

Volunteering in South Africa – a surprisingly local story!

With the end of another school year, there have been lots of articles about 'Gap Years' – this one's different! It's about professional people wanting a career break and retired people wanting to give something back. For two local couples, their dreams of voluntary work overseas came to fruition last year.

Nita and Paul live in Newport Pagnell, while Lynn and Michael live just a short distance away. All four travelled to South Africa to volunteer their time and skills, living and working in the townships of Port Elizabeth. Their trip was arranged by the aptly named 'people and places', a not-for-profit enterprise.

Nita's former career was in nursing and palliative care; Paul's experience was business, and accountancy; Lynn is a social worker for children and families; Michael is a maths teacher – a great range of experience that was put to good use in a grassroots healthcare project and a township school.

As Lynn has said, "Our voluntary work was hugely rewarding – we were definitely the right people in the right places – able to share our professional experience and life skills with local people who made us feel really welcome. So many great memories ..."

"This was probably the most rewarding thing we've done", said Michael. "A lot of consideration went into matching our skills. It was our first experience of overseas voluntary work and will not be our last."

Both Nita and Paul have talked about having gained much from attending previous volunteer meetings, as well as meeting up with Lynn and Michael – who live just half an hour away. "Meeting other volunteers and hearing about their own experiences before going to South Africa gave us real insight and understanding – invaluable!"

Since returning home, all four have given talks to social groups and clubs whenever they can – some Phonebox readers may have been to one. Now there is another opportunity to hear their stories and talk



with them, as well as other volunteers!

You are invited to come and join Nita, Paul, Lynn, Michael and others on 19th November in Newport Pagnell. 'People and places' founders, Kate and Sallie, will be there to talk about their work and the life-changing opportunities volunteer travel can offer you.

For further details about the meeting, or to find out more about voluntary work, please contact kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk or call Kate on 01795 535 718

