

## 2011 - European Year of Volunteering

A campaign called 'New Year New Journey' was launched at the beginning of 2011, by Alyn Smith, Scottish MEP, asking the population of Scotland and their local communities to commit to volunteering. As a volunteer himself, Mr Smith firmly believes that the contribution of volunteers to various sectors of society should be recognised. On a personal level volunteers acquire knowledge and skills, meet new people, gain experience for work, not to mention the enjoyment of getting involved. The Scottish Economy gains too with the latest Scottish Household Survey showing the value of volunteering to be estimated at £2.1 billion, based on average hourly rates for equivalent paid posts.



A Eurobarometre study last year found that 3 out of 10 Europeans claim to be volunteering. Volunteer activity is an excellent way to value time and talent, allowing everyone to contribute in their own way. Through the European Voluntary Service, thousands of teenagers and young adults travel abroad to teach, develop life skills, take part in sports while learning about other cultures. 28% of Scottish school pupils think that volunteering is the best way to become a good citizen. (Scottish Household Survey).

For more information about volunteering in Europe or to exchange information and experiences, check out the EYV 2011 website [www.eyv2011.eu](http://www.eyv2011.eu). If you would like to get involved, you can sign up online and commit to volunteer for a specific number of hours during 2011. At the time of writing, the UK was in the lead with 'commitments' ahead of Italy in second place. You can sign up for the European Year of Volunteering 2011 on Facebook too!

Organisations, if you are planning any events in connection with EYV 2011, please let us know. Volunteers, if you have any experiences of volunteering you would like to share, please get in touch. Don't forget Scotland is part of Europe so home-grown volunteer stories are very welcome!

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[www.volunteeringfife.org](http://www.volunteeringfife.org)

# Life Skills through Volunteering

Lucyna Rysiakiewicz began volunteering a few years ago within NHS Fife Play Services Department in Kirkcaldy. Her role has changed over the years and Lucyna shares with us her volunteer journey. "I come from Poland and was qualified and working as a midwife for over 25 years. Unfortunately a situation led to a decision to leave the country and I decided to move to Scotland. When I arrived it was my dream to continue to work as a midwife and to enhance my English as I spoke none.



I still wanted to work in the hospital environment so I contacted the hospital and was put in touch with Liz Nicol (Play/

Volunteer manager) who was very helpful, friendly and supportive and seemed to always be trying to help everyone.

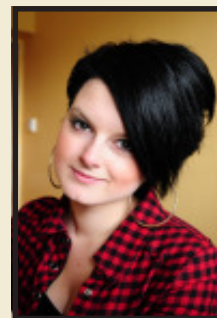
I wanted to gain experience in a Scottish hospital and soon realised that routines were different as I started off supporting play in the children's ward. Looking back, I wanted to move from Poland but here I was struggling with the language which was a barrier and a huge issue for me. Even doing the simple things like shopping was unbelievably difficult.

I have settled in Scotland now and volunteering has helped me a lot. I have now moved from the children's ward and at this moment I am volunteering in the Midwife Led Unit (MLU) in Forth Park Maternity Hospital. I am very much supported by a group of nursing assistants.

In the future I would definitely like to come back to work in the hospital and start off as a nursing assistant. I find my volunteering in the MLU very interesting and important.

I really enjoy my volunteering and plan to continue what I am doing."

Polish school pupil, Weronika Groska recounts her volunteering experiences.



"I spent the first thirteen years of my life in Poland. Moving to Great Britain in 2006 was a life-changing decision made by my parents. It was a real challenge at first to keep up with all the school work without speaking fluent English but with great help from the teachers and friends I am now happily studying Advanced Highers and have applied to study Medicine at university. I regularly meet with bilingual students at my school to boost their confidence and communication skills, something I can easily relate to.

At school I also help out at the Department of Additional Support which has 80 young learners requiring help with physical and learning needs. This has taught me how to work effectively with children with ASN.

