



Once upon a time...

STORIES ABOUT VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEERING

VOLUME 4



Volunteer Wellington | Te Puna Tautoko
A CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Introduction

The 34 profiles in this 4th volume of *Once upon a time ... Stories about volunteers and volunteering* cover the people 'we all are', with a colourful overview emerging of extraordinary diversity and the impact of volunteering on our lives.

We are new migrants, students, those keen to find paid employment, some with disabilities and going through times of transition, and others who are full-time professionals looking to move in a new direction or find out about another sector of the community. 'Leave the bubble of the day-to-day work routine,' as one interviewee stated.

Managers of volunteer programmes are here too. Their creativity and ability to communicate with difference reveals their joy when working with people who, through volunteering, are included in community life. Through the willingness of these managers (and team leaders, coordinators, administrators) to be welcoming and generous, and thanks to skills which go beyond the usual demands of regular HR practice, they find solutions where there are difficulties; they spot potential; and they create unusual roles in order to give people a chance to participate.

Volunteer Wellington is proud to work with our wide-ranging community membership (more than 400 organisations), which employs so many spirited managers of volunteers.

They are the ones who continue to come to our training, who become involved in our mentoring programme and peer-support networks, and who make the most of our capacity-building services.

They are also the ones who, when we ask for suggestions for subjects of these profiles, are full of ideas and eager to encourage members of their volunteer teams to talk about their experiences.

This understanding of making diversity happen through volunteering is creating a more integrated society, with people from different ethnicities, religions and skill sets all 'getting to know one another' as a result of working together in the voluntary sector.

The profiles tell two sides of the story: the volunteers' journeys and the rewards the managers have experienced working with such rich difference. The result of these two sides working in accord is that people have contributed and given their skills and energy to a cause. A change has happened in their lives, and therefore in the lives of their families and those around them. The power of the voluntary sector is working its magic ... with Volunteer Wellington as a connector, a link between the known and the unknown, the pivotal organisation (as are the 17 other volunteer centres throughout the country) making community vibrancy and well-being happen.

Special thanks to the team of writers and researchers – Trish Anderson, Suzanne Carty, Elizabeth King, Ann Liu, Andrea Meecham, Jennifer Monk, Sushma Patel, Carolyn Williams. You have brought people's stories to life. And photographers Eva Kaprinay and Gary Jones – you've captured a further dimension. Sue Hobbs' (of minimum graphics) design adds the enduring quality which ensures these stories will be readable and inspiring for a long time to come. You all demonstrate the power of volunteering.

And our financial contributors – this publication would not have happened without you. The Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment, the Bushell Charitable Trust, the Office of Ethnic Communities, Work and Income, the Wellington Community Trust – thank you. Thanks also to Vertia for another great print job.

The final thanks goes to all of you who are the stories. We will read you again and again. You have given so much back to the community by telling us about your volunteering. *Kia ora and kia kaha for the next steps of your journeys.*

Pauline Harper and Julie Thomson
Co-managers

Volunteer Wellington

July 2015

\$20.00

Volunteering has changed my life



EMA KAPRIANOV

WAYNE STEVENS is 49 – ‘almost 50, but I like 49 better,’ he says. This public servant, a 19-year veteran of the Treasury who is now working at the Health Ministry, has become something of a serial volunteer. Volunteering is such a big part of his life – integral, in fact, to who he is – that it has rubbed off on the family.

The father of three young children is clearly chuffed that his seven-year-old daughter has decided she wants to help people, too, when she grows up. ‘It’s very interesting. She has a really caring nature. It’s good to be inspiring her and passing on my values.’

Those values – helping others, especially at their time of direst need – clearly drive Stevens today. Volunteering, he says, has changed his life and his career path. ‘If you go back 10 years or so, I was more focused on the economy, on wealth generation. Now my thinking is more about the

human being at the end of government policy, to focus on what we can do for people.’

Stevens began volunteering more than 30 years ago when at university. Because he loved the outdoors, he joined **WELLINGTON LAND SEARCH AND RESCUE**, an organisation he still works with today. There he was given some advanced First Aid training by paramedics at **WELLINGTON FREE AMBULANCE** and went out with a **WFA** crew one day to observe.

‘They invited me to become a volunteer,’ he says. ‘Really, one thing has led to another.’ These days he does a 13-hour shift for **WELLINGTON FREE AMBULANCE** each Friday night. ‘It’s so good to support people at their time of distress ... saving a life, bringing a new life into existence. It’s really rewarding.’

But Stevens’ community work hasn’t been limited to **SAR** and **WFA**.

“The kids, the staff, the principal ... they’re awesome.”

For two years, through **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**’s Employee Volunteering programme, he and other Treasury staff volunteered at a decile-1 school in Porirua, assisting youngsters with maths and reading as well as working alongside the Arise Church to provide the kids with breakfasts several mornings a week, and food parcels and gifts at Christmas time.

‘The kids, the staff, the principal ... they’re awesome. It was also good for me and my Treasury colleagues to see that what might look good on paper didn’t always translate to being workable on the ground.’

But some of the situations he and his **WFA** colleagues deal with have brought home to Stevens the high incidence of mental health issues facing some in the community. So today he works as a policy analyst for the Health Ministry’s mental health team, a group of experts that also deals with suicide prevention as part of their work.

‘There are real people at the end of our policies ... volunteering has shown me that. It has – it’s changed my life.’ ■

STORY BY SUZANNE CARTY

Volunteering makes a positive difference



SAMUEL TANSLEY's volunteering has made a positive difference for him during difficult times and now it's helping Samuel reach his professional goals.

With six months of a three-year Bachelor of Information Technology under his belt, the Whitireia student was recently looking for some part-time IT work. Student Job Search pointed him in the direction of **VOLUNTEER PORIRUA**.

'When I asked if they had anything in IT they said just pop down the hallway. I immediately got a role with **PORIRUA CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU** which is in the same building. Now I'm learning to be their IT administrator.'

But this isn't Samuel's first volunteer role. Last year he volunteered for **MARY POTTER HOSPICE**, collecting goods from people's homes for the hospice's retail shops.

'My Mum got me into volunteering for the hospice. I was sick – I had mental illness problems – and volunteering was a good way for me to get out of the house. It gave me something to do and the people that I worked with were really nice to talk to. With all the heavy lifting, it was also a great way of getting fit!'

Samuel says he's in pretty good health now, and getting progressively better. His studies are going well and the volunteering for **PORIRUA CAB** is a great way for him to stay focused.

“Now I'm learning to be their IT administrator.”

'It keeps me on-track, so I know what I'm studying for. At the end of the day, the studying and the volunteer work are all leading up to me becoming an IT professional.'

Ultimately Samuel hopes to combine his IT skills with architecture. Prior to embarking on his IT studies he was an architectural draftsman and he thinks the two disciplines would work well together.

Samuel does six hours a week with **PORIRUA CAB** – 'it fits in nicely with my studies'. Studying full-time and volunteering hasn't been a problem for him – 'I'm getting good grades,' he says.

Manager Sandra Andrews gives him lots of support and there are about six people that he usually interacts with. Samuel knows he still has a lot of learning to do 'but I can call upon the people at **PORIRUA CAB** for help. IT administrator is a big role so I'm really just at the beginning.' ■

STORY AND PHOTO BY ELIZABETH KING

Finding a niche in community life



LYNN BLANN's small office sits at the back of the huge **MARY POTTER HOSPICE** outlet and warehouse in Porirua. She is the Retail Operations Manager for the **HOSPICE**, running six shops plus the warehouse, with 10 paid co-ordinators and a volunteer staff of up to 250.

Rows and rows of goods have been delivered, sorted, stacked, labeled and are now ready for further delivering – and selling. With her finger on the pulse of the whole shebang and an incredible ability to combine warmth and efficiency, she is able to declare 'we don't have any issues here in Porirua – we are a very happy team.'

Lynn's experience with volunteering began when, as an older mother in Whitby, she became a founding member of the local toy library. This initiative morphed into a support group for older parents. 'Something that was missing at the time,' she said.

'We continued for a decade, keeping a valuable group going that was run entirely by volunteers.'

Now she applies the same inclusive, determined information-sharing she brought to the toy library and mothers' group to the diverse people who come her way in Porirua – and the other **MARY POTTER** shops.

'Whether they are short-term or long-term, volunteers are gold,' she says.

'We need them for sorting, collating, driving and retail work.'

Younger people, often unemployed and with limited or no work experience under their belt, are encouraged. As are people who have disabilities and may be finding it difficult to find a niche in community life. Lynn leads by example, often unloading trucks and, when time allows, 'being there in the midst of things'.

She also mentors people when life's

“This is all part of their journey.”

difficulties create personal problems. This 'advice and encouragement' helps to create a dividing line between the inevitable issues which arise through unemployment and sometimes disaffected family situations, and working conscientiously in their volunteering role with the **MARY POTTER** retail outlets.

When she introduces new volunteers to the teams and tasks involved, information is given about every aspect of the organisation. 'People get the big picture of the **MARY POTTER HOSPICE**.'

Lynn has set up buddy systems for new team members. This gives added responsibility and leadership opportunities to longer term volunteers. As their volunteering continues she finds out what hidden skills and interests people have and where they want to develop. 'Everyone brings something to the table,' she says.

An added incentive is her policy of giving certificates for consistent attendance when volunteers have been conscientious, reliable and trustworthy. 'It is important to give something back – and is also very helpful when people are in transition and desperately trying to find paid work. This is all part of their journey.' ■

Skills and learning gained from refugee support work



GARY JONES

ENGA KURA TOKOTAUA has much to say about her volunteering experience as a support worker with **RED CROSS REFUGEE SERVICES**. The skills she gained and learning involved have done much to ensure she is in a good place for her journey to paid employment.

Each year New Zealand accepts 750 refugees for resettlement. After a six-week orientation programme in Mangere, further settlement then takes place in different New Zealand towns, Porirua included. This is when refugees are assigned volunteer support workers for six months to assist with the settling-in process.

'**RED CROSS** trains volunteers to support refugees with the many challenges they face adjusting to a new culture and society,' Enga says. 'We go through an intensive course to give us the skills to help people through the early period of integration. Then we are assigned in small teams to work

closely with families or individuals for six months as they settle into their new community.'

At the time of this interview, Enga had been working for nearly six months with a family from Colombia that was settling in to Porirua. The biggest challenge initially was language. 'It takes a while to get communication flowing when neither of us speaks the other's language. But over time that gets easier. Our cross-cultural worker and interpreter is a great help in those early stages.'

