
FRAN TOWNSEND:

REMEMBERED BY VOLUNTEERS AND
STAFF OF THE ALTERNATIVES TO
VIOLENCE PROJECT

I am deeply sorry to hear the news. Fran was always efficient, good humoured and concerned for the good of the workshops she arranged. She looked after us as facilitators in a kindly way and embodied much of the good in AVP in her approach to her work. What a gap she leaves! My thoughts are with her family and colleagues in the AVP Northwest Region.

Ken Hutchinson

It was indeed a great shock to learn of this news. I have worked with Fran on many occasions both as a facilitator and as the North West organiser. Despite her health, which was not very good, she was always cheerful, efficient and above all caring both for the participants and the facilitators. As a workshop coordinator myself I know how much effort it takes to make a workshop happen and she would give up most of the weekend to ensure that everything went well. It is really a great loss for AVP both nationally and for AVP North West.

Martin Mansell

I've always known that Fran's health was not good, and she was very unwell the first time I met her. That was on a Training for Facilitators workshop in York, somewhere around 1996. I was facilitating a training workshop for the first time and she was a participant. And what a great participant she was. It was a considerable physical struggle for her, but she worked with enthusiasm and humour and was clearly going to become a gifted facilitator. Most of my contacts with her after that were at AVP gatherings and in her capacity as the administrative anchor of AVP in Manchester. It was such a delight to phone the Manchester office and get Fran's warm, friendly, helpful voice at the other end. This is such a tragic loss of a devoted AVP worker and a lovely, generous, kind person. My deepest sympathy goes to Fran's family and friends.

Jenny Hartland

I'd known Fran for around ten years and found her to be a supportive and gentle woman. She would always listen to any concerns I had, on a personal level as well as connected to AVP. I remember going for a walk with her at the AVP annual meeting in Croydon listening to my personal issues and offering me advice. Whenever she contacted me she would ask how I was personally and I could see she really cared. Whenever I facilitated in Manchester she looked after the team so well, even preparing lunch for us during the team building session. I will miss her.

Tony Poole

This is really shocking news. I was with Fran just a few weeks ago for a workshop in Manchester. She seemed fine – bright and cheerful as always – and looked after the team and the participants very well. She was very capable and committed, and unfailingly kind and helpful. I'm sure everyone who knows her will remember her with great affection. I certainly will. This is a huge loss for AVP. I am shocked and very sad.

Arthur Charlton

I'm really sorry to hear about Fran's death. From my time as Prison Project Coordinator in the AVP London office, she was one person who I could rely upon to pick up the phone with positive attitude, whether she could help you or not wasn't the point, so I always left with a calmness.

Delroi Williams

My sympathy and prayers for the repose of the soul of dear Fran to the family and all who worked closely with her. The news is all the more poignant when it comes at this time of the year. I consider that her efforts as a skilled AVPer have left us with a legacy of love, peace and reconciliation. May all our efforts add to this noble record.

Kathleen Staunton

I only met Fran once at the Gathering, a few years back in Thirsk. I found her to be a clearly open and loving person. I am holding all who remember her in the light.

Sarah Linnell

I am so sad about Fran's departure. She was such a kind and generous person. I loved her way of saying 'expecting the best' at the end of her messages. I won't forget Fran and will miss her.

Anne-Fred Walle-Mentre

What very sad news indeed. I do not think I knew her because I'm still new with AVP. But I felt the shock of the sad news with the rest of AVP management, staff and volunteers. My heart-felt sympathy is with her family. May her soul rest in peace.

Franca Ubogagu

Fran was lovely – friendly, warm, gentle, dedicated to AVP, always a pleasure to talk to. Perhaps the greatest tribute is that I can think of nothing wrong to say about her.

Gill Boccock

We are all in shock in the South West. We found Fran to be so warm, supportive and caring – such a role model and asset to AVP. She never complained about her chronic ill health and was always cheerful. She will be sorely missed. We would like you to pass on our condolences to her family.

Virginia Membrey

I was really sorry to hear of Fran's death. I met Fran very early in my time in AVP and I remember how focused she was on how she could be and do the best for her children. She was a lovely woman.

