



Reynard Street
Neighbourhood House

April 2018 - April 2019

Volunteering Report

Volunteer Coordinator Hannah Evans



Volunteer Coordinator

April 2019 marks 12 months since I commenced part-time as Volunteer Coordinator at Reynard Street Neighbourhood House (RSNH). With this report I aim to highlight the value of our volunteers and provide some insight into the scope of the Volunteer Coordinator role. Case studies provide qualitative markers of success and speak to the diversity, wealth of knowledge, social capital and community strengthening that our volunteers bring to the house and to the Coburg community in general.

Many of our volunteers find the experience rewarding and mutually beneficial as they up-skill, gain confidence, network, practice language skills, combat social isolation and feel good about giving back to their community. It often feels like a win/win situation for all involved! Still, there have been challenges to overcome and I've included some statistics and details from our database to provide a snapshot of volunteering and volunteer coordinating at RSNH.

Weekly Volunteering

This year we've had regular volunteer attendance in/at:

- Community lunches
- Coffee cart
- Gardening in the sensory and community gardens
- Playgroup
- Circle of Security Playgroup
- English classes
- Makers and Menders
- Administration support
- Events and marketing
- Jobs Club



The Financial Value of Volunteers

Each week volunteers contribute 151.5 hours of valuable work and support within our regular programs.



With programs running for 40 weeks per year, that equals an astounding **6060 hours** of volunteer labour.



As the house runs on a small core staff, volunteer contribution ensures the viability of the house's programs. Simply put, without volunteers, we wouldn't be able to run our programs successfully within budget!



Yearly, volunteers contribute \$149 621.40 worth of labour to our organisation, just within our regular weekly programs



"Irregular" Volunteers

Over the course of the last year we've engaged with 143 volunteers in our regular programs. Additionally, we have a huge array of tasks and activities that unpaid volunteers undertake on an irregular basis. These contributions strengthen the impact and effectiveness of the work done by paid house staff and teachers and build on the effectiveness and visibility of the neighbourhood house in the broader community.

Following are some of the tasks that volunteers contribute to the house outside of our regular hours and programs. It would be impossible to quantify the value of these many and varied actions, but I hope to give a sense of some of the tasks that are easily overlooked.

Volunteer Roles

Volunteer Team Leaders

Our Team Leaders take on a mentoring role with new and inexperienced volunteers in playgroup, gardening, community lunch and Makers and Menders. These roles require a higher degree of preparation, reliability and responsibility and are invaluable in facilitating the ongoing success of the program.

Committee of Management

Our committee is comprised of members of the local community who contribute time and valuable knowledge to monthly meetings and events.

House Care

Volunteers frequently assist with washing up, mopping and vacuuming after events; and setting up furniture for events and weekly lunches. Volunteers also contribute in small ongoing ways such as bringing in the mail, taking out bins and emptying the kitchen compost. These small actions assist with the smooth functioning of the house.

RSNH Staff

Paid staff contribute many hours of unpaid work throughout the year in a volunteer capacity. Tasks include collecting and transporting items for fundraising barbeques, facilitating events such as Open Day and Caring Together concerts and excursions; and leading weekend and afternoon workshops in gardening and art.

Volunteer Roles

Design and Promotions

Throughout the year, the house engages volunteers with specialist knowledge to assist with design, social media and marketing. Promotional work that volunteers undertake includes creating hard copy and digital materials for events and regular programs which are then distributed by the house staff and other volunteers.

Driving and Transportation

Volunteers are frequently picking up and dropping off materials and resources for the house. This includes gardening tools and materials, food ingredients, cooked food, donated bread and sewing items. Regular attendees of the house also help with transporting other volunteers and visitors, allowing them to participate more fully in activities.

Flyer Distribution

Volunteers distribute our brochure and other materials via local letterbox drops. Sometimes these volunteers meet at the house as a group and set out on a route, others collect the materials and distribute them in their own time. All of our letterbox drops are done on foot and **800 households** in surrounding streets are reached using this method.