The children of the family, she says, take to school, New Zealand life and learning a new language like ducks to water. 'The family I work with is a large loving family and has integrated very well. They have been through so much and are such great people ... they deserve to be happy. The family is now pretty independent but I still visit regularly. I will stay in touch when the

“I will stay in touch with the family when the six months is over ... we have become good friends.”

six months is over ... we have become good friends.'

Enga's volunteering fits a busy life as mother of an active four-year-old son and full-time university study. However, following the example of her mother who was always an active volunteer Enga says today: 'It seemed natural to me to want to help other people too. And I'm finding that meeting people who have survived so much and who are so positive about starting a new life, is energising.'

She adds that teamwork is key to refugee support work. 'We always work in teams of two or three and I have been very lucky to be with a volunteer colleague who is very experienced and efficient. Great for me working with my first refugee family!'

With an estimated 60 million refugees in the world there will never be a shortage of work for people with Enga's skills, generosity and commitment. ■

STORY BY CAROLYN WILLIAMS

A ‘stroll’ into the world of literacy volunteering



“I felt my abilities were recognized and I left the interview feeling very positive.”

VALERIE PROBERT took a stroll along Porirua’s Hagley Street to become involved with an adult literacy tutoring course, surprised at the ‘huge morale boost’ that was an unexpected ‘side effect’.

Val was feeling discouraged at the time. With a history of teaching in New Zealand and overseas, she was looking for work on her recent return home. No job offers had come her way.

She needed a positive experience. And that’s what she got when she noticed **VOLUNTEER PORIRUA**’s offices by chance. ‘I thought: why not give it a go? So I just rocked on up there!

‘The ladies at **VOLUNTEER PORIRUA** looked surprised when I walked in because I hadn’t booked an interview with them,’ says Val. But through a stroke of good luck, someone didn’t turn up for an appointment so the staff could chat with Val about her options.

Literacy volunteering held the most appeal and she was delighted with the response from **VOLUNTEER PORIRUA** staff. ‘To hear ‘you’ll be great at this’ was wonderful. I felt that my abilities were recognised and I left the interview feeling really positive.’

Val was referred to **LITERACY AOTEAROA** where she enrolled in a Certificate in Adult Literacy Tutoring course. ‘It’s like having a scholarship. You have to commit to completing the course. If you don’t complete it, you have to pay for it. But in making that commitment, you get a useful skill.’

The course has both theory and practical components. ‘The theory involves learning about the Treaty of Waitangi, understanding the background of literacy in New Zealand, studying teaching styles, and doing assignments. My classmates and I have learned that people need literacy tutoring for varying reasons – for some it’s up-skilling so they can do their job

or to get a job in the first place, others may be court-ordered to get a driving license if they are driving without one but don’t have the literacy skills to learn the road code.’

Once Val has completed the theory she’ll be matched with a student for the course’s practical component. ‘My classmates and I can’t wait to start tutoring!’ she says.

‘After successfully completing the practical component, you get your certificate and can continue volunteer tutoring. There’s also a diploma in adult literacy that everyone on my course is interested in doing – the diploma means you can be employed in adult literacy.’ As Val is currently on a Jobseekers Benefit, she says that this opportunity is one of the great things about doing the course: ‘It allows me to work towards a qualification that could ultimately give me paid work.’ ■

STORY AND PHOTO BY ELIZABETH KING

A passion for community inclusiveness



LORRAINE SWETMAN has a degree in English and counselling. To gain experience and put the theoretical side of her degree into practice she became a volunteer with **YOUTHLINE**, listening to young people with problems and giving guidance and support.

‘I was very shy at the time and wanted to grow myself into a more rounded personality. **YOUTHLINE** was my starting point.’

Her next volunteer role was with the **BGI CHALLENGE FOR CHANGE** youth mentoring project. She worked with an 11-year-old Maori girl, heading for life as a gang member.

‘She talked to me about wanting desperately to belong. Having once been so shy and unable to make new friends I understood her need – I was finding a sense of belonging through volunteering.’ Lorraine was also becoming aware of the importance of ‘getting to know about difference’.

After a further volunteering stint and this time on the floor with the **RED CROSS** shop in Kilbirnie, her passion for ‘bringing people with differences together’ found a niche. Lorraine

became supervisor of volunteers at the Newtown and Kilbirnie **RED CROSS** shops, coordinating in total teams of around 135.

Lorraine is ebullient and bright and, as I heard from a number of volunteers, always welcoming. Keen to apply her talents and her interest in community inclusiveness it was ‘getting to know people with diverse back stories’ that gave her an extraordinary ability to relate to other cultures, religions, sexualities and languages.

The power of inclusion through volunteering became second nature to Lorraine. Besides cultural differences, people with disabilities were also regularly welcomed to Lorraine’s teams.

Lorraine has moved on now and is working on setting up a ‘social business’ to include the volunteer community, disability and dogs – another of her passions. She discovered **ABLE PET CARE** while travelling in Brazil and is using this as a model for her current venture.

‘When I work with people with differences I find out about transferable skills.’ She gave the example of a

“... we are all human and do have much in common.”

young woman with several physical disabilities who was unable to tag, or hang, or even sort clothes. ‘After having so little confidence that she could only whisper, she later turned into the shop’s customer service wizz on Wednesdays. Every customer who came in that day was warmly welcomed by this bright, happy, articulate volunteer.’

Other testaments to Lorraine’s ability to ‘bring people together’ are her methods for dealing with conflict. She often had people working on different rosters from Iraq, China, Afghanistan, India, Somalia and other parts of Africa.

Yes, border issues and hard-held beliefs can cause challenges and unease, she said. ‘I start by using very inclusive language and when I hear of conflict, I bring the two parties together and ask them to talk about who and what they both stood for, explaining that everyone has a right to their own belief structure but never to impose it on another. At that stage everyone realizes that underneath we are all human and do have much in common. The conflict goes.’

Lorraine Swetman’s ability to create inclusive, welcoming environments developed a potential within her own skill set that she had not been aware of – not until she worked with the diverse volunteer seekers aiming to contribute to a cause and to also be connected to others. ■

Disability no barrier to 'getting on the water'



“If there’s goodwill let them come. They’ll find their place.”

DON MANNING, 63, (pictured on the right) has been interested in people with disabilities since he was a schoolboy. Back then he wanted to get a friend with cerebral palsy into a yacht and teach him to sail. In the end, that wish wasn’t to be fulfilled for another 37 years. But eventually, it did happen.

This former Catholic priest’s lifetime love of sailing led to his being shoulder-tapped 13 years ago to help set up, and then become chairman, of **SAILABILITY WELLINGTON**, a charitable trust that enables and encourages people with disabilities to sail on Wellington Harbour from Evans Bay Yacht Club.

Four days a week, from 9am till 3.30pm, Don Manning and his sizeable squadron of volunteers work with 136 Wellingtonians to get them on the water. Participants range in age from nine to 74 and have myriad disabilities that they are determined won’t hold them back. Thus it is that people with intellectual disabilities,

spina bifida, cerebral palsy and brain injury are helped into **SAILABILITY WELLINGTON**’s 14 Hansa Class yachts in order to sail, some for therapeutic reasons, some learning to race.

Genevieve McLachlan, a disabled sailor and a trustee, says sailing is the closest she’ll ever get to total freedom. Born with cerebral palsy and limited sight, she says her only concession to the latter is to have a sighted volunteer in the boat with her.

Though Don is the backbone of the trust to which he’s given 13 years, 12 in a voluntary capacity as trust chairman and chief fund-raiser, he cannot do it alone. The trustees that back him give him practical and moral support, as do his more than 50 volunteers.

Their tasks are many and varied, but all undergo sufficient training to ensure they have the necessary skills to act as a **SAILABILITY** volunteer. Some operate the slings and hoists necessary to help the disabled sailors into their boats. Others act as bosun. Some prefer

to be skippers or coaches. Still others like to work on the land, ensuring life jackets are donned and cups of tea ready when exhilarated volunteers return.

Don Manning says many of his volunteers are ‘self-selected’; that is, they contact him and express interest in helping out because they’ve heard about the trust and, as sailors themselves, want to share their knowledge and love of sailing. Many, but not all, are retired. A great percentage of them come via **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**.

In fact, Manning has a volunteer request lodged with **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** at the time of this interview. He wants someone to build indoor model yachts to a prototype, created by a Wainuiomata-based supporter, for those days that the capital’s inclement weather means taking to the sea wouldn’t be wise.

Occasionally, Manning says, the trust gives consideration to formalising its volunteer navy. So far, though, it’s resisted the thought. He quotes long-time friend and backer Dr Dick Graham: ‘If there’s goodwill, let them come. They’ll find their place.’ ■

STORY BY SUZANNE CARTY

Creating an ongoing legacy



DEBILÉ LEPAGE

WENDY LEARY, coordinator of volunteers with **VICTIM SUPPORT PORIRUA**, has had a focused career covering a number of health related positions. 'I have always been interested in people's psychological wellbeing,' she says.

Work in the mental health world as an occupational therapist at Porirua Hospital and later as a case manager for Veterans Affairs NZ within the NZ Defence Force, armed Wendy with the knowledge and wisdom to take on a role with the Care Coordination Centre, assessing the community support needs of the over 65s. Wendy became a 'strong advocate for the client' honing her ability to determine people's needs and the associated underlying issues.

When we spoke at the Porirua Police Station she had been working with **VICTIM SUPPORT** for two years. Her role is to ensure that a cohesive team of volunteers is recruited, trained and organized to carry out the community-based organisation's mission ... to reduce the affects of crime and trauma

for all victims of crime, accident and emergency.

'The volunteer team is the core of our service. The ages of our volunteers here in Porirua range from 24 to 64. My aim here is to develop people's personal strengths and establish a base of different skills and knowledge.'

Wendy is 'in awe' of people who choose to use their leisure time to provide support and advocacy in so many varied situations of crisis. They could be called out for many eventualities such as burglaries, sudden deaths, suicide, search and rescue or car accidents. 'We work closely with the police but not for the police.'

Familiar with working with paid staff and now for the first time managing a team of volunteers, Wendy says: 'There are differences. More awareness of what motivates the individual volunteer is essential. These can be discerned early in the interview process and during the three-day initial training which follows. People are then buddied with a more experienced

“No one is bullet-proof.”

volunteer until they feel confident to work alone.'