Anne Gilchrist

I am shocked. I had only just met Fran at the National Gathering and was inspired to hopefully volunteer with her. Now sadly that is not to be. Life's blessings and grace to her family in their sadness.

Elizabeth Edema

I can't say I knew Fran more than slightly, but such a lovely person to meet and have reason to contact.

Simon Jackson

In a very short time Fran had become a friend as well as a point of contact if I needed to know something about AVP. I re-started my own AVP journey in the autumn of 2009. Fran was my first contact, and her calmness made that initial step much easier to make. I will miss her.

Jean Lyon

It's been a tough week for many who new Fran and she will be greatly missed by many. Fran's patience, understanding and gentleness will be massively missed around the office. I will never forget her kindness and her passion for others to do well.

Kate Kay

I am devastated to hear the news; Fran was so obviously committed to her work and so supportive of her volunteers. Could you pass on my best wishes and sorrow for Fran's death to her family? She will be missed by many people.

Steve Griffiths

I choose my friends very carefully, and can say Fran was my closest friend. In the 5 yrs that I knew her she never once put herself first never moaned about anything, just took her life her work and illness dying in her stride. Even after getting that news we all fear, she just said it's just another illness and got on with the job. A.V.P. has lost the most committed worker they ever had. Rest in peace Fran.

Simon Hammond

This is indeed very sad news. Over the years when I was co-ordinator of AVP Scotland, I knew Fran as a fellow AVP co-ordinator. I used to ask her for information and seek her advice and opinion, as she was co-ordinator of one of our most successful groups and after that, regional group. She was always willing to help in whatever way she could. I shared a room with her at one AVP Gathering and I remember her telling me that her daughter was pregnant and that she was awaiting the birth of her grandchild. She spoke with great tenderness and love. When I think of Fran, I can picture her slight build and her unassuming ways. I found her to be gentle, quiet, reliable and caring. She had great loyalty to AVP and stuck by it through the ups and downs. The word stalwart comes to mind. My thoughts and prayers are with her family at this sad time.

Elizabeth Allen

Your news about Fran is indeed a shock. She gave me a lot of encouragement in the early days and supported me in certain parallel activities I was doing. She was very open. My loving thoughts go to her family.

Joyce Gee

It's awful to hear the news of Fran. She made the North-West office such a welcoming place and was such a lovely down-to-earth person.

Celia Harris

I had the pleasure of working with Fran for three years whilst I worked for AVP in London and she worked in Manchester. I remember going up to Manchester in my first month in the job to meet with Fran, we drank a lot of tea and chatted about work, family and relationships – the love she had for her family, her strong principles, values and integrity came through right from that first meeting. Over the years, Fran was always a friendly voice at the end of the phone, we'd talk, share ideas, work through problems and chat when things were getting stressful. I respected Fran as a colleague, a woman, mother and a friend and am deeply saddened to hear of her passing. Fran was such a warm, good person and she will be greatly missed by me, AVP and by so many others who she has touched or helped through her work. My thoughts are with her family at this difficult time.

Natalie Hewison

I did not know Fran well, but would like to say this, so that you know that Fran's influence extends into the range of everyone she met, not just her close network. She was cheerful and welcoming to me in all our e-mail communications about AVP, so that I knew before I met her what her smile might be like – I wasn't disappointed! I felt like she cared about everyone who crossed her path and I know that AVP has lost a valuable ambassador in the Northwest region. She will be missed by everyone who knew her.

Barbara-Jean Borthwick

I can't say what a shock it is and how painful it is to read about Fran's sudden death. The thought of not ever seeing Fran again is so, so hard to imagine. Fran's patience, generosity and wisdom lit her path and all around her. Please, please send my condolences to her daughter. I am so, so very grateful for having had the privilege of meeting and working with Fran.

Henrica Takens-Milne

Working with AVP Manchester was always something to look forward to because I knew that with Fran overseeing the arrangements, everything would be organised and run well. Her commitment to AVP showed in everything she did and in the cheerful way she did it, despite suffering ill health from time to time. It clearly meant so much more to her than just a job. I shall miss her smile, her concern for others, the apparent diffidence with which she concealed a very determined nature, and the sound of her voice. A great loss to AVP, and I'm sure a terrible loss to all those closest to her.

John Conchie

I was shocked to hear this. I didn't know Fran well, but she always seemed a tireless advocate and supporter of AVP. She will be really missed.

Rosemary Hartill

How to express how much Fran has given to AVP over the years? Such care and concern for all the people she worked with...and such commitment! I am very sad Fran has died... and I want to celebrate the generous and loving person she was and is in my memory.....

Hubert Cassel

Fran supported everyone she came into contact with in AVP, from anxious enquirers to experienced facilitators. She had the gift of giving her full attention to each individual, so that we all felt we had a unique friendship with her. She supported me through the phases of my training and first few workshops. I always knew that I could speak freely and that she would automatically maintain confidentiality-Fran lived by the AVP guidelines!

Fran stayed with me overnight last June, helping to run a taster session as part of our efforts to promote AVP in Merseyside. She gave me the personal gift of recommending the writing of Barbara Kingsolver, for which I shall always be grateful.

Irene Marsh

To me Fran was a quiet, unassuming and loving person who was dedicated to the work of AVP in Manchester and made a huge difference to the success of our workshops. She will be very much missed.

Shirley Payton

Fran is one of the few people it would be impossible to say a bad word about. She was always cheerful and positive, and a very brave person. She will be a great loss not only to her family and friends, but also to all her colleagues at AVP, where she was a much loved part of the team, and where her contribution was outstanding.

Colette Bone

Fran was a joy to know. She was so caring about her job and the AVP committee, the facilitators and those who came to our workshops. She was a model of what we Quakers call "living simply". She seemed embarrassed to be paid by us, though I know she needed the money.

I know she was proud to be a grandmother, and it is good to know she met Hannah – she must have enjoyed that. One of her last emails was signed "Fran the Gran 2".

Nic Wright

I have known Fran since her early days with AVP, her first Level 1, her first Workshop as apprentice facilitator, member of our AVP Greater Manchester management group, and subsequently appointed as our Project Co-ordinator. Fran took on the role and developed it, taking a professional approach to the work and managing both office and volunteers effectively. She became the voice of AVP in the North West and I'm sure that many people have been encouraged to attend workshops through her understanding and support.

AVP has benefitted from her loyalty, commitment and belief. She stayed with us through thick and thin, although things have not always been easy. Fran lived her life in accordance with the principles of AVP, and truly felt, as a participant once said 'AVP is not just for Christmas', but that AVP can transform lives.

In my time as Chair of AVP Greater Manchester I worked closely with Fran for many years, and to me she was not only a colleague, but became a steadfast friend. My last memory is of waving to her from my gate only two or three weeks before her death. It is a happy memory of her smiling face. She was a wonderful person, full of courage in the face of physical frailties which she never allowed to get her down. She is sadly missed.

Hilary Brazell

My experience of Fran was of warmth, welcome, encouragement, kindness and efficiency. I only knew her in the last year through going to facilitate in Manchester and her organising of the workshops, her care of us facilitators and of the participants was just lovely – she was so cheerful and reassuring, she always fed us well on the Friday evening and made sure that all would be well for the weekend. She was a key part of the Manchester experience for me and I shall miss her hugely. There must be countless participants of workshops in Manchester who will remember her with enormous appreciation and affection.

Alice Audsley

During my time working for AVP in London I have worked with Fran from time to time. I found her to be a loving person, devoted to service of the people she worked with including workshop participants, volunteers and her fellow staff. I will remember her for her straightforward generosity, buoyant enthusiasm and her hope that endured through difficult times. My thoughts are with her family.

David Gee

I have known Fran for over ten years. To me she came over as such a warm hearted person whose commitment to AVP in Manchester was beyond question. When I took over from Hilary as chairman, two or three years ago we talked about our working relationship. She made it so easy for me. Whenever I offered to help with the office work I was always told she could manage as indeed she did. I knew her health was fragile but she had to be really bad to take time off – she was so determined not to be beaten. Twice this year I was unable to go to a meeting in London and she took my place: the reason, well it was to see her daughter and family more than AVP. She signed off her last email to me as “FRAN GRAN 2” and that is how I will remember her.

Alan Saleh



Fran and colleagues at AVP National Gathering 2010