Fundraisers

Volunteers promote and sell raffle tickets, bake, donate and sell cakes and other edibles in their own time and in the lead up to events such as Open Day. Fortnightly we have generous amounts of home cooked hot food such as lasagne and soup donated by dedicated volunteers. We are grateful for frequent donations of cupcakes, gardening equipment and craft materials.

Upcoming Roles

New/returning roles identified for 2019/20:

- Building and Grounds Maintenance
- Community Lunch Supervisor
- Volunteer Coffee Cart Trainer/Mentor
- Disability Support Volunteers
- Social Craft Group Facilitator
- Community Garden Marketing Volunteer
- Veggie Swap Facilitator
- Weekend Garden Workshop Facilitator





Event Volunteering

Volunteers have contributed to the following events in the last 12 months:

After School Art Program
Bunnings Community Day Info Stall
Bunnings Sausage Sizzles x 3
Caring Together Christmas Concert
House Christmas Party
Indoor Mural Painting
Logo Screen-Printing Workshop
NAIDOC Week Art Workshop (2018)
NAIDOC Week Weaving Workshop (2019)
Open Day 2018

Playgroup Christmas Party
Reusable Shopping Bag Sewing Workshop
School Holiday Art Program
Weekend Working Bees
Baking for Coffee Cart
Winter Soup Festival
Weekend Vegetable Swaps



Access and Inclusion

Many volunteers overcome health and personal challenges to be involved in our programs. Supportive relationships and social interaction are the main reason some people become volunteers in the first place. Some disabilities are invisible. You may be surprised by the statistics below:

In 2018/2019 we have:

● 34 Volunteers

who have a mental illness or mental health condition including depression, anxiety and PTSD.

● 23 Volunteers

who have a physical disability or health condition. Three volunteers have low vision or are legally blind. Two volunteers have hearing difficulty.

● 9 Volunteers

with Autism Spectrum Disorder

● 4 Volunteers

who have an intellectual disability.

● 4 Volunteers

with a psychiatric condition such as schizophrenia.

Access and Inclusion

Other obstacles our volunteers manage include:

- Limited access to transportation
- Limited access to education
- Financial difficulty
- Asylum seeker and refugee status
- Long term unemployment
- Social isolation
- Ongoing health problems such as acquired brain injury, chronic pain and cancer
- Time management issues due to health and living situation
- Pressure from Disability/Employment Service Providers and Centrelink - full-time job search requirements
- Being a carer for a family member
- Single parent/child care responsibilities
- Social anxiety, difficulty interacting with a diverse group
- English as an additional language



Access and Inclusion

RSNH does not receive any disability specific funding. Therefore we often rely on volunteers to assist staff in helping community members with a disability to participate in our programs and activities.

This assistance is extremely important and appreciated!

We have many people accessing the house with complex and sometimes stressful physical and mental health conditions. Other volunteers stepping up to assist with alleviating anxiety, welcoming people and sharing knowledge increases the supportive atmosphere of the house and complements the positive relationships that paid staff are able to foster.





Challenges in volunteer recruitment/retention

Retention

We attract many volunteers who are actively looking for work or planning to study in the near future and they leave within the first 3 months.

Inclusion and support funding

We have a large number of volunteers who would be able to engage more fully with dedicated one-on-one support for their additional needs.

Neighbourhood House hours

Our regular programs operate Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm and many volunteers apply hoping to contribute outside these hours.



Challenges in volunteer management

- Multiple volunteers with complex mental and physical health conditions working as a cohesive group
- Challenging behaviors combined with varying ability to communicate/follow instructions in a group setting
- Some volunteers require near- constant supervision by other volunteers or paid staff
- Skilled/qualified volunteers secure employment quickly then leave
- No control over reliability of volunteers referred through external partner organisations
- Lack of commitment over a medium-term time frame (3 - 6 months) - time spent training and inducting volunteers who do not return/commit
- Striking a balance between inclusiveness and completing tasks to a specific time-frame/standard

Referral Agencies

We receive volunteer referrals from:

ACSO (now closed)

AMES

Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre

Baptcare

Boxhill TAFE

Centrelink

Ikon Institute

Jesuit Social Services

Matchworks

Max Employment

Milparinka

Moreland City Council

Melbourne Polytechnic

OpenTable

Ostara

Red Cross

Stott's College

St Antonine's College

Sydney Road Community School

TEAM

Wesley Uniting



Recruitment

We advertise through Volunteering Victoria, Seek, Gumtree, our own RSNH website and via online noticeboards for RMIT, Deakin, Swinburne and Melbourne University.

Volunteers also become involved with the house through word of mouth, visiting our website, seeing our marketing materials in local organisations or receiving our flyers in their letterbox. Some volunteers are invited by a friend or decide to volunteer after completing an ACFE class or short course at the house. Parents who have attended playgroup with their child will sometimes return to the house to volunteer in playgroup. We have volunteers undertaking "mutual obligation" activities with Centrelink, high school students from St Antonine's College and Bachelor/Diploma of Community Services placement students.



Travel

Our volunteers come from far and wide! While many live in Coburg, they also travel to the neighbourhood house from:

Airport West

Brunswick

Cambellfeild

Craigieburn

Epping

Essendon

Fawkner

Flemington

Footscray

Glenroy

Greensborough

Greenvale

Heidelberg

Northcote

Parkville

Pascoe Vale

Preston

Reservoir

Richmond

Roxburgh Park

South Bank

South Melbourne

St Albans

Thornbury



Diversity

We are proud of the diversity amongst our volunteers, many of whom were not born in Australia and speak English as an additional language. Our volunteers were born in:

Afghanistan

Australia

Bangladesh

Canada

Chile

China

Colombia

England

Eritrea

Ethiopia

Hawaii

India

Indonesia

Iran

Iraq

Ireland

Italy

Japan

Lebanon

Mongolia

Nepal

New Zealand

The Phillipines

Russia

Singapore

Spain

Syria

Turkey

Vietnam



Language

Languages spoken by our volunteers include:

Amharic

Arabic

Bengali

Cantonese

Croatian

Dutch

English

Ethiopian

Farsi

French

German

Greek

Hindi

Indonesian

Italian

Japanese

Kurdish

Mandarin

Nepali

Persian

Romanian

Russian

Spanish

Tagalog

Tigrinya

Turkish

Vietnamese



Training and Development

At RSNH we offer in-house training to our volunteers in their area of interest. We also encourage our volunteers to attend Moreland Volunteer Training such as First Aid and CPR. The Volunteer Coordinator mentors volunteers and team leaders who wish to transition to further training, more responsibility, accredited training or paid employment. Some volunteers gain paid employment within the house programs when available. In the last twelve months:

● 52 Volunteers	● 17 Volunteers	● 12 Volunteers	● 47 Volunteers	● 12 Volunteers
were trained in espresso coffee making, money handling and customer service.	learned basic horticulture and gardening skills.	gained accredited Responsible Service of Alcohol and Safe Food Handling certificates.	were able to practice and improve their English language skills whilst volunteering.	completed First Aid and CPR training.

Training and Development

During the last 12 months 84 Volunteer Inductions have been completed. Working towards a sustainable/paperless way of documenting volunteer “paperwork” is a goal for the near future.

● 8 Volunteers	● 17 Volunteers	● 23 Volunteers	● 3 Volunteers	● 98 Volunteers
learned basic safe handling of manual tools.	gained cooking and baking skills for community lunch preparation.	received mentoring on confidence, social skills, teamwork & communication.	have completed governance training.	successfully applied for and gained Working with Children Checks.