A key skill is being able to listen ... rather than tell. One's own story may assist someone to be a better listener – as long as any experience of trauma has been resolved.

Wendy emphasizes that volunteers with **VICTIM SUPPORT** are in a privileged position. Much of their work takes place in a volatile environment where volunteers are privy to confidential information. 'Training and de-briefing must therefore be ongoing and we all need to take responsibility for one another. No one is bullet-proof; therefore self-care and self-awareness are essential.'

Long term Wendy would like the Porirua volunteer base to be more representative of the ethnic mix that lives locally. She plans to create short-term roles with special projects, such as fund-raising barbecues and information-sharing events. This would be a way of including newcomers and those with limited English.

'By working with us they would get to know us and understand the significance of this incredible service. Then at a later stage they may feel ready to contribute to the bigger picture.' Wendy is aware of succession, diversity and the ongoing legacy of knowledge – all part and parcel of the role of a successful manager of volunteers. ■

Feiyang and his violin enliven many lives



EMA KAPRINAV

“I had never seen her so happy.”

GWEN ESLER has been the Diversional Therapist at **PRESBYTERIAN SUPPORT'S HUNTLEIGH HOME** for the elderly for two years. In this capacity she is also the leader of the volunteer programme which she started from scratch. She now has 20 volunteers covering all sorts of recreational/and befriending activities.

Gwen is the one who responds to volunteer seekers enquiries – ‘always within 48 hours’ she says. A face-to-face conversation follows and if ‘both sides’ are still interested she take them on a tour of the Home and an induction process follows.

‘All that time I’m observing and listening – planning what will be the best possible placement for their skills, background and also what they want to learn.’

Feiyang Zhu from South China is an accounting and finance student at Victoria University. He spotted the ‘befriending’ role during an interview with **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**.

‘I wanted to get into a native context and talk more with local people – especially the elderly. I miss my grandparent in China.’

HUNTLEIGH’s one non-English speaking Chinese resident came to mind as Gwen was having her initial chat with Feiyang. ‘When I introduced them both, our resident’s face brightened up immediately. They talked for two hours. I had never seen her so happy.’

But Feiyang – his close friend and fellow student Liwen always comes along too – had hidden talents not even Gwen’s skillful observing had revealed. During one of the boys’ weekly visits, Feiyang heard a piano being played in the recreation room. He asked the ‘able pianist’, 90-year-old Arlene Hudson, if she would like to accompany him while he played the violin.

From then on, at least an hour of accompanied violin playing takes place in different wings of **HUNTLEIGH** on a Friday afternoon. Feiyang has been

learning the violin since he was 3 years old. Of course his violin came with him to Wellington but his playing was only ‘for myself’. This playing with elderly people is very joyful, he says.

Gwen talks about others who have joined her team in recent months. Talia from Russia comes in three days a week. Her English has improved to such an extent since being with **HUNTLEIGH** that she is now doing archiving and comprehensive administration work.

Bertie from the Philippines has proved to be a great ‘fixit man’. He mended a set of broken **HUNTLEIGH** golf clubs and is now setting up a men’s group. And Gwen has had just as much success with four young Duke of Edinburgh participants. They ran a series of weekly ‘social hours’ – very popular ways of bringing residents together.

The **PRESBYTERIAN SUPPORT** framework for employing volunteers is the foundation for Gwen’s work. ‘It’s solid and fits all the different reasons people have for volunteering ...’

And this could be because someone is in a faraway country and missing their grandparents; or the pleasure of playing the violin and finding a receptive audience; or organising a social get-together and seeing elderly people happy together. ■

Volunteer career began with fostering kittens



FRITZ

EVA KAPRINAY came to Wellington from a small town in Hungary, Ozd (160 kilometres from Budapest), more than a decade ago. ‘A love story’ is her reason for settling in New Zealand. She met her partner on the Internet, and after that in real life when he was returning to Hungary for a visit after 40+ years in this country.

Eva’s active life in the community sector after arriving here began with fostering kittens for the **SPCA**. ‘I love kittens – and they always understood Hungarian!’ (Eva knew very little English when she arrived in New Zealand – ‘just hello, goodbye, thank you ... words like that’)

For 33 years in Hungary, Eva had worked as a teacher and speech therapist, with a string of specialized skills to her name. It was therefore appropriate to spend time working therapeutically with a Hungarian friend who had become a resident of **TE HOPAI HOME & HOSPITAL**

after a stroke, and was having speech difficulties.

But there came a time when her friend didn’t want to talk any more. ‘I decided to visit her at **TE HOPAI** with a kitten from the **SPCA**. She loved the contact – and so did several other residents.’

Stage two of Eva’s volunteering had begun – animal therapy. Meanwhile, she was always taking photos. Some were of her new surroundings to show friends and family at home; some illustrated her therapeutic volunteering with the elderly; others were reportage and news for a Hungarian magazine/newsletter that she had become involved with early in her NZ settling-in phase.

This latter work was associated with a Hungarian cultural group that met regularly. ‘These gatherings have become a very special part of my life. We still meet every month at the Newtown Community Centre. I

“I like to take positive photos – this is exactly what I enjoy doing.”

have made sure we mostly speak our mother tongue – it’s important for me to keep in contact with my culture and language.’

Stage three of this vivid community activity has been the further development of her photographic skills. With encouragement from her husband, she is now working with her fifth camera since this recent career began. As her tools of trade keep getting better and better, so do her assignments grow in complexity, as does the significant value her photographs add in terms of marketing and promotional tools for so many community organisations.

For **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** alone she regularly covers international and national celebrations, training events, images required for exhibition purposes as well as volunteer and managers of volunteers’ profiles.

Marae, conferences, in fact any gathering involving interesting community people and projects are subjects that volunteer photographer Eva Kaprinay relishes. ‘I like to take positive photos – this is exactly what I enjoy doing.’ ■

Volunteering experience leads to a successful career



GARY JONES

BONNIE WADDELL left school at 15 with no qualifications and found herself 'very unemployable'.

She was encouraged to volunteer at a week-long camp for children with serious disabilities. 'This was a life-changing time for me. I worked as a camp leader and was with the children 24 hours a day. I realised that I enjoy helping people and decided that I needed to get myself qualified so I could do that effectively,' Bonnie recalls.

She returned to school motivated to get the qualifications she needed and started work just before her 17th birthday as a cadet on a modern apprenticeship with the Ministry of Social Development. This scheme is

for 16- to 21-year-olds who want to become case managers, a front-line role advising people who are beneficiaries.

Bonnie now works for **WORK AND INCOME** as a regional training co-ordinator, up-skilling case managers and training staff around the Wellington region who are recruited as new case managers, ensuring staff deliver the best possible service.

'I have been involved with the Ministry of Social Development-funded project with the NZ Defence force called LSV (Limited Service Volunteers). More than 2000 young people aged 17 to 24 have been through this programme. It is designed to motivate them, teach important life skills and help them to enter the

“It was an experience that I reflect on and will use for the rest of my life.”

workforce. I really enjoyed working closely with the young people, helping them to see that they can plan and work for their future.'

Bonnie sees herself staying with **WORK AND INCOME** and is thoroughly enjoying her training role. 'I see lots of opportunities to grow within this organisation and I'm keen to stay. I'm in a place where I can help people. Our goal is to help New Zealanders help themselves to be strong, safe and independent. I like that!'

'It was ten years ago that I volunteered at the children's camp and I was young with no direction. But it made me realise what I wanted to do with my life and what I had to do to achieve that goal. It was an experience that I reflect on and will use for the rest of my life.' ■

STORY BY CAROLYN WILLIAMS

Slick ideas to establish a volunteer culture



RYAN O'CONNELL (pictured centre) believes in the power of stories. As a volunteer co-ordinator and manager of the one-to-one befriending volunteer programme in the wellington region for IHC, stories are a vehicle for recruiting, promoting, encouraging; and for professional development for his volunteer team.

A 'story' himself, Ryan's career began in film and media studies. Travelling followed with one-to-one support work in between. As this was with people with a variety of disabilities, the work paved the way for a deep knowledge of what it feels like to have either a physical or intellectual disability and what people most want.

'Often it is a friend ... someone who is willing to take a moment.' Ryan also observed from among his clients during this 'experience building' time overseas, a desire to be part of the wider community; not someone segregated and stuck out on a limb.

At the time of this interview, Ryan had been in his role for two years. One of his first actions when appointed was to establish his office within the

mainstream community sector. 'This showed that IHC meant business when we talk about integration.'

His current office is a 'desk' within the **SUSTAINABILITY TRUST** building in Forrester's Lane off Tory Street, Wellington. His patch is Hutt, Porirua/Mana and Wellington. But as numbers of volunteers increase, his next goal-for-change is to develop a new programme focussed on volunteers supporting young people with intellectual disabilities to achieve particular goals.

The induction, training and support programme put in place by Ryan for his volunteer team is thorough and, as he says, 'developmental and progressive'. To do this well, particularly sound volunteer support, an 'ongoing-ness' is required which is easily dissipated if stretched too far afield.

Meanwhile Ryan has put in place some slick ideas to establish a volunteer culture – 'one in which all team members feel they belong to the organisation'. The around 60 volunteers, with whom he works on a one-to-one basis, become a friend with

“ ... someone who is willing to take a moment. ”

the person to whom they are matched. Stories now come into the picture again ... 'they need to come together as regularly as possible to share their experiences – tell their stories'.

During the initial period of friendship he rings them weekly for a debrief. Get-togethers take place at a local pub once a month on Fridays. In Lower Hutt and Porirua these gatherings happen in cafés. There is a monthly mail-out, again aimed at keeping everyone in touch with each other, as well as the whole organisation.

Ryan takes part in professional development workshops and forums whenever possible. Further support has come about as a result of meeting other coordinators at seminars organised by **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** – he met the ideal person to be a peer support mentor.

It's an interesting example of managers from two different sectors but with similar volunteer team processes becoming peer mentors and exchanging ideas. Their mutual topics can include 'right matches', maintaining organisational enthusiasm despite working in relatively isolated situations, keeping people aware of the cause and the results of their work. One works with skilled migrants requiring 'journey to work' mentoring; the other with people with intellectual disabilities who need a friend. ■

An organisation I believe in



GAIL ROBINSON is 61 and steaming ahead with her volunteer role with **DRESS FOR SUCCESS**.

