



# CLOSE WITH... JENNI FRYER



THE CEO OF MARTINEAU GARDENS, A 2.5-ACRE COMMUNITY GARDEN WHICH OFFERS THERAPEUTIC HORTICULTURE FOR PEOPLE WITH A RANGE OF NEEDS, IS HEADING A NEW PROJECT TO MAKE THE VENUE EVEN MORE ACCESSIBLE – WHILE ROCKING TO ALANIS MORISSETTE, BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND AC/DC!

## BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

I'm a Brummie born and bred and started out as a journalist on the Sutton Coldfield Observer. I moved into PR and communications, working on everything from pubs to pipe work and dating to dumper trucks. When I hit 40, I decided to take the plunge and started working in the charity sector with hospices, sight loss and young people's charities before I landed in my current role.

## IT'S WHAT I DO

I'm CEO of Martineau Gardens, a 2.5-acre community garden which offers therapeutic horticulture for people with a range of support needs. We're a registered charity and are open to the public six days a week, alongside school visits, events and hiring the space. I'm involved in the running of the charity, fund-raising, events – everything that doesn't involve digging or planting. (I have a track record of killing plants!)

## WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE

My ambition this year is to lead a fund-raising appeal for the gardens for a new building, which the brilliant team at Martineau will be launching in June. It's a fantastic opportunity for the gardens to become more accessible. We are launching a crowdfunder to support the next steps in the build process.

## BIGGEST SUCCESS

In my personal life, raising three children solo while also caring for my mum who lived with dementia. Professionally, it's finding a role where I see the impact of what the charity does every day. I read the other day about glimmers, tiny

moments of joy that spark positive feelings. I realised just how many of those come through some wonderful moments at work for me.

## BIGGEST LESSON LEARNED

There is a fine line between being courageous and a bit daft! I've never been afraid to try new things, but on several occasions I've ended up over-committed and overstretched as a result.

## WHAT I LIKE ABOUT BRUM

It has to be the food. It demonstrates the diversity of the city – from the pop-up traders at Digbeth Dining Club to Michelin-starred restaurants, like Opheem. One of my favourite nights ever was a fund-raising pop-up restaurant at Martineau Gardens run by Ben Wright, who was a chef at Opheem at that time. I waitressed – it was brilliant fun. But I'm equally happy with a hot, fresh samosa from the Desi Sweet Centre on Soho Road.

## DOWNTIME

I'm a huge fan of a live gig and regularly organise meet-ups for a local rock group. This year I'm off to Cardiff to see Alanis Morissette, Liverpool for Bruce Springsteen and Paris for AC/DC. I also love a smaller gig closer to home – the blues afternoon at the Hare and Hounds, Kings Heath is a favourite.

## ANYTHING ELSE TO ADD?

Whatever you do today, take a walk in the fresh air if you can. Connecting with nature and being outside is one of the simplest and most powerful ways of boosting wellbeing. ■