

**Submission
No 2**

**VOLUNTEERING AND UNPAID WORK PLACEMENTS
AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW**

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FORWARD

On the following pages is information on a volunteer referral service that was set up in Tamworth NSW that was used to place people from the community wishing to volunteer with community and not for profit organisations.

I feel that if children and young people are to be encouraged to volunteer having a local volunteer service to refer them to these organisations, would be the most efficient way of placing and monitoring them.

As part of the duties of the person employed to run the service could be to visit schools and explain to the students about the benefits of volunteering in the community.

The service would also be beneficial for unemployed youth who have to work for the dole or do voluntary work as part of their obligation to receive Newstart benefit.

A volunteer referral service would be ideally placed to monitor establishments seeking volunteers regarding health and safety obligations and also ensuring that police checks on all volunteers are undertaken.

Getting children and young people to volunteer as a lifestyle would encourage them to continue volunteering through their lifetime and into retirement.

Volunteer Referral Services in each region are a necessity whether they are set up by Local, State or Federal Government and would be a real asset to the community and encourage a positive work ethic among the youth of the community.

Volunteer Referral Service

Initial Stage

Setup

Recruit or select a suitable staff member to hold the position of Volunteer Referral Officer

One of the most important things to establish is a single contact point, with a phone and answering machine, a fax number, an email address and if possible a website.

The service should be in the CBD and be located on the ground floor. This is essential as retired people often wish to volunteer but may rely on public transport to get around and are sometimes unable to climb a flight of stairs.

Once contact points are established a DL brochure and A5 flyer should be designed that can be distributed to all the groups and other points of interest e.g. Visitor Information Centre, Library, Council noticeboards community noticeboard, Galleries and other likely places.
(The groups should have Volunteer Referral Service brochures so cold calls can be referred to the service.)

Duties

List all groups that use volunteers

Design a form that can be used to establish the type volunteer these groups use and need and how many volunteers the groups require now and in the future. This is useful should the current volunteer wish to go on holidays or requires hospital treatment where a short term volunteer could be trained up in advance up to fill in for a short period and avoid putting undue pressure on the remaining volunteers. The above information should be entered onto a database e.g. Access.

Design a form to be filled in by potential volunteers.

This form should not only have space for current skills but space for skills the candidate wishes to acquire from their volunteering experience, as well as interests, availability and length of commitment and if they may like to volunteer with more than one group.

The potential volunteer should attend an interview with the staff member to confirm identity and establish a personal rapport with the service and answer any questions that may arise.

A database should also be setup so that candidate's information can be stored and referenced quickly in the future.

From these two databases it should be easy to match a potential volunteer with the appropriate group. Off-site backups for these databases should be arranged and they should be backed up on a regular basis.

Feedback

Two Feedback forms should be designed for both the candidate and the group. These forms can be sent out quarterly to the group to establish that the volunteer is fitting in and is performing their duties satisfactorily and to the volunteer to establish that they are happy with the placement and if not, why not?

From this information the volunteer could be allocated to another group that maybe more suitable, which could save losing a volunteer who may otherwise leave the group and not volunteer anywhere else in the future, or if they have left their reason for leaving.

All forms should be in Microsoft Word so they can be emailed or posted out and returned by email or post. If the service has a website, the forms could be posted online for easy access and downloads.

The staff member should visit each group at least once a year to familiarise themselves with the conditions in which the volunteers are expected to work.

Arrange a quarterly meeting of all the groups to obtain feedback regarding placements and obtain suggestions on how the service can serve the group better.

They should be aware of any changes in Legislation and any courses the volunteers need to attend, arrange police checks for those volunteers working with children and the elderly.

Produce a quarterly newsletter to distribute among all the groups and volunteers to keep everyone up to date on any changes as well as to promote up coming events and activities e.g. courses, awards, outings, parties.

Arrange displays in public areas such council foyer, library, shopping centres.

A market stall would be a good place to promote the service and recruit new volunteers as it is an excellent way to get in touch with the locals who may not read the local papers or listen to local radio.

Arrange the volunteer Christmas Party and the annual Day Out trip.

The staff member should attend seminars and workshops to keep up to date with best practices in the volunteer industry.

Keep the Council informed of all new information to be included on Council's website.

Promotion

Use of Media

Once the service is set up an official opening launch should be arranged to kick off the service with a bang. Media releases should be sent out and including and invitation to the opening launch.

The event should be opened by someone of importance and relevance e.g. the Mayor, a representative from all the groups should be invited as well. This should provide considerable free publicity and hopefully a flood of initial volunteers.

Arrange for a monthly column in the free local paper. (In Tamworth the column was called "Volunteer Vibes") The column relates to various projects that are being undertaken by volunteers and is similar to Riversdale Ramblings in the Goulburn Post. It can also be used to seek particular volunteers for particular projects for any of the groups.

Arrange regular interview spots with local and community radio stations reiterating the information from the newspaper column and sourcing new volunteers.

The service needs to make itself familiar with

- Volunteering NSW,
- Go Volunteer,
- Do Something Near You and
- Volunteering Australia

and any other websites that work with volunteers. All local vacancies should be listed with these sites as they are often the first point of contact for many local volunteers.

Events

Volunteer Expo

The main event that the service should put on is a volunteer expo in national volunteer week 2013 (13-19 May) and/or on international volunteer day in December.

This gives all the groups a chance to promote themselves in one place where potential volunteers can access information and chat to all the groups and sign up with the service on the spot.

The publicity created by this event should attract lots of people particularly if a free morning/afternoon tea is provided. This does not need to be extravagant just tea/coffee and biscuits establishing a community atmosphere.

There maybe support material from Volunteering NSW and Volunteering Australia that can be used to promote Volunteer Week leading up to the Expo. The usual media releases should be sent out about the Expo and the person who is officially opening the Expo. It shouldn't be hard to get a politician as it is a feel good photo opportunity for them.

Gift of Time Ceremony

The other event that should be done is a "Gift of Time" ceremony. This event could be held after the Expo in the evening or at another time and place during National Volunteer Week or even at a Volunteer Christmas Party.

This in house event consists of the Mayor presenting groups with a certificate for the number of hours put in by the volunteers at that group.

These figures are taken from the signing in log book at each group by someone from the group tallying the hours. The event could be held at a local hall or Council Chambers. Tea/coffee and sandwiches should be provided.

A Volunteer representative from each group is invited to receive their certificate which is to be put up in a prominent place back at the group's location. It should be a semi-formal occasion where the Mayor makes a speech and can thank the volunteers personally for all the hours they have put in over the past year.

The local media are of course invited to cover the event.

To keep up the demand for volunteers the service needs to be pro-active by running regular recruiting drives.

The service should be considered a long term commitment and not just until all the vacancies are filled as volunteers diminish by 10% per year and replacing them is an ongoing job.