‘When I went to **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** to look for a role, as soon as I saw **DRESS FOR SUCCESS** I said, that’s the one for me! It’s an organisation I believe in.’ Gail is impressed by the work the organisation does to support women on low incomes find the right clothes for those important meetings with prospective employers.

A woman of many talents, Gail has years of work experience in nursing, community education, marriage guidance, retail, hospitality and teaching adults. Through these positions she has learnt organisational, communication, time management and people skills, all of which have translated well into the volunteer work she is doing now.

‘This country has so many people out there who are great volunteering role models. Some are in their 70s and 80s. Gone are the days where you hit 65 and you’re in your rocking chair. Nothing you do is ever wasted.’

When Gail first arrived at **DRESS FOR SUCCESS** she thought she would be doing training for dressing clients, but instead she put her hand to assisting with co-ordination of the regular stall held at the Frank Kitts Market every Saturday from 10am until 4pm.

‘That’s what I’d really love to be doing,’ she says. ‘Co-coordinator Katie and I were thrown in the deep end. But that’s okay because we are both intelligent women.’ (Such flexibility also demonstrates **DRESS FOR SUCCESS**’s flare for creating interesting and different roles for their volunteer team.)

“The staff are very supportive women and wonderful to work for.”

The market involves selecting clothes for the day, setting up and packing out. Katie is younger so Gail enjoys the fact that she is ‘more in touch with fashion trends’.

Income for the organisation comes from these market days. ‘We are very particular about what we have on our stall ... we want to up our profile as having a kind of classier/labelled clothing. But the prices are still good. A nice dress might go for \$20–\$25.’ Gail pointed out though, that when a woman is referred to **DRESS FOR SUCCESS** and comes in to be ‘dressed’ for a job interview, those clothes are all free.

Although at the time of this interview Gail had been at **DRESS FOR SUCCESS** for only a few weeks, she already felt ‘part of the place’. The staff are very supportive women and wonderful to work for, she said.

Many who have volunteered with **DRESS FOR SUCCESS** have gone on to paid employment; and in the future Gail hopes for such an outcome. ■

STORY AND PHOTO BY ANDREA MEECHAM

Getting exposure to New Zealand culture



LAKSHMI SIVAPALAN did a good job of keeping herself busy as a new arrival to New Zealand from India: she wrote a food blog, studied, and, she says, ‘watched lots of movies’. But then Lakshmi took up volunteering, giving a tremendous boost to her communication skills and confidence.

An engineering lecturer back in India, Lakshmi came to New Zealand in 2010 with her partner – a software developer – who was on a work visa. ‘His work kept getting extended – we didn’t know how long we would stay – so I was just passing time.’

Lakshmi decided to become a volunteer after returning to New Zealand from a trip back to India last year.

‘My partner and I wanted to stay in New Zealand, so I thought that I really should do something in my new country.

‘I hoped that volunteering would help me meet people, get exposure to New Zealand culture, improve my communication skills, get rid of my shyness, and get used to kiwi accents.’

She found her ideal volunteer job at **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**, interviewing people who want to find volunteer work.

‘I’m the bridge between the potential volunteers and the agencies that require volunteers. Potential volunteers come to **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**’s office and during the interview process describe their motives, goals – and the ideal placement they want from us. We then talk more about any past experience, the skills they have and the skills they would like to develop ... and their availability.

‘We’ll go through the volunteering database together to select the most suitable roles. The potential volunteers then get a printout with all the detail of these roles. They have taken the first steps towards pursuing some interesting volunteering opportunities. They can also come back to talk to me, of any other interviewer, if they need further help.’

Lakshmi started out doing three hours a week but now she’s doing

“I meet people of different ages, cultures and background.”

six hours, plus she fills in for other interviewers when needed. Since she began volunteering, she and her partner have also been granted New Zealand residency under the skilled migrant and partner categories.

‘My volunteering job has definitely developed my communication skills. Doing the interviews has helped me to speak continuously, whereas before I usually spoke English in short sentences.’

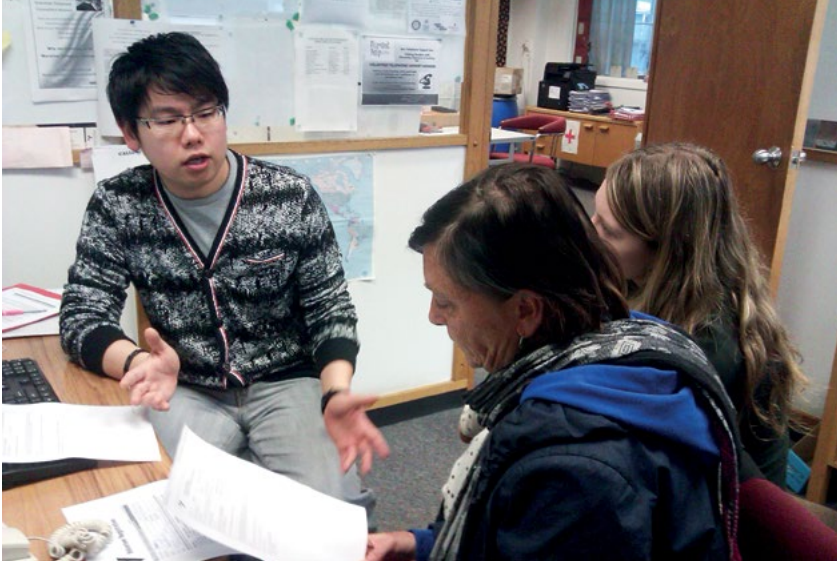
Lakshmi says she ‘just loves’ working for **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**. ‘This job gives me the satisfaction that I’ve done something useful for the week; I’ve identified the needs of potential volunteers and helped them find a volunteer role.’

She doesn’t think she would have had this experience anywhere else. ‘Every day at **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** is different: I meet people of different ages, cultures and backgrounds, and they each have their own story. I recently interviewed a woman in her mid 70s. She had done volunteering in the past and wanted to do more. I was so impressed that she was still doing so much for society.’

And the future? ‘I would like to get a paid job,’ Lakshmi says, and hopes that her volunteer work will stand her in good stead. ‘But even if I get a paid job, I plan to continue volunteering.’ ■

STORY BY ELIZABETH KING

A natural talker – a good interviewer



CLAUDE AO is originally from South China. When he recently arrived in Wellington, after a sojourn in Auckland, he wanted to have networks beyond his workplace – and he wanted to feel that he was ‘making a difference to New Zealand’.

He’s a linguist (he speaks Cantonese, Mandarin and Japanese, as well as flawless English) and he likes talking. So coming in to **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** for a face-to-face interview was logical.

‘My aim was to make the most of my ability to articulate,’ he said. **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** had exactly the right role. He would be talking to other volunteer seekers as part of the Wednesday after-work interviewing team, carrying out face-to-face interviews.

When Claude joined the group, we had just begun a post-interview survey. For a month we asked every person interviewed why they had chosen this method of ‘volunteer finding’, what they had learnt and how they rated the experience.

Always an enthusiast, Claude was keen to involve those he had talked with. ‘I was learning so much as I was going along – about how to read people’s motives, about **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**’s many community members, about the differences in roles and the expectation from both sides of the coin. So I was equally keen to know how people had found our process.’

At the time of this discussion, Claude had been in the interviewing role for almost three months. His full-time work is with NZQA on the Terrace. On Wednesdays he closes his office door and comes down to 84 Willis Street sharp at quarter past five. He’s never late.

‘I really like seeing people finish the interview happier than when they came in. I feel a sense of achievement when they find the right volunteering role – and they’re excited about the next step.’

Claude’s obvious enjoyment of his role and his ability to make people feel ‘happier’ is reflected in the analysis we did upon completion of the post-interview survey, in which 93 per cent

“I really like seeing people finish the interview happier than when they came in.”

of volunteer seekers were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the interview process. And 93 per cent found a voluntary role that they would follow up with. Here are some key quotes from what people said.

‘In today’s technological age where communication by email etc is most prevalent, speaking to someone face-to-face is very important to me.’

‘Provided me with new ideas and thoughts that I didn’t think of.’

‘Has got me confident when I go for a job interview.’

‘Personal as opposed to what was written on the database.’

‘Reassurance that I could be usefully employed to meet organisations’ needs.’

Claude is one of around 13 interviewers who volunteer at the Wellington office. Teams of three and four work in both the Porirua and Hutt offices. As the interface between the idea of volunteering and the many communities with whom we work, they are a vital part of our service. And as our survey proves ... appreciated. ■

Local experience a must



CAROLINE VAN VLIET's journey back to life in New Zealand (and establishing a new life in the Hutt Valley) has been far from easy.

She had spent the previous six years with her family in Mexico. The challenges of learning Spanish, finding work and being immersed in a different culture were difficult but she eventually found a niche for herself.

Surely the return to things familiar would be simple? But it was a return that proved to be almost more 'foreign' than the other way around. 'Rents are expensive and jobs really hard to find. Employers kept saying "where's your local experience?"'

Although of Dutch origin, Caroline is a born and bred New Zealander. What can it be like for new migrants,

she began to ask herself. Her confidence was 'rock bottom'. And despite past experience in finance, a sense of 'being completely useless' brought Caroline to a very low ebb.

Then she met **VOLUNTEER HUTT** manager Katie Terris at a talk she was giving about the benefits of work experience through volunteering.

'I went along to **VOLUNTEER HUTT** to find what roles were out there and what new networks I could become part of. I needed a way to keep my spirits up ... and gain new knowledge at the same time.'

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PARTNERS was her choice. In the course of her training she met, and has subsequently been matched up with, a young woman with a refugee background from

“I needed a way to keep my spirits up ... ”

Colombia. The regular tutoring sessions have also become a strong friendship – with large amounts of mutual reciprocity.

English is being learnt, Caroline keeps up her Spanish and the two women have many interests in common; and surprisingly, even lifestyle similarities.

'Having this ongoing and very satisfying volunteering role in my life has certainly lifted my spirits as well as my confidence.'

And 'lifted confidence' can do a lot on the journey to full-time employment. After a string of rejections, a positive offer came to the fore soon after Caroline began her **ENGLISH LANGUAGE PARTNERS** tutoring. Now she has a long-term contract with the Ministry of Social Development.

Caroline is very happy to be finding a niche for herself as she resettles in her home country; and now with the advantage of adding a slice of the culture she became so attuned to in Mexico. It's a busy life-style and one which she is enjoying. ■

Stan's the man...



GARY JONES

... that's what the people he works for say about Stan Malcom.

STAN MALCOLM has worked for **BIRTHRIGHT** for eight years collecting donated furniture and delivering it to one-parent families in need. 'We would not be able to assist these families without the help of a volunteer like Stan,' manager Christine Prince says. Stan uses his own trailer and car to collect and distribute furniture all around Lower Hutt. He meets people of all ages and says he gets great feedback.

Volunteering as a driver at **MARY POTTER HOSPICE**'s Porirua warehouse is also included in Stan's week. Says manager Lynn Blann, 'Stan drives a truck and collects goods for our busy fundraising stores. And he helps with the delivery of equipment to patients we're caring for in their homes. He's always friendly, reliable and trustworthy.'

Stan has been looking for full-time work, but health problems mean

that he can no longer work in the forestry, milling and industrial sectors where he spent many years. He has lived in Lower Hutt for 29 years, on his own since his wife passed away almost a decade ago. 'But my three kids live pretty close and there are 18 grandchildren, from babies up to 22. They keep me busy!'

Determined not to let the grass grow under his feet, Stan often returns to **VOLUNTEER HUTT** to find other roles to vary his experiences and the people he likes to meet. He's got to know manager Katie Terris well and she says: 'Stan has provided invaluable help to the SPCA, Meals on Wheels and Christ Church Historical Society. Feedback from these agencies is overwhelmingly positive ... Stan is a reliable and very welcome volunteer.'

As volunteer caretaker at historic **CHRIST CHURCH** he keeps a watching brief, liaises with the security firm and ensures the place is in tip-top shape for weddings and other special occasions.

“ Stan is a much needed and valued asset to our organisation and a great benefit in the service delivery we provide to our families. ”

Christine Price,
Birthright, Lower Hutt

He speaks highly of the different managers with whom he works. 'They all look after me very well.' And he is happy with all the tasks he carries out, saying that he enjoys his routine, his workmates and the variety.

His aim for the future – to be fitted around his pretty full calendar of volunteer work – is to do a horticulture course, one day a week. 'This will give me more skills with planting and pruning so I can do lawn mowing and gardening for people.'

Stan is indeed 'the man', one who is held in high regard by those he supports in all of his volunteer roles. ■

STORY BY CAROLYN WILLIAMS

The stops and starts of the journey to work



PAVAN KUMAR (pictured on the right) says cheerfully that after 10 years he is happy to claim New Zealand as his 'adopted motherland'. But his journey to the destination of an interesting, worthwhile job and sense of belonging to a community has had its share of obstacles and challenges.

From Hyderabad in central India, a native Tamil speaker and fluent in four other languages, Pavan arrived in Wellington almost by default. It was 2001, the year of the September 11 crisis, and he was unable to obtain a UK visa. The world was paranoid about anyone from the sub-continent.

The other side of the world, where he did have some friends, became a feasible option. With a BA in mathematics and an MA in arts and literature, plus experience as a medical transcriber, Pavan already had an

impressive list of qualifications. He was employed for a time in a PR role by Spartan Engineering where he made good New Zealand friends. 'But it's easy to stagnate,' he said. 'Making the right choices for our own development has to be a priority.'

Unemployment struck around 2005. The job market was tight as the global recession moved around the world. A business course with McGirr Training followed and this 'magically' led to a temporary position with ANZ Bank. Next came a computer course during which Pavan began his volunteering journey.

'I became involved with the beautiful people of **ARO VALLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE** and helped to organise their 'rumble in the jumble' fundraiser. In the course of the work I met Celia Wade-Brown (network

“My experiences have led me to this fulfilling work which I love.”

building is part of the volunteering scene). This contact, plus a great verbal reference from the co-ordinators, helped me land a job with Orcon, an internet service provider.'

However his division's move to Auckland was not possible for Pavan. His need to remain in Wellington resulted in a further spate of unemployment; and again a suggestion from a Work and Income case manager to take on a volunteering position.

The role he took on was with **WELLINGTON SOMALI COUNCIL**. 'This organisation and the work I was doing was making a very big difference to a lot of people who had suffered trauma and, as people with refugee backgrounds, they are often alienated from mainstream society.'

As he learnt more about the needs of the community a paid position opened up. 'I was in the right place at the right time and was offered the role. It's about advocacy and community development and I feel it is my experiences up until now that have led me to this fulfilling work which I love.' ■

Worth his weight in gold



ALFRED FIDOW greets me warmly and leads the way to the greenhouse at Aotea College in Porirua, where he volunteers every Thursday morning. Native plants are grown in the greenhouse for planting in Cannon's Creek by Alfred with the **FRIENDS OF MAARA ROA** team on Saturday mornings.

Originally he heard about volunteering at Porirua Community Link (previously Work and Income) while looking for paid work. 'Giving volunteering a go' happened after being inspired by Lynne Harding of **VOLUNTEER PORIRUA**. His decision to work with a conservation group was based on intuition, he said; and he 'dived straight in'. On his first day manager Juliette gave him a warm welcome and introduced him to the team of around 10 other volunteers.

'There was no new-guy element. After the welcome I felt I could fit

right in,' he said. He began his working life with his family on their land in Samoa; he sees his life as an adventure, embracing opportunities as they present themselves.

Alfred has now returned to New Zealand to spend time with his extended family and further his studies. Mixing with new people from different backgrounds and talking about shared interests is giving him new perspectives to life, he said.

And it's these 'shared interests' that is the aspect of volunteering that Alfred values most. Before this new phase of his life he spent most of his time hanging out with friends of a similar age group while also working towards a degree in Information Technology. During my visit I can tell that older volunteers are enjoying chatting to a young guy so interested in listening and learning while getting good work done.

“After the welcome I felt I could fit right in.”

At the plant nursery, Alfred works with a team making cardboard collars to protect young plants when they are transplanted at Cannons Creek. There are plenty of heavy carrying tasks as well. Comments from Juliette and another team member were that he is 'exceptionally willing to help' and 'worth his weight in gold!'

Alfred feels that volunteering is an opportunity to be part of a supportive group who are like informal mentors, helping him improve his communication skills and change his attitude. 'Before I came here I used to be a very competitive guy who would do things that aren't so smart,' he tells me.

Now he's become involved with the nursery's spirit of co-operation and companionship and he comes across as a confident and self-assured young man with a lot of good things to look forward to in life. And it is no surprise that Alfred feels his new-found confidence, friendly way of speaking and positive attitude have been major factors in his successful application for a permanent part-time role at Pak n'Save in Porirua. ■

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JENNIFER MONK

From Bangkok to the Soup Kitchen giving IT support



PACHARAWIT TOPARK-NGARM (on left) is a computer studies graduate from north-eastern Thailand. The 35-year-old has not long finished his second degree, a masters in computer science, and is now on the hunt for a job in Wellington.

Eventually, he means to return to hometown Khon Kaen, a five-hour drive from Bangkok, and win a job lecturing at the city's university where his parents are lecturers. First, however, he wants to make good use of his year-long work visa and, ideally, turn that into residency.

After a technical but short-term IT role with **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**, he searched further on their database and is now volunteering several hours a week at the **SUZANNE AUBERT COMPASSION CENTRE**, known colloquially as the **SOUP KITCHEN**. Founded in Buckle St and now at 132 Tory St, it has fed the Capital's needy since 1901 with the help of many volunteers.

Three afternoons a week, the centre also opens what it calls the **SOUP HUB**, a place where people can use its computers and printers. It is here Pacharawit has found himself a role thanks to **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**'s website. The first job was filled by the time he contacted the organisation involved, but the second was for someone to play a computer support role at the **SOUP HUB**.

'I came to meet them – they were very nice people. I was very happy to be working with them.'

He likes assisting those who use the Hub where he can. 'Someone needs help with setting up their website, for example, or printing out their work, preparing a CV or wanting to watch a movie. I have free time so why not do something I know how to do?'

He enjoys it, he says, because he has both the time and the skills, having achieved a computer-engineering degree from Oregon State University and had a year working for giant

“I can get to meet people and get some connections.”

telecommunications company Huawei in Bangkok.

'At the moment, without regular employment I thought if I volunteer, I can get to meet people and get some connections,' he says.

Pacharawit doesn't expect volunteering at the **SOUP HUB** will lead to paid work, 'but I think I could probably get a good reference'. And he believes that if that elusive job turns up, he will continue to volunteer at the Hub if possible. 'I would be happy to do that,' he says.

This young man from Thailand has been struck by the role the **SOUP KITCHEN** plays in assisting people who are down on their luck because back home, he says, such support is provided by families. Or people fall through the cracks. In Wellington, about 200 volunteers make the disparate arms of the **COMPASSION CENTRE** work, providing, among other things, a free breakfast and a \$2 dinner six days a week.

Pacharawit Topark-ngarm says the New Zealand government, and the **SOUP KITCHEN**, 'look after people very well'. He is very pleased to be part of the Hub's volunteer army. ■

STORY BY SUZANNE CARTY

Dynamic teams of volunteers support Trade Aid



“They become life-long friends.”

CHRISTIAN PILKINGTON (second from left) has had a life-long involvement with issues around social justice which has governed her choices of work. For the past 10 years she has managed **TRADE AID WELLINGTON**, part of a string of shops selling distinctive and beautiful craft and artwork from co-operative groups in Third World countries.

Always an activist and keen to advocate for her beliefs, Christian began with the women’s movement and related campaigning around the 70s and 80s. Trained as a primary school teacher, firm structures and ways to educate have informed all her work since, whether volunteering or in the paid workforce.

A stint in hospitality added to this base, providing event management skills and the elements of being a good seller.

‘Although our philosophy is very different from a commercial outlet, we still have to make a success of selling our goods. We are in prime Wellington real estate. We have to pay our rent; and we want to return maximum

profits to our Third World partners.’ Christian’s team of three permanent staff work with around 30 rostered volunteers providing retail services, with some moving into advocacy, education and promotional activity.

‘The **TRADE AID** mission is social justice through fair trade. All producers are therefore assured of a fair and sustainable price for their goods. Because of the contribution of volunteer staff, big mark-ups are avoided and the shops remain viable.’

Yes, volunteers are trained to give excellent customer service, says Christian. ‘But this is the tip of the iceberg. Enthusing them to understand the **TRADE AID** mission is the real impact from their time with us. Our environment is challenging and dynamic, with this shop having the highest volunteer staff turnover in New Zealand. Many are students and travellers with change happening in their lives all the time.

