

Volunteering takes on the Recession

Army of volunteers now more vital than ever

"Of all the attributes that Scotland has to see it through this recession and its deadly impact on the public finances, there is none greater than the voluntary sector and in particular those who give freely of their time and skills." Bill Jamieson, The Scotsman 19.6.09.

This opinion was borne out by Tricia Marwick SNP MSP, a staunch supporter of the voluntary sector. Stephen Adamson of VC Fife met her recently, first of all asking about the increasing demand for services from front-line voluntary services, which may face cuts in funding.



Stephen Adamson with Tricia Marwick

"It is important that we try to maintain and enhance as many services as we can in the voluntary sector. My support for the voluntary sector has always been based on the fact that voluntary organisations are innovative. They can change tack very quickly; they can react to circumstances which I think the more bureaucratic organisations simply can't." (continued on page 2)



Volunteer of the Year Awards 2009

This year's awards' evening will take place on **Thursday 26th November** in the Beveridge Park Hotel, Kirkcaldy.

Organisations, whether new or long-established are invited to nominate individual volunteers or teams of all ages.

Look out for nominations in the post soon.

An MSP's Approach

Stephen: *What measures are the Scottish Government taking to ensure that young people do not become long-term unemployed?*

Tricia Marwick: "The Scottish Government have been doing a number of things, not least bringing in apprenticeships. We've got to make sure that we don't allow this generation to be long-term workless. First and foremost we need to work our way out of the recession. I think the Scottish Government and the UK government, which ultimately controls the banking and financial sector and the wider economy, have to look very carefully at where we're going, what decisions are being taken and what decisions are needed to get the economy moving again"

S: *Under the 16+ Learning Choices Initiative all school leavers are made an offer of a 'positive destination' which includes volunteering. How can we ensure that volunteering raises its profile as an attractive positive destination? (see also page 7)*

TM: "I think that the voluntary sector needs to make volunteering much more attractive. In addition to being a good thing, it leads to the development of skills, particularly confidence. It would be wonderful to see many more young people volunteering but I think the voluntary sector has a responsibility to make the choice of volunteering a positive choice."

S: *A high percentage of the volunteers we are interviewing are unemployed just now and there has been a steady increase since the beginning of the financial downturn. What hope is there for this section of the population?*

TM: "I think it is a good sign that people are volunteering. They've got time on their hands and they want to donate their skills to organisations, particularly voluntary organisations. They want to get out of the house in the morning. They want to go and do something useful and that's where the voluntary sector comes in. I know, from my experience, that those who actually use their unemployment period as productively as they can are the ones more likely to get back into work rather than people just sitting around and expecting it to happen.

I don't think the voluntary sector or individuals can change the economic climate we're in, but what we can do is give positive help to those who are unemployed at the moment and offer support and help to keep them motivated."

The full transcript of the interview can be found at www.volunteeringfife.org

"Despite concern over how certain groups are faring in the economic downturn, government figures show that employment among ethnic minorities, disabled people and older people has not been heavily affected over the past 12 months. Although these groups started from a low base-level of employment at the beginning of the recession, they have not been hit as hard as young people, men, and those in deprived areas. For more information go to: www.susescotland.co.uk

Help is out there



Volunteering: - a stepping-stone into employment

Job Centre Plus, in partnership with Volunteer Development Scotland, has launched a new initiative to help unemployed people access volunteering as a stepping-stone into employment.

At their six-month interview with a Job Centre Plus Personal Adviser, customers are given several options, including volunteering. If the customer decided to go down that route, their contact details are passed to the relevant Volunteer Centre, who aim to find a suitable opportunity for them within a time frame of 10 days.

Volunteering is an invaluable way for people who have been out of work for a significant time to regain their confidence, learn new skills or refresh old ones, update their CV with relevant experience and acquire up-to-date references. If you think you meet the criteria, you should speak to your Personal Advisor at Job Centre Plus for more information.



Give Something Back

After a very successful period in West Fife, based at Volunteer Centre Fife in Dunfermline, Give Something Back (GSB) was rolled out in Central Fife with a new project in January 2009. Based at St Brycedale Avenue, Jacquie Mellon, the Volunteer Co-ordinator, has been supporting volunteers with additional needs into volunteering – this can include long-term unemployed, those with health issues or family concerns.



This has proved to be a challenging task due to the change in the current climate and the “credit crunch” which is hitting all sectors of society including voluntary organisations which feel they cannot support more volunteers. Through regular meetings and a full explanation of the support available to the volunteers, Jacquie has managed to allay organisations’ concerns and encouraged them to take on volunteers with additional needs. Jacquie has found that organisations are now more accepting of GSB volunteers, including several retail organisations that have never refused any of the volunteers.

The manager of one charity shop in Kirkcaldy said “the volunteers from Jacquie may start off needing some support but soon manage on their own and they are extremely reliable as they are working where and when they want.” Hopefully this attitude will continue as Jacquie is receiving regular referrals and is always looking for new and interesting placements for her volunteers.

If any organisation would like more information on the service provided by GSB please contact Jacquie on gsbcentral@volunteeringfife.org. If your organisation is not currently registered with Volunteer Centre Fife, please get in touch to discover how volunteers can help your organisation.

Helping to make your money go further



No-one can escape news of the financial crisis and its effects on banks and other financial institutions. So why do Fife's credit unions continue to expand?

Credit Unions are non-profit making co-operatives owned and controlled by their members. They benefit all of the local community by providing a safe and convenient method of saving and providing loans at low interest rates without hidden charges or fees. They don't borrow from other banks, play the money markets or buy debts from other financial institutions, so have avoided the current economic turmoil. Credit Unions use their members' savings to lend to other members so are very self-contained. So, while banks and building societies tighten their lending criteria, Fife's Credit Unions are opening their doors and offer affordable loans with low, transparent interest rates of 1% interest per month.

What's the catch? Well, before you apply for a loan, you have to start saving. Credit Unions are self-help financial co-operatives where members save together and lend to one another. So don't wait until Christmas or your washing machine breaks down, join now. Save from as little as £1 a week and, when you need help, your Credit Union will be there for you.

Credit Unions depend on volunteers to provide a flexible and motivated workforce and, in turn, volunteers receive excellent training opportunities and great work experience. Even if you have just an hour a week to spare, you can volunteer in your credit union. For more information, call Susan Dryburgh, Credit Union Development Officer, on 0800 085 5803 or visit www.fifecreditunions.co.uk

Achieving Affordable Warmth with Home Energy Efficiency Team (HEET)



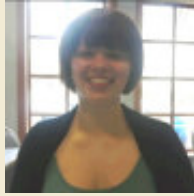
Across Scotland it is estimated that some 850,000 households are suffering 'Fuel Poverty' - when you have to spend more than 10% of your disposable income on heating your home.

In Fife a small team of volunteer Energy Advisers working for HEET visit you in your own home to give FREE energy efficiency advice ranging from small measures around the home to advice on grants for cavity wall insulation, loft insulation or even a new central heating system. We examine fuel tariffs and explain bills and signpost the best methods for households to maximize their full entitlement to benefits.

HEET is managed by CSV-RSVP Scotland. If you feel that you can offer two half days a week and would like to be trained to a certificated level, then get in touch. Volunteers not only bring a valuable and worthwhile service to their community but make new friends and network with other like-minded people.

For more information contact Sandy Wilkie on 0131 222 9090, swilkie@csv.org.uk

Filling the skills gap



From Far Afield

Megan Borowska is originally from Poland and started volunteering with the Day Centres Service in Kinghorn to develop her English. After two weeks a paid position became available and Megan had so impressed the manager with her attitude and voluntary work that she was offered the job of Activity Co-ordinator.

As a volunteer, Megan was involved in various tasks such as providing meals and talking with the clients. As Activity Coordinator she is in charge of the Day Centre with direct responsibility for 7 volunteers. "Everyone just mucks in together... we are a team and I think that's important for us and for the people we are helping..."

Megan's English has rapidly improved since starting volunteering but she remarks that things are different back home. "There aren't many volunteer organisations in Poland and people often have to work so hard that they don't have the time or energy to do voluntary work as well... but you can get a lot of satisfaction from volunteering as well as friendships and exchanging opinions..."

