

# This woman made £650,000 dealing in property... and then gave it away



**Philanthropist:** Charlotte Grobien of Putney has pledged to donate a total of £1 million to charity. "I have everything I could possibly want," she says

WHEN Charlotte Grobien began as a property developer, she aimed to make as much money as possible. But unlike other entrepreneurs, her motives were entirely altruistic. She made a profit of £650,000 from building and selling three homes in south-west London and is now giving the money to charity.

"I am not a martyr," said Mrs Grobien. "I look at it this way: I have everything I could possibly want, the big house, the smart car and the nice holiday every year. Ultimately, I have reached a time in my life where, fortunately, I don't have to work for personal gain."

"There are millions of people who are not so lucky, so I have found a way to make some money to help those who need it."

Mrs Grobien, who lives with husband Henning in Putney, began in 2003 by buying three plots of land for more than £1 million, some of it was her own money and the rest borrowed from her bank.

She obtained planning permission to build a house on each plot and raised another £1 million to spend on building materials. She then employed an architect and workmen to create her vision.

"I had watched all the television programmes on climbing the property ladder and always thought 'I could do that'," she said. "It took a lot of time and effort but it was

## ELLEN WIDDUP

rewarding watching the builders lay the foundations brick by brick.

"I knew they were building something much more than a four-bedroom house. They were also laying the foundations for a money-making venture that was going to benefit so many."

Mrs Grobien quit her job as a conference manager and events organiser in 2002 to join the voluntary sector. She worked at Wandsworth prison and in schools offering careers advice before deciding to embark on property development. Her husband, a retired corporate executive, offered occasional advice.

The architect, estate agents and accountants all gave their time for cost price and Mrs Grobien set up Give It Away, a company that helped her to organise the finances for the venture.

She sold the three properties in Putney for more than £3 million, making a £650,000 profit after all her costs.

"It was so rewarding," said Mrs Grobien. "I have already given away almost £200,000 of the money I made and there is still more to play with... I've made a pledge to myself that I want to give away £1 million in total so that means at least one more property project."

[www.give-it-away.co.uk](http://www.give-it-away.co.uk)

## Good causes she has benefited

CHARLOTTE GROBIEN has given away £172,000 of the £650,000 she has raised to these organisations:

### Whizz-Kidz, £22,000

Provides motorised mobility aids such as wheelchairs and specially designed tricycles and buggies to children with disabilities. The money was used to equip five children.

### Small Steps, £50,000

A pre-school attached to Greenmead Primary School in Putney, providing learning and support for severely disabled children up to five and their parents. The money paid for a physiotherapist plus sessions in a warm water pool for 12 families.

### Skill Train, £30,000

Provides support for teenagers facing educational or social exclusion in Wandsworth, giving support, counselling and drug therapy as well as mentoring and life skills for employment. Those helped included a group given anger management classes.

### React, £10,000

Provides help for children with life-limiting



**Helping hand:** Shea French Gibbons from Eltham in her Whizz-Kidz wheelchair. Mrs Grobien gave the charity £22,000

illnesses cared for at home. The money helped several families, including a 17-year-old boy with muscular dystrophy who was given a remote-controlled bed he can use to turn himself instead of waking his mother.

### Yes To Life, £20,000

Helps cancer patients access treatment. The service was extended to University College Hospital, which helped provide a therapist delivering advice and complementary treatments.

### Action for Blind People, £20,000

Helps blind and partially sighted people with issues such as work, housing and leisure. Half the money went to the South London Actionnaires for eight- to 16-year-olds and the other half to a project that helps blind people in London find employment.

### Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa, £20,000

A home in Roehampton which encourages, educates and develops children who are looked after away from home. The money was spent on equipment, staff training and a GCSE teacher for teenagers.