

## Walking the Path to Being Active - Lynda

Between zumba classes, badminton, aqua jogging and walking groups, there are few times when Lynda Donnell is taking things slow. Prior to 2013, it was a different story for the 62 year old. Put on medication for her blood pressure and referred to Appetite for Life - a healthy eating programme - by her GP, she later signed up for the Green Prescription programme and its Be Active initiatives. A Green Prescription (GRx) is a health professional's advice to a patient to be physically active, as part of the patient's health management.

"I felt like I needed to get rid of some weight and be fitter in myself," Donnell says. Donnell has neurofibromatosis (NF), a genetic disorder that causes tumours to grow on certain nerves. In what is now her "other life", she had four tumours removed between 1974 and 1992, one of which left her left arm paralysed. She was left-handed prior to the procedure, and has learnt to adapt and use her right arm.

"Where there's a will there's a way. There is no such word as can't. This is me." Through the GRx she has gained a new level of motivation and confidence. Donnell now volunteers over at least seven different programmes from Linwood and Bromley to Parklands and Woolston, to promote GRx and share her story. "I feel better in myself. I like encouraging people into good exercise and healthy eating."

If it hadn't been for the Be Active programme, she says she would not have discovered all the activities she can now tackle. "They encouraged me. I believe in what I'm doing as a volunteer." It's also given her the energy to keep up with her three grandchildren. Every Wednesday she leads a walking group along New Brighton beach, and is then off to badminton before Zumba in the afternoon.

"There are lots of laughs. And it is good to get the husbands along." As a kindergarten relief teacher, who graduated at 40, she has always had to be fit to be able to run round young children. "I can now carry the mats a lot better and put the sandpit mats on a lot quicker. I did it before but I'm flying through it now."

She was also once drawn to peanuts, chips and the occasional sausage roll, but instead opts for healthy options like smoothies and bypasses the cake after each walking group. Sport Canterbury GRx patient support person Beth Hickland says Donnell helps many people but is modest about her work. She has volunteered at over five programmes over a year-and-a-half.

"People come back because they know she is there to support."

