

# Countess of Wessex visits Emelia's Place

Sophie, HRH Countess of Wessex visits The Hereford Haven. The Countess enjoys a joke with Julia Rennie and Gill Thomas.





Sophie, HRH Countess of Wessex visiting Emelia's Place which is run by Hereford Street Pastors. The countess meets some of the city's street pastors.

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THE Countess of Wessex called the Hereford Haven a "fantastic organisation" during a royal visit this week.

Sophie, who is married to Prince Edward, visited the breast cancer support centre on Tuesday as part of a tour of four places in the county.

She had visited the centre before and said it was lovely to be back and see the organisation growing.

The Countess thanked all the fundraisers gathered for giving their time to the charity, which provides emotional and physical support to women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer.

Fundraising manager Frankie Devereux said: "To hear the Countess talk so highly about The Haven means an awful lot to us and our supporters, and hopefully it will encourage them to carry on supporting us."

The Countess met volunteers and staff at The Haven, and women who have received support.

Toni Greaves was there with her husband, Chris.

She received support from The Haven after she was diagnosed with breast cancer in December 2011 and the couple are fundraising for the centre through their Biking is Breast campaign.

Mrs Greaves said of the Countess: "She is such a wonderful person – she is so easy to talk to and down to earth and approachable and interested in what The Haven does as well."

Lord Lieutenant Lady Darnley accompanied the Countess throughout the county.

Their first port of call was to Sophie House in Hampton Bishop, which is a Martha Trust centre caring for profoundly disabled young people in Hereford.

Sarah and Richard Smith, founders of the Martha Trust in Hereford, together with their fellow trustees and staff were delighted to welcome the Countess.

Her Royal Highness visited their therapy unit, where she saw state-of-the-art audio visual equipment in use.

She was presented with a bouquet of flowers by Sophie Sharp-Smith and the visit was concluded with the planting of an ornamental tree to commemorate the visit.

Following the visit to The Haven, Sophie went to Emelia's Place in Gaol Street, Hereford which is run by the city's volunteer street pastors. It is a unit to help people on a night-out recover from excess alcohol and help reduce the pressure on the ambulance service, A&E and police.

Jocelyne Grisman, street pastor and event coordinator, said: "The Countess seemed really engaged with it.

She wasn't uptight and she asked questions and made jokes. It made everyone feel at ease."

The Countess was shown the work of street pastors, while performing arts students from the Hereford College of Arts acted out scenarios about how street pastors help people on nights out.

Before leaving the city she visited Close House in St Peter's Close – a youth centre which helps young people aged 13 to 24.

The Countess joked with young people and volunteers and impressed with her understanding and appreciation of their work.

She watched scenes from the Story of Mary and Joe, a film made by Close House, MediaShypp and the Ledbury Poetry Festival.

Sophie congratulated volunteers for being an extended family for young people who need it and presented Carl Higgins and John Mason with awards for their efforts in 2015.