Having chosen to apply for Medicine meant that I needed to start volunteering but this was only one of the reasons. I also did not want to spend all my summer holidays doing nothing useful so decided to start working in a charity shop. Sometimes I also visit the residents at a local care home which is helping me develop an understanding of working with the elderly.

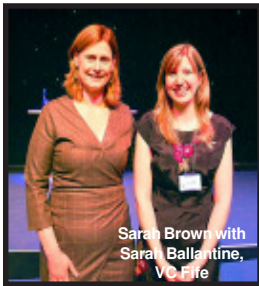
Volunteering is not as well recognised in Poland. I wish it was, so that people of my age could give back something to society in their free time. Being involved in such a range of voluntary activities is really helping me improve my interpersonal skills. Having the opportunity to contribute to society around me gives me huge satisfaction."

# Celebrating Fife's Voluntary Sector



Fife's voluntary sector had cause to celebrate at a glitzy awards ceremony held at the Rothes Halls in Glenrothes late last year. Nearly 300 people attended 'Celebrating Fife's Voluntary Sector', an event funded by Celebrating Fife 2010 and organised jointly by Volunteer Centre Fife, CVS Fife and VONEF to recognise the fantastic work done by volunteers and voluntary organisations in Fife.

The event was a great success and a welcome 'pat-on-the-back' to the voluntary sector in Fife during difficult financial times. Sarah Brown, wife of Gordon Brown



Sarah Brown with Sarah Ballantine, VC Fife

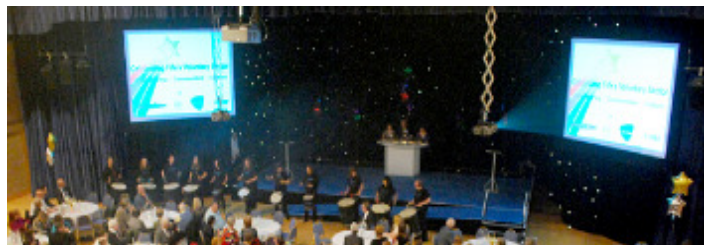
MP and patron of several local and national voluntary organisations, was in attendance to present the awards and to offer her support to the voluntary sector in Fife. She later tweeted that the list of nominees was 'inspiring' and that she 'LOVES the power of people doing good'.

Resonate Drumming Band started the event with a bang, and further entertainment was provided by the spectacular Spirit Combat International

Scottish Demo Team. An inspirational film made by Adam Smith College students to showcase Fife's voluntary sector also added to the night's entertainment, and feedback from those in attendance was overwhelmingly positive. One attendee commented that the night was 'wonderful', whilst another said that 'it was nice to spend an evening with some of the brightest stars of humanity'. Ron Nugent, Manager of Volunteer Centre Fife, said "It is a privilege for us to be able to recognise the often outstanding work undertaken by volunteers and organisations within Fife's voluntary sector. So often their efforts go without remark or reward therefore it is an honour to be given the opportunity to acknowledge the great difference they can make to people's lives."



VC Fife Manager, Ron Nugent



Community drumming band Resonate start the evening off

Do you have a volunteer story we could feature in a future edition of the Newsletter?  
Do you have any new developments we could highlight? Contact [cupar@volunteeringfife.org](mailto:cupar@volunteeringfife.org)

# Celebrating Fife's Winning Organisations

## Inspirational Award *Safe Space*



As well as providing support to survivors of sexual abuse for 21 years, Safe Space works on a local and national level to raise awareness of the issues surrounding sexual abuse and empower survivors to speak out about their experiences.

## Most Enterprising Award *Markinch Playgroup*

Staff and volunteers have raised funds and local awareness of the group and successfully gained sponsorship from the local supermarket David Sands!



## Open Category Award *St Andrews Voluntary Service (SVS)*



SVS is an organisation run by a team of St Andrews University student volunteers to promote volunteering and co-ordinate volunteering opportunities for students. Last year SVS placed nearly 400 volunteers in over 30 projects!

## Organisation Growth Award *St Ninian's Charity Shop & Community Cafe*



Opened in 2003 in Glenrothes, St Ninian's Charity Shop and Community Cafe doubled its turnover in less than a year. It extended last year to include a larger and newly-refurbished cafe which is staffed by volunteers and serves low cost and healthy food to the community.