‘Rather than worrying we decided to embrace the situation. When we enthuse a volunteer they carry on being an advocate for **TRADE AID** – and

social justice – forever. They become life-long friends of **TRADE AID**. It doesn’t matter how long or short their stay.’

In order to spread the load of responsibility, other volunteers are involved in the training process, which is formal but also very accessible. Exercise sheets are used so that people can keep track of what’s been covered and how they’re progressing.

With ‘opportunity’ and ‘difference’ being inherent **TRADE AID** values, Christian vehemently applies these when she talks with potential volunteers. ‘Sometimes English is limited or even non-existent, but if it’s obvious the person has the right values and awareness we will do our best to find a place for their skills ... which may be repairing damaged stock or gift-wrapping at Christmas time. They are being given the chance to get the feel of our culture.’

Shared meals every month ‘after hours’ have proved to be a successful way to catch up with all members of the team, to share experiences and news; and also to introduce an educational component. Such as information about craft in Vietnam or together watching a video on poverty in Latin America.

TRADE AID, on the corner of Victoria and Bond Streets, is a small world within a vast world. Inside its walls, dynamic teams of volunteers are actively taking small steps towards more equality and justice. ■

Opportunity to ‘really’ listen to people



EMA KAPRIANOV

SMRUTI PANIGRAHY – the name Smruti means remembrance in the ancient Sanskrit language and is pronounced Smrootee. It’s a name, Smruti says, that nobody can remember.

Smruti arrived in New Zealand with her husband and baby in 2012. Well educated and with extensive experience in banking finance and IT, she found a fixed-term job as a financial analyst with Corrections New Zealand quite easily. But something was missing. Smruti had a good grasp of English but says that she sometimes struggled to pronounce certain words correctly and thought people sometimes had trouble understanding her accent. Smruti wanted to do something to improve that; something that gave her the opportunity to really listen to people as well as practise speaking English.

Where to begin? Why Google of course, and when she searched, up popped **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** in the results. Smruti came in for an interview and was a natural

candidate for an interviewer role at the organisation’s office. The role involves meeting people who want to become volunteers, listening to them to get an idea of their background and interests, explaining volunteering and then trying to match them with a suitable volunteer role.

Smruti sat and observed other interviewers for a few times before she took her first tentative interview. From watching experienced interviewers she learnt how to observe people and change the way she talks to fit the needs of each person. ‘By listening to people you get used to the words’, she says. The team at **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** has provided great support too, from teaching her to pronounce words ‘correctly’ so Kiwis understand her, to helping improve the grammar in her emails.

In this role she’s met not only Kiwis but people from all over the world and from different cultures. ‘I’ve met lots of Indians’, she says. Drawing on her personal experience means she can

“By listening to people you get used to the words.”

empathise with the difficulties people of other cultures face as they settle here, try to find work and integrate into society. She’s even met someone from Bhutan, a tiny country in the Himalayas.

Smruti brought a little of her own culture to the **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** office last year during Diwali, an ancient Hindu festival that symbolises the triumph of light over darkness. She dressed in the traditional churidar costume, made Indian sweets to share with her colleagues, and brought her husband along to join in the celebration.

Three years after moving to New Zealand, Smruti is in full-time work again, but is still giving an hour or two of her time each week as a volunteer interviewer. The family hopes to stay in New Zealand and has applied for permanent residence. She’s even got her husband thinking about using his maths skills as a volunteer.

Smruti has made great progress with her English skills and her pronunciation has improved immensely, thanks to the interviewing she does as a volunteer. It’s rather ironic that not only does she have a name many of us find hard to remember, it’s also one we struggle to pronounce correctly. ■

STORY BY TRISH ANDERSON

Research skills bring history to life



GARY JONES

PETER LAYNE's first task as a research volunteer at the **NEW ZEALAND POLICE MUSEUM** in Porirua was to 'get to know' the background stories of the sepia-coloured mug shots of criminals from the 1880s staring down from the surrounding walls.

'I looked for information about the lawbreakers on *Papers Past* and integrated it with information from the *NZ Police Gazette* to create detailed stories for 10 of these offenders. Their stories are now on the museum's Facebook page,' Peter says.

Peter picked up a lot of fascinating detail about the mug shot subjects during his research, including the fact that some of the offenders came out of prison with a lot more flesh on their bones than when they went in. 'Many of them would have been impoverished by the depression of the 1880s,' he explains.

His background was perfect for the role. Some 43 years in the banking industry (Peter was, among other

things, a foundation staff member of Kiwi Bank) and experience in historical research have honed his attention to detail and investigative skills.

'When I turned 60 I was at a crossroads and left banking two years later to try other skills,' Peter recalls. 'I went to **EMERGE**, which is an agency that helps people with disabilities (Peter has hearing loss). They recommended that I talk to **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**. Through their Porirua office I found a position at the **POLICE MUSEUM** which is part of the police training complex, the Royal New Zealand Police College, in Porirua. The museum and its exhibits are used in training as well as being open to the public.'

A front-of-house role was his initiation to the museum. 'Even though I'd been in banking all those years, I had to learn how to work the eftpos machine!' He welcomed visitors, and carried out retail, phone and administration work. These tasks,

“When I turned 60 I was at a crossroads and left banking two years later to try other skills.”

and others, are carried out by some 11 volunteers on a roster system.

Peter has several other projects on the go now. 'Currently I'm scanning (digitising) photos. I've also catalogued a collection of negatives and photos in a standard museum format. This information is then transferred into the museum's collection management system.'

After two years at the museum, Peter is now one of the longest serving volunteers. Curator of Public Programmes (at the time of this interview), Naias Mingo, says that volunteers bring valuable skills to the museum: 'We have a diverse group, all with unique skill sets and backgrounds. Volunteers work on projects that develop their skills while also benefiting the museum and our collections. The work Peter has done, particularly his research on some of our people from our mug shot wall, has enriched the stories we tell the public about policing in New Zealand.'

Research and recording are key to preserving the stories and history of policing in New Zealand. ■

STORY BY CAROLYN WILLIAMS

Another world opened for Anju



ANJU PARVATHY from Kerala (pictured on the right) in South India came to Wellington with an MBA and working experience with government departments. Soon after arriving with her husband and small son, she found that looking for a job in New Zealand was 'not so easy'.

Through **ENGLISH LANGUAGE PARTNERS' JOB MENTORING SERVICE** she heard about volunteering – 'a new concept for me'.

When she came to **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** for an interview she was very surprised. 'I was not knowing we can do so many different things with volunteering.' She became an

interviewer herself, and explained how another world opened for her.

After more than a year with **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**, having taken on two roles – she later added administration assistant to her brief – she spoke excitedly about the changes to her outlook on life.

'It's not just what you get out of this volunteering – the new skills and meeting people and all – it's the sense of contribution. That has surprised me. When I talk with someone and they smile because I have given them an interesting volunteering role, this makes me very happy; very satisfied.'

This 'satisfaction' has led to Anju

“This makes me very happy; very satisfied.”

and her husband discussing together the possibility of themselves, setting up a voluntary organisation should they ever return to India.

Anju talked about interesting highlights during her time with **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**. 'There have been many,' she said. 'But one that stands out was getting the opportunity to talk with the mayor at **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**'s 2014 International Volunteer Day celebrations held in the St James Theatre foyer.'

When she was interviewed for this story, Anju had just been selected for the skilled migrants' programme at Victoria University. 'I'm leaving knowing I shall never forget my community involvement. This work has given me the chance to meet many people I would never have met if I had not got involved with volunteering. And it's helped me to know what's happening! That is helping with the next steps in my career.' ■

Volunteering part of a learning journey



MICHAEL PRINGLE was given a book about the importance of protecting the environment when he was 13. A life-long career dedicated to active work with both peace and conservation organisations had begun.

When he was 18 it was the heady days of vociferous anti-nuclear movements. Political activism followed. Wherever he landed, however, there was always a need for the 'strong administrator – the level-headed, balanced eye of the objective researcher'; that person, says Michael, who can combine passion and a solid striving which makes progress – in the environmental sense – happen.

Michael has run several offices in paid and non-paid capacities. 'It makes no difference what the status,' he says.

'Doing our best for the cause is the aim.'

He quotes Sri Chinmoy: *Let it be our solemn promise to Mother Earth, that from now on we shall take good care of her.*

Now Executive officer of **ENVIRONMENT & CONSERVATION ORGANISATIONS OF NEW ZEALAND (ECO)**, this quote is on the wall beside his desk, the ultimate goal behind every action and every decision. **ECO** is a coalition of 50 environmental groups – large and small – and is 'the intellectual backbone of the environmental movement supplying services where and when required'.

As a member of **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**, Michael has been surprised at the interesting diversity of volunteers who have come his way

“The common good is the reward.”

to add to **ECO**'s 'backbone'. Skill bases have covered IT and the building of a new database for research work and library cataloguing.

'I train in small digestible bites so that no one is overwhelmed with information – and whether a job seeker, new migrant or long-term volunteer with the team, my philosophy is that we are all in this for the common good. This is valuable work experience; it's all part of a learning journey. I enjoy the fact that through volunteering with **ECO** people are more employable.'

He emphasises too that for those new to New Zealand, volunteering is a positive step towards finding their feet in this country.

And as Michael Pringle has a way of 'bringing people along with him', all who work alongside this visionary man as volunteers will have vastly increased knowledge of Mother Earth and therefore a deeper desire to care for her, whether they're part of the team at **ECO** or have moved on out into the wider world. 'The common good is the reward,' he says. ■

Volunteering is a way of life



MARILEN MARIANO arrived in Wellington, with her 11-year-old son, in February 2011. Originally from Manila in the Philippines, Marilen enjoys the clean, green environment of New Zealand. Although she enjoys everything about Wellington, looking for a job has been a ‘tough challenge’.

‘Work is very basic, if you don’t find your money coming in, you worry about rent and food, along with other expenses, especially if you have a child with you. It was very tough, but emotionally and psychologically I was prepared. Because you are in a new place, you have to understand new things – you are starting over.’

Marilen found volunteering the best way to know her new home. She began with a plan. This was to cover a different issue each year. Human rights came first and through **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**’s interview process, Marilen took on a researcher role with the **HUMAN RIGHTS IN EDUCATION TRUST**. She moved to women’s issues

during her second year and found ‘interesting and diverse’ positions with **WELLINGTON WOMEN’S REFUGE** and **DRESS FOR SUCCESS** – one dealing with violence against women and children and the other about building confidence and work readiness.

‘I was surprised at the difference I could make by volunteering through the crisis line; and by helping women get appropriate and smart clothing when they go for a job interview. Most of these women are either applying for work for the very first time or have been out of the workforce for long periods.’

At the time of this interview, Marilen had just landed a full-time job as Settlement Support Co-ordinator with Wellington City Council. She is thankful for the rich experience she received from volunteering.

‘This contributed significantly to securing my present position. Volunteering made settling in easier

“Volunteering helped me not to focus on my problems too much ...”

and gave me lots of information. It helped me not to focus on my problems too much and instead I cultivate friendship and good networks. This is always a two-way process. You give back and gain a lot more in return. That is why volunteering is always perfect.’

Marilen still volunteers during her spare time, all the while trying hard to achieve a balance between her work, her volunteering and her family.

‘In my situation it is more difficult, because I have a child. But this is not an excuse. From both my work situations – my paid employment and my volunteering – I am always learning something new. They complement each other.’

For Marilen, volunteering has definitely become her way of life, inspiring her to strengthen her work values by helping others. ‘I remember an author who said that “service is the rent we pay for living”. Service is a powerful word. I am grateful that I have found a way to serve people.’ This is Marilen’s story with **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**. Everywhere she goes in the future, we know she will always start by helping people. ■

STORY AND PHOTO BY ANN LIU

Gaining familiarity with English



SHANGWEN YANG came to New Zealand eleven months ago from Luo Yang, an ancient city located in Henan Province in the north of China, to pursue a Master's degree in accounting and finance. In those first few months in New Zealand, Shangwen went through a period of homesickness and had a feeling of isolation from the people around him. He gradually emerged from these doldrums by making friends with many people from different cultural backgrounds. However, his spoken English became a stumbling block in communicating with them. Aiming to improve his English, he started volunteering with **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**.

'It is easy to speak basic oral English. It is like 'how are you?', 'I am good'. But how good? I can't exactly express my

feelings with proper real-life English. What I am speaking is 'textbook' English. Volunteering here has given me a chance to practise natural English. That is very helpful.'

Shangwen believes that English is the bridge linking different cultural communities in New Zealand. To engage effectively, good oral English is a necessity. In his volunteer position as follow-up assistant, Shangwen contacts people over the phone to collect feedback about their volunteer roles. It is a challenge, he says, understanding people at the other end of the telephone – that's the barrier he wants to conquer.

'People from India or Spain are easy to understand because they speak textbook English like me. But it's more difficult with understanding Kiwis.

“I believe my English will be improved step by step ... ”

Lots of sound-linking and fast speaking with a strong accent, I can only grab key words to guess. Especially for Kiwi slang and colloquialisms, I even don't know how to use them properly. I know the more I speak, the more I can learn.'

Shangwen thinks of his volunteering as an enjoyable activity that he does every week. He is not only practising English but also making friends with people in his workplace and gaining more confidence for his future job-hunting.

'I am very busy with my assignments, but I still try to squeeze in time for this volunteering. I believe my English will be improved step by step, so I can't give up. Especially, my volunteer work is helping those people in need as well.'

There is no doubt that eventually Shangwen, with his persistent efforts, will reach his goal of speaking fluent local English. The confidence that he has gained from his position at **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** will definitely be a valuable asset in his life in New Zealand. ■

STORY AND PHOTO BY ANN LIU

Experience and skills benefit the community sector



EMA KAPRIAN

VALERIE BARNES has worked in the energy industry in the UK and Australia for more than 20 years. Her roles have included marketing, planning and strategic thinking. A move to Wellington in 2011 with her husband, already in a leading position with a multi-national power company, meant a complete change of direction – and pace.

A brief interlude into the world of corporate volunteering in Australia had given Valerie a taste of a sector with potential and possibility. When she came to **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** to find a role which she could both ‘get her teeth into’ and also carry out on a regular basis she ‘was pleasantly surprised to see the diversity of volunteering options available’.

A position with **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**’s Employees in the Community (EITC) programme was an ‘eye-opener’ she said, as it so closely

matched her professional background. Another surprise, she said, was that when she joined the EITC team with coordinator Judy Kerr, working one day a week, she found that the volunteer position allowed her full scope to use her skills and experience; as well as give her much new knowledge about the unique services available within the local community sector.

Her past involvement with business-to-business marketing was quickly put to use in the EITC programme. ‘I found connecting with Wellington businesses keen to volunteer and connect with local communities, interesting and stimulating. Judy is flexible and focused on making a difference. This position has the space to be innovative and share ideas.’

One of the highlights of Valerie’s role has been to create a resource aimed at supporting businesses establish a volunteer programme and continue

“This position has the space to be innovative and share ideas.”

to manage it effectively. Called *Your Friendly Guide to Employee Volunteering*, the result is a useful source of ideas and real-life examples of successful corporate employee volunteer programmes which have added capacity to the community sector.

‘I enjoyed working with a talented volunteer team that we brought together especially for this task. Writers, involvement with researching and editing, and finally the graphic design which gave the good look – what an interesting project.’

A healthy life-work balance is how Valerie sums up her couple of years of volunteering with **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**’s EITC programme. ‘It has also made it possible for me to connect with the vibrant business and community life of Wellington in a way that would not have been possible if I had not decided to volunteer.’

The skills and experience gained in the role will also make for a substantial CV if she chooses to re-enter the corporate sector in the future. ■

RESEARCHED BY SUSHMA PATEL

Basil brings on the wheels



GARY POOLE

BASIL MARSTERS' past experience makes him perfect for driving patients for the **CANCER SOCIETY**. When people are having treatment for cancer, driving to and from their treatment can be a daunting task; in fact impossible for most.

For some years the **CANCER SOCIETY OF NZ** has run a very successful programme where volunteer drivers pick up and deliver patients to the clinic in Wellington, escort them if needed, wait while they have their treatment, then take them safely home again.

Basil has been driving patients from the Porirua area since late 2013. 'When we lived in Auckland my brother got cancer. He didn't tell anyone in the family and was taking himself across the city in an exhausting trip on two buses and a train. When I realised what was happening I started taking him for his treatments myself.

'Having been through the

experience I understand what people may be feeling. It's important for me to listen to people and treat them well. Many of these patients are completely dependent on us as their drivers to get to their treatment.'

Basil is a skilled machinist and has worked on all sorts of machines in different manufacturing plants. 'Since we moved to Wellington from Auckland, I have not been able to find a job that uses my machinist skills that is within my capabilities.

'While I am looking for a job this volunteer work is great. It gets me out of the house and working with people. It also enables me to be there in school holidays for our youngest child and help out with our other grown-up kids. I feel useful and glad that I am helping people when they need it. And it's good for me.

The **CANCER SOCIETY** says in their thorough volunteer training that the role requires respect for

“ ... volunteer work is great. It gets me out of the house and working with people ... I feel useful and glad that I am helping people when they need it. And it's good for me. ”

confidentiality of patient information and circumstances. People should be caring and sensitive. They must also be trustworthy and able to relate to people from all walks of life. Other needs are their own reliable car, a current driver's licence plus a good safe driving record.

VOLUNTEER PORIRUA's Lynne Harding says: 'This is a daytime role that may suit people in part-time work or those who are retired. Time management skills are important as patients must get to appointments on time!'

Patients know when they hear the throaty roar of Basil's sporty car, with its flamboyant paintwork and flaming chomes, that their ride has arrived ... and that they are in good and caring hands. ■

STORY BY CAROLYN WILLIAMS

An eye-opening experience



EMA KAPRIANOV

NATHALIE HARRINGTON, 24, (pictured on right with Mayor Celia Wade-Brown) and about to complete her tertiary studies, has a lot to put in her resumé. That's largely due to the experience she has gained as a volunteer.

Nathalie arrived in Wellington in 2010 to embark on a degree in Spanish and International Relations. Five years later she has a BA in Public Policy and Chinese, an almost completed Law degree, and over three years experience as a Board Trustee.

Her first role was through **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** as a youth mentor to Tongan secondary school students at **WESLEY COMMUNITY ACTION**. She loved the work, but not so much the Saturday night time-slot. However what it did do was open her to a world outside her group of university friends. Later that year she moved to an interview role in the **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** office. It's a role that requires a good listener.

Listening to people made Nathalie realise there was a world outside what

she describes as her 'privileged life as a university student'. She met people she never would have encountered as a student.

Nathalie's potential didn't go unnoticed and in late 2011, when the youth role on the **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** Board of Trustees became vacant, she was asked if she'd like to apply. 'They took a giant leap of faith in me because there hadn't been a student on the Board prior to that.' Her youth brought a new perspective. Being a digital native, she understands the potential and pitfalls of social media. This has helped guide the centre to use social media as a mechanism for wider community engagement.

Nathalie says being a trustee has been an eye-opening experience as well as a huge learning curve. 'I didn't know what a Profit and Loss sheet was, I had little knowledge of governance or the duties and obligations of a trustee.' Nathalie is quick to acknowledge the experience she's gained from working with groups of people who have different interests, priorities and focuses, and is grateful for the

“I'd never have achieved any of that in the bubble of university life.”

opportunity and the new learning she has gained.

She says that for many university students, their only experience of the city they choose to study in is as a student. Nathalie, on the other hand, has seen first hand how people who need services get by, the gaps in the system; and because of **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**'s partnership with Work and Income, now has an informed understanding of how this government agency operates. 'I'd never have achieved any of that in the bubble of university life,' she says.

Her role at **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** also guided some of her university studies: A paper in Welfare Law was something she wouldn't have considered. 'I never had any interest in the New Zealand welfare system before,' she says.

So where does a young woman who has achieved so much go from here? Nathalie will be taking some well deserved time out to travel overseas when she graduates. She'll then return to a job she has already secured with a Wellington law firm. By then she'll have two degrees and four years of governance experience on her resumé. That's quite an accomplishment. ■

STORY BY TRISH ANDERSON

Remaining on a positive track



GARY POOLE

JOE KAHI took on a role as a volunteer planting native trees with **FRIENDS OF MAARA ROA** to keep his spirits up during a time of unemployment. One day when he was out planting, he decided to drop his CV in with Whitby New World on the off chance that they might be looking for staff.

He was up on the hills digging when the phone rang and the store manager invited him in for an interview.

Joe had worked for 16 years at the City New World in Wellington but stopped work at Christmas 2012 for family reasons. After six months, things had improved and he began applying for positions, sometimes hearing nothing at all from people who had received his application.

