



A MIDDLETON MINUTE WITH . . .

MARIE GRIBBEN, Centre Manager at Middleton Shopping Centre



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What's your favourite photo at the minute?

We all have a favourite photo of ourselves, one that brings back to life, fantastic memories and this photo is mine! It was taken in my favorite holiday destination of Santorini a couple of years ago. I love cats and this cheeky chappy appeared to love me back! He visited my balcony every day for over a week – it may have been something to do with the chicken and biscuits I bribed him with.

What does a day in your role as Middleton Shopping Centre Manager look like?

Where do I start! No one day is ever the same. Being a Shopping Centre Manager means your people skills have to be diverse with the ability to step it up a gear when the going gets tough. My alarm is set for 7am and in the words of Dolly Parton 'I tumble outta bed, stumble in the kitchen, pour myself a cup of ambition, yawn and stretch and try to come to life! There is no such thing as a normal day, as each day is extremely varied. At any one time I can be dealing with H&S issues, contractor risk assessments for the centre or retailers, budget management, processing invoices, marketing / community events, retail liaison, visitor safety, deciding on the next sustainability project or even helping clean the toilets! Being a Centre Manager is not a 9-5 job, therefore invariably work often continues into the evening. Having a good support network around you both personally and professionally is very important. We all need to lean on someone for support at some stage in our life.

What is essential to your role

Without question the whole shopping Centre team! The Centre is so much more than a shopping destination, it's a community made up of individuals who come together to provide a service for our visitors. The personnel employed at the Centre are remarkable and give 100% all of the time. Encouraging a 'one team' mentality and seeing the benefits of this compared to a 'them and us' attitude, pays dividends. I can't run the Centre alone; it is and always will be a team effort.

Who do you admire and why?

I have immense admiration for the retailers and independents in the shopping centre. The last two years have been extremely difficult for everyone, but the resilience shown by our occupiers has been inspirational. I set up a WhatsApp group for all the retailers just after the first lockdown, so that everyone could keep in touch with each other. Despite the challenges faced by the pandemic, the loss to their business and changes to our everyday life, the banter within the group was fantastic. They are all truly admirable.

What's your favorite book and why do you think the mindful library is important?

I love crime thrillers and my favorite author at present is Tess Gerritson. Reading is my escape from reality and we all need a bit of that! I was delighted to be able to launch our very own small library, Mindful Nest, on World Book Day 2022 to encourage our visitors to bring a book or take a book. This free facility offers a relaxing area in which you can browse through the books available or simply bring a book to exchange. The concept is a welcome community addition to the centre and has been really well received by everyone.

What would you consider the most interesting fact about Middleton ?

I love history! Middleton has a rich colourful history and I have thoroughly enjoyed bringing the past to life. During our 50th birthday celebrations it was fantastic to learn about the high level 70m frieze that the shopping centre has. This is a unique point that the shopping centre has and one to be celebrated.



What do you enjoy most about your role ?

Getting involved in charity events or fundraising for local charities / communities. Unfortunately, shortly after starting at Middleton, the pandemic hit. This resulted in restrictions for everyone. Following the easing of restrictions, I was able to 'Sleep Out' for Land Aid, raising awareness and funds for homelessness. Additionally, our One Great Day event allowed me to dress up as Supergirl with the team!