## Social Inclusion Award *Fairway Fife*

Based in Cowdenbeath, Fairway Fife is a new peer-mentoring project which encourages young people with learning difficulties to have dreams and be more active in the community.



# Voluntary Sector Winning Volunteers

## Young/Student Volunteering Award *Michael Hunter*



Michael has volunteered with the Abbeyview Forum for several years, and was instrumental in the creation of the Youth Forum. He helps with the production of the Community Magazine and regularly volunteers at Abbeyview Day Centre for the elderly.

## Mature Volunteer Award *Evelyn McLeod*



Evelyn won the Mature Volunteer Award in recognition of over 32 years' service with the Samaritans. She now suffers from Parkinson's Disease but still comes into the branch when possible and concentrates on answering emails from people seeking support.

## Volunteering Team Award *Drivers at Victoria Hospice*



Volunteers enable patients and their carers to attend social activities such as exhibitions and pantomimes, as well as hospital appointments and carer respite. They also provide support for relatives following bereavement.

## GSB/Moving On Award *Helen Buchanan*



Helen, registered blind and with other health problems, has volunteered with Fife Society for the Blind for over 10 years. She provides support in the waiting room of the NHS Low Vision

Clinics and has also raised thousands of pounds by various means.

## Open Category Award *Dysart Caulfield*



Dysart volunteers with LINK East Fife Mental Health Adolescent Befriending Project, for his outstanding commitment to his befriended during particularly difficult times.

Did you know you could volunteer as a minibus driver, teller, gardener, administrator, playworker or cafe assistant? For details of these and many more volunteering opportunities see [www.volunteeringfife.org](http://www.volunteeringfife.org)

# Fife Migrants Forum



**Fife Migrants Forum (FMF)** helps migrants from all backgrounds integrate into the wider community and access services and information, in particular these relating to welfare rights, housing, employability, health and asylum. FMF offers individual support, both practical and emotional, to migrants in crisis. At the moment, FMF provides this free service in English, Polish, Slovak, Czech, and Russian. They hope that they will be able to cover all main community languages in the near future.

FMF also offers limited translation and interpreting services in most Central & Eastern European languages as well as cultural-awareness training. These are charged services offered to agencies.



*"Fife Migrants Forum have helped us with signing up our daughter for school in Fife. They explained the process, accompanied me to school and helped filling the forms" Kate, 32, Slovak Republic*

*"FMF have helped me sort out issues with my landlord. They also helped me with completion of Fife Council housing application. I could communicate with them in my own language and didn't have to go the local office and involve interpreter" Jana, 26, Czech Republic*



FMF's priority now is to recruit volunteers from within the international and mainstream communities in Fife. They are looking for people from all parts of the world with all kinds of skills who wish to play a role in helping people integrate. If you believe you can contribute to this exciting project they would love to hear from you. You don't need to be from some exotic part of the world to be a volunteer with FMF. If you would like to work with the international community in Fife and feel that you have something to offer they would be delighted to hear from you. You can contact them through their website [www.fifemigrantsforum.org.uk](http://www.fifemigrantsforum.org.uk) where you will find an application form for volunteers.

You can  
**visit FMF** at Laws Court 339 High Street Kirkcaldy, Fife  
**call** 07837 892008  
**email** [fifemigrantsforum@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:fifemigrantsforum@hotmail.co.uk)  
or find them on **facebook**



# Old Traditions Still Valued Today

## Soup Kitchens - French-Style



One of the oldest traditions in volunteering is helping in a soup kitchen. Although the world of volunteering has developed almost beyond recognition, soup kitchens still thrive today. In France, they are going from strength to strength.