And Close to Home

Susan was made redundant after 10 years working in hospitality. Once the novelty of not having to get up early or work long, unsociable hours wore off, Susan was bored and missing the social side of work. Alongside a lot of time job hunting, she hoped she could put her skills to good use in helping others.

"I searched the Volunteer Scotland web site and discovered Manna, a coffee shop about 4 miles from my front door! I started volunteering in May and after a couple of shifts to find my feet I was soon up and running! Everyone was very friendly, both staff and customers! It felt great to be back in a working environment, putting my knowledge and skills to good use.

It has helped me regain self-confidence and through the knowledge and help of other volunteers I have discovered options that I wouldn't have found out otherwise.

I would recommend volunteering, whether in a familiar sector in or something completely new, to help you learn new skills and expand your job prospects. It helps to build confidence, is very rewarding and, most importantly, enjoyable."

Recession can hit the youngest hardest



According to evidence, youth unemployment rises more during a recession*. In addition, fewer job opportunities lead to an increased demand for Further Education places. As a result there are substantially fewer 'positive destinations' for school leavers, particularly those most vulnerable. But there is some good news..... **16+ Learning Choices** is the new model to ensure that every young school leaver has access to a suitable 'positive destination' offer which now includes volunteering. If you have a young person interested in volunteering, or if you are part of a volunteer-involving organisation who would like to involve young people, then get in touch with Linda Turnbull 01592 645540 or email youth@volunteeringfife.org

*National Analysis: School Leaver Destinations and Recession 2009

Did you know you could volunteer as a stonemason, a shepherd, an energy champion, a photographer, a cooking tutor or a complementary therapist? For details of these and many more volunteering opportunities see www.volunteeringfife.org

Change of Direction

“My name is Martin Denholm and at present I am the adult service Co-ordinator at The Drug and Alcohol Project Limited which provides counselling, information and support to individuals who are affected by their own or another’s substance use, be it drugs, alcohol or volatile substances.



After a career in heavy industry until redundancy in 1995 I got a job at Royal Mail as a postman; it was here that I got my first taste of the benefits of volunteering. I joined the community action group at my sorting office.

It was at this point that I saw the advert in the local paper inviting community members to become volunteer counsellors for DAPL. I thought I didn’t have a chance as I believed that my skill set was geared to engineering and industry not counselling or support. However, I decided to take the plunge and apply and, to my amazement, a few weeks later I was invited in to the selection day which I found fantastic; it was new, exciting and definitely took me out of my comfort zone.

After volunteering with DAPL for a few months I was successful in my application for a sessional worker; I then went on to secure a project worker’s post which in turn led to progressing to my present position. Volunteering gave me a secure foundation to start building a new career for myself and I would encourage individuals to take the step into volunteering. Volunteering gave me confidence, experience and training which became a firm foundation to build a new career which 12 years later I still enjoy.”

Allan was employed with the same manufacturing company in North-East Fife for 40 years until last year when the company went into administration and he was made redundant. Devastated and unsure of what to do, he turned to the Opportunity Centre and received advice on updating his CV and accessing new training courses. After completing his ECDL and still unable to find alternative employment, he was referred to the Volunteer Centre.

Allan, by his own admission, was unsure of volunteering to begin with and questioned whether it would help him into paid employment. Interestingly he has been a member of ‘Cupar In Bloom’ since its inception in 2004 – this in itself is volunteering. However after being referred by the Volunteer Centre to Scottish Church Heritage Research (Allan has a keen interest in photography and heritage) he has quickly adapted to the demands of the role.

Allan says: “I hope that by volunteering I’m showing that I am actively looking for a job. I am willing and able to try anything. I see it as a way of others in my community becoming aware of my situation. I might feel like staying in the house every day, but I know the importance of volunteering as a way to enhance and broaden my skills.”

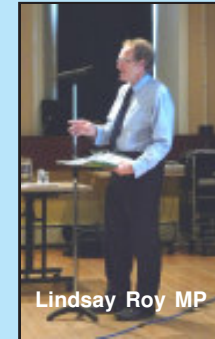
Allan is now about to start volunteering with a local charity shop to further enhance his confidence and skills and hopefully lead to paid employment in the long term.

