

# Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre

Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre builds vibrant resource community through volunteering. We do this by promoting, facilitating, supporting, and celebrating volunteering across central Victoria. We connect individuals, organisations and communities; co-operating with those who are passionate about volunteering. Our skilled volunteer team comprising retired professionals provide face to face and telephone support to individuals seeking information and support to connect to volunteering across the greater Bendigo region. Our service has been operating for over 12 years; with the growth and importance of our service to the region we move into the Bendigo Library last year.

**Our Monthly step into volunteering Sessions**, have grown in popularity with an emphasis on the benefits of volunteering for people of all ages plus the rights and responsibilities of volunteers. We've 'Stepped up' our sessions to feature two community organisation each month, highlighting the range of volunteer opportunities they have on offer which has led to a real growth in volunteering by providing real linkages for attendees to our community organisations.

## **Skilled Volunteer Team: Skilled, Adept, Versed, Volunteer, Instructors**

Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre's SAVVI Team comprises of retired or semi-retired professionals, keen to share their time and talents, expertise, knowledge and life experiences to inspire and grow individuals, and the Not for Profit Organisations across Central Victoria.

Their support services include provide advice and support to new community agencies including financial planning, business and strategic planning, IT improvement support, mentoring a learner driver, assisting youth with practical skills, helping young mothers develop their parenting abilities and assisting young people starting out in small businesses.

## **Bendigo Volunteer Leaders Network**

The purpose of the network is to provide a forum for professional peer support, including opportunities for discussion, problem solving, celebrating success stories, and information sharing and planning to strengthen the volunteering sector across central Victoria and beyond.

Our role is to provide professional peer support, networking opportunities, education through workshops to assist development and strengthen our NFP sector, identify current issues with affect the community sector especially in our region and advocate on volunteer issues.

BVRC believes that volunteer involvement helps to build democratic, healthy and self-sustaining /vibrant communities as volunteering is relevant to all spheres of community life and volunteers are making a positive change to the economic, social, cultural and environmental sectors within our society.

## **Case study- Volunteers stories**

1. Joe had been a truckie for nearly 40 years, retired six months, struggling to adapt to home life, missing the regular contact with blokes. An all too familiar story until Joe and his wife call into the volunteer centre to see what this place was all about and how could it help them. The volunteer team linked Joe to Bendigo Tramways where we assisted with the restoration program while his wife in decided to participate in some volunteering with Bendigo Health. They called into the centre eight months later and thank our team for giving them life again and saving their marriage
2. Karen was in her 20s and enthusiastic about finding a volunteer role. She was looking for a positive fit with her visual impairment and a venue close to the local bus service. An Information Support Officer from BVRC chatted with Karen and together they discussed options that may suit her needs. At the time, Advent Care Retirement Village was seeking help with kitchen duties and was conveniently located directly next to a bus stop. Karen liked the sound of this opportunity and soon began volunteering.

Seven years later, Karen still enjoys her role in kitchen duties at Advent Care. She is a valued team member who feels empowered by her contribution to the community. She speaks with gratitude about the opportunity she was given seven years ago, and still thanks the Information Officer who referred her.

# Recognising our Volunteers

Volunteers share their time, talents and often their treasure with our community organisations, hence it's important to both appreciate and recognise the valuable contribution volunteers make to our communities.

Appreciation expresses “thank you” for time and effort, which can be done in a variety of formal and informal ways. Recognition, with its root “cognition,” conveys the message that one is mindful of and values the unique contributions made by a volunteer. For example, publishing a volunteer’s name on a report acknowledges his/her specific work, and asking for volunteer feedback values a volunteer’s unique perspective.”

This year’s theme GIVE HAPPY LIVE HAPPY highlights the enjoyment volunteering brings to the lives of individuals who participant in community life.

So how would you use these inspirational quotes? Let's count some ways...

- ✓ Handwrite your quotes in your thankyou cards, Christmas cards, birthday cards, postcards and more
- ✓ Print your quotes, cut and slip into any of your volunteer recognition cards
- ✓ Print your quotes, re-format and then frame to give as wonderful and ever-changing recognition gifts
- ✓ Print your quotes onto small cards and laminate as another great volunteer recognition memento
- ✓ Put your quotes in newsletters to inspire others
- ✓ Add your quotes to all your marketing material to catch people's attention
- ✓ Add your quotes to speeches, training workshops and other presentations to motivate others
- ✓ Have an inspirational quote of the day, week or month to inspire you and others

# Your Role as a Volunteer Manager

Regardless of your situation or the strategies you ultimately adopt, your success as a volunteer manager will be centred on three important points:

## **1. You understand the scope of the job.**

The goal is to develop a comprehensive definition of what needs to happen in order to effectively mobilize and direct volunteer resources within your organization. Though the length of this list may seem overwhelming at first, facing it as a "known quantity" is immeasurably better than continually being surprised by the number of tasks concealed behind general phrases like "recruit new volunteers."

## **2. You believe in the value of volunteer involvement.**

In addition to specific tasks, there is another major factor in assuring successful volunteer management: attitude. This is a person-to-person job directly influenced by the amount of honest commitment you feel to volunteering. Such commitment, in turn, may be influenced by how you came to hold the position.

Did you actively seek the role?

Did you "fall into it" by accident?

Were you assigned to it ("anointed")?

Those who enter the field of volunteer administration by accident often accept leadership of a volunteer program as a temporary stepping stone to something else, such as a promotion, direct client supervision, etc. The "anointed" often recognize that they may have been designated rather arbitrarily, and see the assignment as auxiliary to (and of lower priority than) their "real" jobs.

Regardless of how you came to be in charge of volunteers, the challenge is to cultivate the attitudes necessary for success:

- Belief in the value and power of volunteering.
- Recognition of people's potential capabilities, rather than their formal credentials.
- Desire to make the program work to its fullest potential.
- Openness to tapping a variety of volunteers (different ages, backgrounds, ideas, etc.).
- Willingness to stand up for the rights of volunteers.
- Enjoyment of working with volunteers.

## **3. You are committed to the team approach because it benefits the organization as much as it benefits you.**

Good volunteer management is about your commitment to the team approach as it benefits your organisation as much as it benefits you. Naturally, as Volunteer manager or coordinator, you are will be the person in charge, but with the benefit of shared responsibility as specific tasks are delegated to others. The program will be stronger because it will have gained the input of ideas and perspectives in addition to your own.

You and your co-workers will share both problems and successes, resulting in real joint ownership of the results. You will avoid the trap of isolation which often comes when you are the only one who understands the job. And neither you nor the organization will fall prey to the "solo syndrome" - the perception that the success or failure of volunteer involvement rests on only one person's shoulders. Thus, from the double perspective of both time management and program development, recruiting a team to share your leadership role makes a lot of sense.