This was soul destroying and Joe realised that he had to do something positive about his situation. The Learning Shop in Porirua helped him get his CV in shape and encouraged him

to be positive and proactive in applying for jobs.

He also took on volunteering. 'This helped me remain on a positive track.' It is also part of a Maori proverb which he says he lives by: '*Tama tu, tama ora, tama noho, tama mate – work and survive, sit and perish.*'

Joe's chance CV drop-off led to his being employed with New World in Whitby where he is experiencing work in all departments as a member of the 70-strong team.

Manager Mark Roche says, 'Joe came to us highly recommended by the city store. I promised him a foot in the door and more hours as they arose. When I met him I was struck by his humbleness. He is a gentle man and he quickly fitted into the team here. He had only been here a few weeks when he was given *Employee of the month* for one of the many kind acts he is known for. If we could clone Joe we would,

“I’m loving the work and the team here at Whitby New World and am so pleased to have this opportunity.”

we are constantly being told good things about him ... customers love him, colleagues respect him and, as employers, we couldn't ask for anyone better. Joe is one of life's good guys!

Joe says he loves working with people. 'I am gregarious. I always make the effort to introduce myself. I have learned to greet people in more than 10 languages ... Syrian, Iraqi, Cambodian, Somali, Laotian, French and more. When I meet customers in the store I greet them in their own language. They are so pleased that someone has done that to make them feel welcome.'

In his spare time he also bakes delicious banana cakes for his elderly neighbour and keeps local lawns tidy.

Joe is grateful to all the people who helped him on his journey back to full-time employment. 'I'm loving the work and the team here at Whitby New World and am so pleased to have this opportunity.' ■

STORY BY CAROLYN WILLIAMS

When you are in a new country...



MANASI CHOUDARY (pictured on the left) worked, before her arrival in New Zealand, in film direction and production in Mumbai India, making both advertising and feature films. An opportunity for her husband to study further with a creative workshop script-writing assignment at Victoria University brought the couple to Wellington.

‘When you are in a new country you are always wondering what the people are about, what they think, what they are likely to do in certain situations.’

So she decided to volunteer. Through **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** she found several positions. ‘These roles helped me to understand this country a lot better; and they gave me an experience of the work scene here as well.’

A sensitive woman with a gentle demeanour, Manasi interviewed potential volunteers with **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** for some months. At the same time she took on the role of communications assistant and social media expert with **ARTS ACCESS AOTEAROA**.

‘People identify themselves with the work they do,’ she said. Through this latter position she not only learnt about the New Zealand art scene but also about work with people with disabilities. ‘I developed more ability to empathize and understand difficulties that are often not understood in the usual course of events.’

The interviewing role gave her a sense of New Zealand’s diversity and also welfare system. Many of the people she talked with who were

“ Many too, like me, wanted to feel part of things. ”

seeking volunteering roles were, like herself, unemployed, but keen for work experience and something interesting and developmental to do during this time of transition.

‘Many too, like me, wanted to feel part of things.’

Another short-term assignment Manasi took on was to work as the ‘creative thinker’ alongside staff of **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** and a fellow volunteer, Hari Shankar, to produce a one-minute film about **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** for a national volunteer centres’ hui. Hari, a full-time employee with Chorus, was interested in the creative side of being involved with some after-hours film-making experimentation.

These experts (as they proved to be) met weekly for two months. Now a dynamic **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** pecha kucha (a one-minute film) is available for further promotional activity.

‘For family reasons my husband and I are returning to India. But I leave with an interesting and deep knowledge of friendly New Zealand.’ ■

Community spirit alive and well at Salvation Army Shop



“ Since I’ve been at the Salvation Army Shop I’m happy again. ”

HASENA ZORA and **CRAIG HUTSON** are part of the strong team that makes the **KILBIRNIE SALVATION ARMY SHOP** tick. From manager Craig’s point of view, the shop has two objectives ... community spirit and development, and commercial viability.

When Craig first came across from the Wellington store to Kilbirnie, then about to become a stand-alone operation, he could see there would be more responsibility and workload for the five existing staff.

“That gave me the scope and reason to expand our volunteer base.” Hasena is one example of his ability to be a creative forward-thinker. Her son had worked in the shop a couple of years ago (now he has paid employment); so as soon as his mother arrived in Wellington as part of the New Zealand Family Re-unification Scheme for people with refugee backgrounds, he introduced her to Craig.

She had a depth of business experience in Iraq but very little spoken English. The trauma of displaced family life as a result of the war added to difficult beginnings. ‘When I first came here I was crying all the time,’ she said through an interpreter. ‘But since I’ve been at the **SALVATION ARMY SHOP** I am happy again – smiling and laughing.’

Hasena’s outgoing, lively personality conveys her pleasure at being part of this well-functioning team. Staff all help with English words. ‘I learn as much here as I do in my class.’

Items are labelled with English phrases and descriptions and Craig keeps introducing new tasks and new possibilities. They joke a lot – especially as he adds a few Arabic words to his own vocabulary. Hasena adds that the staff has become like her family. She looks forward to arriving and being included in the shop’s welcoming environment.

Craig, aged 30, sees his role as manager of a team which includes a number of diverse volunteers as a more interesting – even challenging – career than if everyone were paid. ‘Then it’s just straightforward HR practice,’ he said. ‘With volunteers we have a responsibility to our local community, to ensuring we understand why they are here and making sure we respond to these motives.’

‘Often people are really struggling and they have no chance right now of getting paid work. We will make sure they can purchase things here at good rates maybe to help furnish their homes – that sort of thing. And we make sure they are getting the skills development they are looking for.’ This could be training with using the till, presenting window displays, general life skills and communication.

‘You can’t be rigid with this sort of management – or you don’t grow yourself. We miss out if we don’t talk more to each other and find out about several different views.’

More customers come into the shop. Hasena’s bright smile, as she greets them, says it all. ■

Now I know why I'm supporting you



“They’ve motivated me to do positive things for the community.”

MOHAMMAD ALI AMIRI deeply appreciated the support he received from volunteers when he arrived in New Zealand as an asylum seeker from Afghanistan 10 years ago. The bond he formed with one volunteer and her family continues to this day.

‘When I came to Wellington I was met by volunteers at the airport through **REFUGEE AND MIGRANT SERVICES**. They worked with me to set up a home, television, stove – all second-hand and all donated by local people.

‘Sarah* was one of the volunteers. She helped me in the evening, after work and weekends; things like finding a job, bank setups and getting to Work and Income. I even got to know her family ... they helped me with my English and one night Sarah and her son stayed up until three in the morning making sure I had a good CV.

‘After about six or seven months, Sarah’s time with me was over but our friendship continued, even though her volunteer assignment was finished.

‘One day I said to Sarah: “Do you know what you are doing for me?”

‘She said: “I’m just helping you.”

‘I told her: “You are doing so much more. Imagine you are in hospital, you are hoping someone will visit and just ask, how you are you? Imagine if someone brought a flower to you. It would mean so much. That’s how we refugees feel when we come to this country and are asked: How are you? How can I help you? That’s all we want.”

‘She brushed it off – “it’s just what any Kiwi would do,” she said.

‘A few years later, Sarah was admitted to hospital for several weeks. I visited her – and took a flower. When she saw me she cried. She said, “You told me something three or four years

ago and I’m just now understanding what you said. I can’t get anything better than this. Now I know why I’m supporting you.”

‘And Sarah’s still involved with me and my family. She’s taken me on family holidays and at one stage I even stayed at Sarah and her husband’s house for a short time. My parents have joined me in New Zealand and she is teaching them English each week. I feel like my family is part of Sarah’s family.’

Thanks to Sarah’s example, Mohammad has now become an active volunteer. On top of his paid work as a Night Manager of a hotel and community development advisor for **CHANGEMAKERS REFUGEE FORUM**, he volunteers with **NZ POLICE**, is a civil defence volunteer, sits on a few different boards, and chairs the **WELLINGTON AFGHAN ASSOCIATION**.

‘Having the support of volunteers to help me begin my life in New Zealand was a real privilege. They’ve motivated me to do positive things for the community,’ says Mohammed. ■

STORY BY ELIZABETH KING

* Not her real name.

After-work admin role creates team feel



AMY DAVIS bounces into the office of **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** every Wednesday after work. Her bright personality sets the scene for the hard work to follow during the next couple of hours.

Amy is the ‘special ingredient’ which makes a flexible workplace successful. Her role as volunteer evening administrator takes in greeting those about to be interviewed who are seeking volunteering roles (and who are also often full-time workers fitting volunteering into busy lives). She also welcomes the team of interviewers about to begin their volunteering stint. From 5pm until 7pm the office is a buzzy, busy scene.

‘But,’ says admin Amy, ‘it’s well organized and it all flows. Even with three, and sometimes more, interviews happening simultaneously everyone knows what they’re doing – there’s a team feel about it all.’

Before finishing university Amy

decided to volunteer as a way of gaining administration experience, meeting new people and finding out how office structures ticked.

Having done papers on social and public policy she took on a position with the **NATIONAL NETWORK OF STOPPING VIOLENCE**. Spotting Amy’s potential and ability to write, the organisation kept adding to her brief. Besides everyday administrative tasks, she updated all operational policies. ‘It was interesting, valuable work – an introduction to a sector which was much bigger than I ever imagined. I was also able to add some strong, practical work experience to my CV – and gain a good local reference.’

Meanwhile she had also taken on the late afternoon ‘welcoming’ role with **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON**, with some short-term research projects thrown into the mix via this organisation’s different networks. Amy remembers collating educational

“I was able to add some strong, practical work experience to my CV.”

opportunities for managers of volunteers, a study being led by writer and independent voluntary sector advocate Sue Hine. ‘The complex layers of the community were being revealed through my volunteering.’

After a couple of years as a historian and writer with the Waitangi Tribunal, Amy currently works for the Ministry of Justice as an advisor and as a quality assurance monitor with Legal Aid Services. But her Wednesday after-work routine continues; ‘I like the camaraderie and this contact with another world. It takes me out of my work bubble and I have made friends with people I never would have met in my usual circle of activities.’

And with Amy’s ‘bounce’ comes a stabilising effect on the early evening atmosphere of the **VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON** office. Even though this is after work (and for very young volunteer seekers after school) everyone is welcomed warmly and the interviewing process is clear and focused. For many it’s their first interaction with the community sector; the warmth created will become a ‘lasting memory’. The volunteering legacy is being kept alive and well. ■