

Neha's Journey: From Lost Dreams to New Beginnings

Hi, I'm Neha Sudarsanan and I can proudly tell my present self, "I'm proud of you". I've learned that dreams aren't over when you face setbacks-they simply take new shapes. If you ever feel like you've fallen, remember there will always be another opportunity waiting for you. You just have to recognise it, embrace it, and keep moving forward.



My journey to where I am today has been filled with challenges, self-discovery, and transformation, and I will tell myself I am proud of me.

I've been volunteering with Age Friendly Salford for almost a year, and recently began volunteering with Salford CVS, but before that, I lived a very different life. Taekwondo was my whole world growing up. After years of hard work, I won three national titles and represented my state at the national championships. I dreamed of becoming a recognised champion. But in 2018, everything fell apart after I suffered a serious injury during a national match.

The doctors said I could continue, but it would come at the risk of long-term damage. Faced with an impossible choice at a young age, I walked away from my dream. That decision left me feeling lost. I had poured years of passion, dedication, and effort into Taekwondo, and suddenly it was gone. I didn't know who I was or where I was headed!

When I moved to a new country to study Business Management, the uncertainty only deepened. I was in an unfamiliar place with no connections, feeling isolated and unsure of my future. I had some interest in social work but didn't know if I could turn it into something meaningful.

One day, I attended a career fair and met Michael, a Development Worker, who introduced me to Age Friendly Salford. Out of curiosity, I started volunteering, and it changed my life. Volunteering helped me break free from loneliness and self-doubt. I began connecting with the community, understanding the local culture, and developing the confidence to speak to new people.

Over time, I discovered new passions. Volunteering with Age Friendly Salford gave me hands on social work experience, helping me see that I could make a meaningful impact on others. Volunteering more recently with Salford CVS has given me the opportunity to explore my interest in digital marketing, showing me what it feels like to work in the real world. These experiences helped me realise that my journey wasn't over, I was simply finding new dreams to chase.

As my journey progresses, I realise how volunteering with Salford CVS has helped me open up and see what I'm truly good at. If I hadn't chosen to volunteer, I may never have found the courage to become a **Student Ambassador** or embrace the new opportunities coming my way.

Today, I'm proud to say I've built a future I'm excited about, and it all started with taking that first step into volunteering.

If you're feeling lost or unsure, remember that new paths are always out there, you just have to be brave enough to explore them. Keep moving forward. The best is yet to come.

