Volunteer newsletter

1–7 JUNE VOLUNTEERS' WEEK

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Hello and welcome to our first volunteers' newsletter!

I really hope you will enjoy it and find it informative. We plan to send these out quarterly, and as this is your newsletter, we would welcome your feedback on this edition. Please let us know what you think of it and let us know what you would like to see included in future editions. We would love to hear your good news stories and feature them.

As you will know by now, from 1st April 2020, the Community Health Volunteering programme is being undertaken by Sirona care & health. We are really pleased Sirona has asked us to continue to support volunteering in the community health sector across North Somerset and our programme now includes Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

For those of you who don't yet know me, my name is Bernie Micklewright and I have been leading this work within Voluntary Action North Somerset (VANS) in North Somerset and will continue leading this expanded programme. I will be your main point of contact, so please get in touch with me if you have any questions or concerns regarding your role, and I will be happy to answer these for you.

I would also like to extend a big welcome to those of you currently volunteering with Sirona in Bristol and South Gloucestershire. I'm looking forward to working with you and getting to know you but unfortunately it is not possible for us to get together at the moment, but rest assured, that as soon as this is permissible I will be arranging for all of us to meet for coffee and a catch up. This will give us all a chance to meet one another and talk about the plans for volunteering with Sirona going forward.

This is a difficult time for a lot of people and I am sure that some of you may be self isolating at home. Currently the usual volunteering activities have been paused but will restart once we are through this. In the meantime we will make sure we keep in touch and keep you informed. There are some exciting times ahead and look out for news of how we plan to celebrate later in the year, the extraordinary contribution that our volunteers make.

I look forward to talking to you again soon. Stay safe and well.
Best wishes,

Bernie
VANS Volunteer Manager

Message from Sirona

I am delighted Sirona and VANS are working together to ensure we can continue to support and build our partnership with you as volunteers. In this National Volunteers' Week it is a fitting time to say thank you to those of you who are helping with our response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

I am really sorry I am still unable to come and meet you all personally; I know Bernie is working really hard to prepare for when volunteer opportunities can once again be promoted and she and her colleagues at VANS will be on hand to support you. In the meantime, we are marking Volunteers' Week by asking staff to identify areas where they have seen the vital role that volunteers have played. This will help us to work with you to open up areas for you as volunteers which we know will be a vital part of our support for the communities we serve.

With best wishes,

Janet

Janet Rowse, Chief Executive

Voluntary Action North Somerset

Sirona care & health

Crackin' on!

Sirona care & health had an urgent need for someone with a large van to collect 75 Easter eggs that were donated by the Southmead Hospital Charity and deliver them to 3 of their hubs across their service area for some of their key workers, to thank them for their work and they contacted VANS to see if we had a 'man with a van'.

It was Paul, one of our registered COVID-19 volunteers to the rescue and he just 'cracked on' with the job and made sure those key workers had some chocolate to keep them going! Well done Paul!

Competition

This is your newsletter and we're looking to you to come up with its title. The newsletter will be centred on volunteering and the value that you as volunteers bring to the services that Sirona delivers. We need the title to be distinctive and recognisable to everyone who receives it in the future.

So send your ideas to Bernie (email below) by Friday 19th June and we'll send out a quick poll to everyone to find out which title is your favourite. There will be a prize for the winner.

Get in touch

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The value of volunteering

For individuals, volunteering can be empowering, embedding an ethos of self-help and a sense of self-worth.

We recognise that our volunteers bring their skills, knowledge and experience, as well as having an opportunity to develop new skills which can be a route to employment or a chance to try something new that improves life chances or for those that have spare time a sense of fulfilment and giving something back to their community.

Volunteering also has social benefits, as a way of socialising and meeting new people and an opportunity to get to know the local community.

Volunteers enable organisations to provide vital services across sectors, bringing a wealth of skills and knowledge to their roles and increasing capacity to allow organisations to deliver their services. The majority of voluntary and community sector organisations, where there is a 4:1 ratio of volunteers to paid staff, would be unable to provide their current level of service without volunteers

Volunteer training

Recognising the rapidly changing landscape, VANS has worked in partnership with two training providers to provide volunteer training.

With Weston College we have developed an accredited online induction programme for volunteers that gives them the opportunity to upskill and gain an accreditation in volunteering whilst more importantly, enabling them to understand their roles and responsibilities and safely provide assistance within their communities during this
difficult time.

The qualification covers a wide variety of topics within the health and social care sector: infection control, dementia care, cleaning, first aid, dignity and safe-guarding.

We have also developed an online Google classroom course with North Somerset Community Learning. The course content includes a mixture of slideshows, videos and quizzes and can be completed within 2 -3 hours. A certificate of achievement is provided on completion.

Both courses are currently offered free of charge and can be studied at a time to suit the learner, fitting around work, shift patterns and/or family life and other commitments.

If you are interested in finding out more about the online courses, email Bernie:

bernie.micklewright@vansmail.org.uk