In 1985 French comedian and actor, Michel Coluche, founded the Restos du Coeur, a French voluntary organisation, which literally translated means 'Restaurants of the Heart'. The purpose of them is "to help and bring voluntary assistance to destitute people, in particular in the field of food by the provision of free meals, and through social and economic integration; like action against poverty in all its forms". They are essentially soup kitchens designed to feed the homeless and impoverished. Coluche started the whole project with a famous radio broadcast beginning "I have a little idea, a bit like this... If there are people who would be interested in sponsoring a free soup kitchen, we'd start first in Paris and then spread to France's big cities." The founders aimed to give away 2000-3000 meals per day in the capital. By the end of the first winter they had exceeded all expectations and donated 8.5 million free meals.

After more than a quarter of a century and massive expansion throughout France, Restos du Coeur now give away 100 million meals each year. The project initially attracted 4,000 volunteers which was remarkable, but now sees over 40,000 volunteers giving their time to help those less fortunate than themselves. However, in addition to food aid, Restos du Coeur quickly realised that food alone would not help with re-integration so they extended their work to help people to overcome other difficulties like finding work, or having a roof over their heads.

Coluche sadly passed away in an accident a year after his idea came to fruition, but the organisation has done its founder proud and continues to grow each year.

## Volunteers' Week 2011

We plan to have 'The European Year of Volunteering' as the theme for this year's Volunteers' Week in June. If you are planning any events which you would like us to publicise please let us know.



# Cupar Futures Group

Continuing the European theme, Cupar Futures Group has collaborated with Cupar & Howe of Fife Twinning Association to celebrate the signing of the official charter with Sainte Menehould in northern France. The town twinning event in November brought a buzz to the town and cemented ongoing links with France in sport, food and golfing.

Many small towns in Scotland have been concerned about the effect changes in shopping habits may be having on the town centres. People are shopping on the internet or in out-of-town retail parks resulting in small shops closing and main streets with boarded up shop fronts. To avoid this happening to Cupar, VONEF, in conjunction with the Cupar Futures Group, secured Leader funding last year to appoint a Town Centre Co-ordinator to work with local businesses and community groups and promote the positive aspects of the town. Viv Collie and Irene Lodge are job-sharing the post.



Surveys of retailers and voluntary groups have highlighted the aspects of Cupar that they want to preserve – the friendly small-town atmosphere, the historic buildings, the many community activities, the small independent shops and cafes.

There is a lot going on in Cupar but it often depends on word-of-mouth to find out what and where. As a result, a monthly 'What's on in Cupar' sheet, compiled with the help of community groups and local venues, is posted on the main noticeboards around town, in cafes and business waiting rooms as well as on the revamped town website [www.cupartown.co.uk](http://www.cupartown.co.uk). If your group wishes to publicise any events or to check that your group's details are listed correctly, please visit the website or contact Irene at VONEF (01334 654080).

"The community spirit in Cupar is one of its strengths and we hope to continue to build on that", said Viv and Irene. "If you have any ideas we would be happy to hear from you."

## VC Fife - Keeping You Informed

**Volunteers' Managers Network meetings 2011:** Scheduled for April, June, early September, late October and December. Details of precise dates, venues and themes will be advised in due course.

**Training:** For information on FREE training courses, including in-house and training tailored to your organisation's needs, plus information on accreditation: contact Mary Ray, Training Co-ordinator on 07717 390214, [mary.ray@volunteeringfife.org](mailto:mary.ray@volunteeringfife.org)

**Support into volunteering:** To find out about the Give Something Back project in Central and West Fife contact Jacquie Mellon on 01592 645540 [gbscentral@volunteeringfife.org](mailto:gbscentral@volunteeringfife.org) or Biff McMahon on 01383 732136 [gbs@volunteeringfife.org](mailto:gbs@volunteeringfife.org)

**MV Awards/16+ Learning Choices:** Linda Turnbull, [youth@volunteeringfife.org](mailto:youth@volunteeringfife.org)

**For general enquiries:** contact your local Volunteer Centre Fife office.

[www.volunteeringfife.org](http://www.volunteeringfife.org)

8 For info on every aspect of volunteering - advice about benefits, expenses, Disclosures, preparing to volunteer, links to other voluntary organisations, information on volunteering opportunities throughout Fife