Celebrating Volunteers

Celebration of 25 years of Volunteering in Fife!

Volunteers' Week is a national celebration which takes place from 1 – 7 June each year. This year it reached its 25th Anniversary and to mark the occasion Volunteer Centre Fife celebrated 25 Years of Volunteering in Fife! Over 100 people attended the event in Kirkcaldy and were amazed by the breadth of volunteering that takes place in Fife and the commitment demonstrated by all involved.

Lindsay Roy MP opened the event by highlighting the huge contribution made by volunteers to the quality of life of so many people in Fife. Entertainment was provided by the Funrazers (a voluntary group who have so far raised £41,342 for good causes through singing!).



Lindsay Roy MP



Fun Razers

The enthusiasm and dedication of young people was very apparent during the event which bodes well for the next 25 years! Pupils from Inverkeithing High School demonstrated their volunteering in the school environment and the wider community. Fairway Fife showed a DVD of their mentoring project where young people with learning disabilities are supported to lead a more socially-fulfilling lifestyle with the support of young people. In addition,

a young volunteer from Active Schools talked about the benefits volunteering brought to her in terms of work experience and increased confidence illustrating the two-way benefits of volunteering.

St Andrew's First Aid described the development and expansion of their service over the years due to the dedication of volunteers. Chernobyl Children Lifeline was an amazing example of how people in Fife can support those abroad. The

Dunfermline and West Fife link alone has helped 100 children who are suffering the effects of the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster.



Pupils from Inverkeithing High School



Hearing Dogs for the Deaf display

To find out more about volunteering in Fife please contact Volunteer Centre Fife on 01383 732136. We can support organisations to capture the enthusiasm and dedication of potential volunteers as well as helping people find the right volunteering opportunity for them. In another 25 years we'll hopefully be celebrating even more volunteering in Fife!

Spotlight on Sustrans

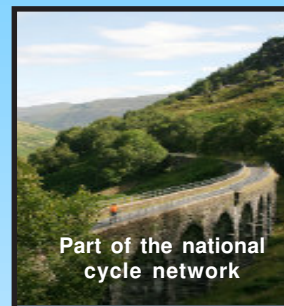
“Making a difference today so everyone can live a better tomorrow”



Walking the coastal path

Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity, working on practical projects so people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. The charity is behind many groundbreaking projects including the National Cycle Network – over 12,000 miles of traffic-free, quiet lanes and on-road walking and cycling routes around the UK, with the Network in Scotland currently standing at 1900 miles and growing.

This year Sustrans is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its Volunteer Rangers and appealing for more people to come forward to help make a real difference to their local cycling and walking routes. Volunteer Rangers give an average of four to five hours a month to check on their local section of the National Cycle Network, by bike or on foot, and make it more pleasant and safe for everyone who uses it. Ranger tasks can involve anything from clearing overgrown plants and branches, putting up direction signs, organising litter-picks, to leading guided walks and bike rides for the public.



Part of the national cycle network

If you would like to get involved telephone 0845 1130065 or visit www.sustrans.org.uk

Volunteer Centre Fife at your service

Training: in-house, tailored, accreditation: contact Mary Ray
Support into volunteering: in West and Central Fife: contact Jacquie Mellon or Biff McMahon
Involving young people: contact the Youth Development Co-ordinator
For general enquiries: contact your local Volunteer Centre Fife office.

Training Co-ordinator for all your training needs, 07717 390214, mary.ray@volunteeringfife.org

MV Award Scheme for young volunteers, 07725 703299, youth@volunteeringfife.org

Give Something Back (Support in the Regeneration Areas of West & Central Fife)

Jacquie Mellon on 01592 645540 gbscentral@volunteeringfife.org

or **Biff McMahon** on 01383 732136 gbs@volunteeringfife.org

All Round Care Project (Support to West Fife volunteers experiencing mental health difficulties or long-term ill health). Tel: 01383 732136 alison.wilson@volunteeringfife.org

www.volunteeringfife.org

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