

We The People

Program 108

Volunteering



One of the most interesting passages in the Bible reveals a truth of profound proportions. In Luke we read that “unto whomever much is given of them shall much be required”. The truly valuable gifts we are given in life should be respected and there is a moral imperative to receive those gifts with humility, dignity and grace, being considerate of others. When we have much, there is indeed a moral obligation or responsibility and it’s a code for life to be held tightly within the heart and one which builds moral capital if acted on.

Now as part of this let’s look at a part of Australian life which is often undervalued.....volunteering. When people freely give their time and their expertise it is an unencumbered altruistic act which binds society together and builds self worth and moral capital. In Australia volunteering value, if measured in dollars, exceeds 200 billion each year. In other words the country would cease to function well if there was no volunteering. The value however reaches well beyond the dollar and as a whole brings happiness to the lonely, food to the hungry, smiles through entertainment, the hand of friendship, better business and hope for many. Volunteers are simply indispensable.

An organisation of great merit locally is Volunteering Gold Coast, located at Miami. With 220 staff of which 170 are volunteers placing over 5000 people a year and transporting folk over a million kilometers annually, it’s the biggest volunteering organisation of its kind in Australia. VGC is a not for profit organisation primarily funded by Federal, State and Local government plus donations which are fully tax deductible. I visited their new offices at Miami last week and a very enthusiastic Emma Trapski their marketing co-coordinator, took me around. It’s clear the culture is one of family where management goes out of its way to recognise individuals and to measure results in human terms. Each week they send me a brief on the unsung heroes who are dispatched to help others and other organisations. Their backgrounds are varied and very interesting.

Volunteer Nick Oliver helps out at Aunties and Uncles Queensland and gives his time to help vulnerable and socially disadvantaged children. Tryll Gemparo helps at the Citizens Advice Bureau on the Gold Coast in the legal department while Melissa Keese a business student volunteers to gain experience in the work place. Russell Lewis was placed in a volunteering program in Western Australia tagging and researching Flat Back turtles and Russell says it has changed his life. John Guspan volunteers in IT after studying for his degree in Economics and certificate courses in IT. This gives John experience and real hope for a full time job soon. There are thousands of unsung heroes just like these good folk and Volunteering Gold Coast take an interest in each and every one of them.

Volunteers aren’t paid, not because they’re worthless but because they’re priceless and if we all volunteered our time or expertise, knowledge and wisdom then what a great country Australia could become. The direction we are taking now is troubled with violence, population growth, greed and unhappy people pervading every facet of life. The famous Leonard Nimoy or Mr Spock from Star Trek said, “the miracle is this – the more we share, the more we have” and so it is that, to those who have much then much is required.

I enjoy reading the words of great people who have attained wisdom and in that their words have been recorded through history. When it comes to volunteering, Gandhi’s words flood into my thoughts when he said *“the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.....for I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again”*. Volunteering is a noble thing to do and has little to do with how wealthy you are or how much you have. It has everything to do with self worth and well being.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley