

## PRESS RELEASE

### Making a difference – our town centre Hosts

*March 2017:* 80 miles walked, 20 shoppers and visitors helped, 90 businesses supported and 30 street issues reported – all in a week's work for Northampton town centre Hosts Kimberley Herbert and Matthew Crawley-Alexander.

The duo, employed by Northampton town centre Business Improvement District (BID), have played an important role in helping to improve the overall town centre experience for shoppers, visitors and businesses since taking up their roles in November 2014.

They engage and interact with members of staff, business owners and the general public on a daily basis, offering help and support, as well as reporting security, cleaning and environmental issues to relevant authorities.

In 2016 alone they reported 1,223 street cleaning issues to the Borough Council, proactively undertook 3,656 town centre business visits and spoke to 5,839 shoppers and visitors to provide guidance, support or directions.

Talking about her role Kimberley, who became a Host having graduated with a Psychology degree from the University of Northampton said: "It is a great job and no two days are ever the same which I love - there's not many other roles like it. Between us we work every week day, from 8.30am to 5pm, patrolling the town centre, visiting business owners and speaking to members of the public to help with everything from shopper dilemmas and directions through to business requests, support and even emergencies.

"We are always in uniform which gives us an important visual presence and definitely contributes towards providing a more positive experience for shoppers, visitors and businesses. Getting to work with partner organisations like the Police and Council is also really rewarding as it makes you feel like you're part of a much wider goal."

Portable technology devices and smart phones are used by Hosts regularly to report issues and log and monitor interactions. Taking pictures of new businesses, events or town centre hot spots for promotion on the BID's social media channels is also an important aspect of the role.

Matthew, who came into the position following graduating from the University of Northampton in Travel and Tourism Management, added: "We are the eyes and ears of the town centre so it's great to be able to share positive things that we see happening every day through our photos and videos on social media. They create a talking point and sense of pride in our town."

Both Matthew and Kimberley agree that the social aspect of the role is important. Matthew said: “We pride ourselves on offering the extra social level of service that you can only get from face-to-face contact. That means chatting to shoppers and visitors to help them navigate their way through the town centre and making regular visits so that shop owners know where to go if they want to get involved in one of our many BID projects or need an issue reporting, like a street lamp that’s stopped working or a security matter. We listen to their challenges, report any issues they have to the relevant authorities and try to make a real difference. Providing positive experiences like these are what people remember and what makes Northampton town centre an attractive place to work, visit and do business in.”

Yvonne Spence, who owns independent boutique Voni Blu in St Giles Quarter, is one of a host of businesses that value the BID.

“As a business we have benefitted from a number of initiatives and promotions and I think the BID’s wider work to promote the town centre as a historic market town and highlight the diversity on offer with the range of specialist independent stores, award winning theatres, places of interest and fabulous restaurants is great,” she said. “I feel Northampton town centre BID has given us a voice and brought town centre businesses together. The Hosts are a good link, taking on board our feedback and keeping us informed as to what is going on. They are a friendly face to the public and really do deliver a feel good factor.”

If you are a town centre business and want to get involved in Northampton town centre BID to promote your business, window display, an event, job vacancy, recruitment anniversaries and much more, please get in touch on Twitter @NorthamptonBID or Facebook: /NorthamptonBID.

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