my living room says, *"bloom where you are planted"*.

I hope that you are all 'blooming', or at least 'living every moment'. I know as fellow supporters of the Otago Community Hospice you are all good and generous people and I would like to say it is a pleasure to be sharing a community with you. If you ever see the white cards with the home-grown pressed flowers on them, please buy a pack now that you know their story... I suppose you now might be more prone to checking inside to see if the bottom two cards are just as attractive!

I wish you all the best for the rest of the year and will leave you with just one more little quote, this time from JK Rowling, *"As is a tale, so is life. Not how long it is, but how good it is, is what matters."*

Much love,



Dawn Ibbotson

