

Intergenerational Volunteering Case Study* Trinder Park Rest Home

Trinder Park Rest Home is situated in the southern suburbs of Brisbane, halfway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Trinder Park offers a range of accommodation options for elderly residents including independent living units, high and low care hostel accommodation as well as a dementia unit. The rest home which has an abundance of birds and wildlife is nestled in 51 acres of natural bushland at the footsteps of Karawatha State Forest. The inviting grounds of Trinder Park feature barbeques, a memorial garden, chapel and various outdoor entertainment areas, ideal for residents and visitors to participate in social events or informal gatherings.

There are a range of programs in the community that offer opportunities for different generations of individuals to interact. Many organisations facilitate specific intergenerational volunteering programs which can be through one of 3 approaches.

1. Seniors and youth volunteering together
2. Senior volunteer working with youth recipient
3. Youth volunteer working with senior recipient

This case study represents an example of different ages of volunteers working with the elderly.

Trinder Park Rest Home Volunteer Program

Trinder Park Rest Home has an active and growing volunteer program that offers plenty of opportunities for volunteers from diverse backgrounds to participate in a range of projects and programs for the residents of the rest home. The program currently has approximately 85 volunteers per week contributing a total of 482 hours each week across the facility in a range of areas. Volunteers are aged between 18 and 85 years with the majority being over 50 years of age. The diverse volunteer base comprises of retired and semi-retired individuals, university students, individuals from job network centres, corporate volunteers, school students and disability service agencies. The socially inclusive nature of the volunteer program ensures that volunteers from many walks of life are able to contribute vital support and skills for the elderly. The organisational culture of the rest home's volunteer program ensures that volunteers 'become part of the family' at Trinder Park and an integral and valued member of the 'Trinder Park' community.



New volunteers are interviewed by the Volunteer Manager who identifies what their needs and interests are and how they can best contribute to the Rest Home. Orientation is conducted one-on-one which includes a tour of duty of the Rest Home, to view the scope of the volunteer program and opportunities as well as the basic principles of volunteering and main key points including the policies and procedures. In addition, each year all volunteers participate in mandatory training including elder abuse training and manual handling.



The volunteer program at Trinder Park is diverse and expansive, meeting the needs of the residents at the Rest Home, and allowing for the interests of volunteers to be satisfied in a variety of innovative programs and projects. The volunteering activities and opportunities include:

- Molly's Trolley
- Shopping Trips
- Community Garden
- Pool Program
- Bowls and Darts
- Bunning Craft Group
- Fundraising
- Pamper Day
- Canteen days
- Wii Project
- Cottage Mail run
- Visiting and games

Social Inclusion



In addition to their regular volunteers, Trinder Park Rest Home also has volunteers from a range of Disability Services. Each Wednesday seven volunteers from Keystone (a Lutheran Disability Support Service) ranging in age from 20 to 40 years are an integral part of the Rest Home, being actively involved in the establishment and maintenance of a community garden for the centre and church services and cooking. The Keystone volunteers interact with the residents during the gardening activities and then are involved in cooking in the kitchen with the residents using produce from the garden.

'Sometimes they cook pasta with blue vein sauce. Next Wednesday we're having a really big pasta and pizza day, and the Keystone volunteers will cook with the cottage residents. I think they're making around a dozen pizzas and it's just a whole lot of fun. The disability guys get in there and chop, sprinkle and eat...and they just love it.'

Keystone volunteers are also involved with the residents from the independent living units in packing and maintaining the headsets for QANTAS. The volunteers untangle the headsets, check the wiring, replace the ears piece covers and heat seal the headsets in new plastic bags. This program raises additional funds for the centre which has been used for things such as modification of the bus to allow for wheelchair access.

'It really gives them a sense of purpose. It's really nice to have that interaction. It's so good for the clients to get out and enjoy themselves. It's just wonderful.'



The Rest Home also has two volunteers from West Moreton Disability Services who are responsible for the Cottage Mail run each Tuesday. These younger volunteers (approx 20 years) are learning valuable skills such as literacy and numeracy whilst having the opportunity to interact and establish friendships with the elderly cottage residents. These cottage residents enjoy the visits and the volunteers benefit in numerous ways including increased interaction and communication with elderly and regular exercise.

'Residents come to meet them at the letter boxes and that's really good. Many of them know that the volunteers are coming around and go and wait out to say 'good morning'...'



This approach has worked extremely well because volunteers feel like a valued member of the community and an integral part of the rest homes' family.

The flexible, socially inclusive approach has meant that Trinder Park is able to sustain and maintain a diverse, generational volunteer base which supports the clients within the Rest Homes' community.

Volunteer Projects

Much of the volunteer program at Trinder Park Rest Home consists of a diverse range of volunteer projects in which are developed in consultation with various stakeholders such as the Divisional Therapists, members of staff, other volunteers and clients. These projects may be ongoing or short term; innovative or traditional; depending upon the needs of the organisation and the residents.

'A lot of my time is spent getting little projects going [for the volunteers], so they can have ownership. We work together with the Divisional Therapists to come up with projects that the volunteers can be solely responsible for.'

This collaborative approach has been instrumental for engaging a wide variety of volunteers with a range of skills, interests and availability. The projects include:

Molly's Trolley - A morning tea trolley run which operates on a Tuesday. Molly's Trolley, run by three volunteers is designed to provide tea, coffee, refreshments and social interaction for the residents.



Bowls & Darts - Operates on Wednesdays the Recreation Hall of the facility. It is organised by four to five volunteers who set up various games of bowls and darts, providing social interaction and gentle exercise for around 20 residents.

Canteen - Six volunteers operate the canteen on a Tuesday and Thursday. These volunteer take orders of various items including toiletries or food from the residents, and do the shopping for these items at a nearby supermarket. The volunteers are issued a float of money for this project and utilise the Rest Home's vehicle on site for the shopping trips. The volunteers then open the canteen, and residents either buy directly from the canteen or the items can be charged to the residents account.

Shopping Trips - Volunteers use Trinder Park's car on Thursdays to take residents to the local shopping centre. The residents must be able bodied, or low to medium care for the volunteer shopping trips.



Bunnings Group - Each Thursday, two to three volunteers take around ten residents to the local Bunnings store for an outing. Many of the residents participate in the Bunnings craft activities, assisted by the Rest Home's volunteers. Often the male residents just love to wander the isles of Bunnings looking at the range of products available. Volunteers keep an eye on the residents assisting, supporting and interacting as required.

The scope and variety of the volunteer program allows for *'thinking outside the square'* to create a diverse and interesting program that meets the volunteers' and the clients needs. The range of opportunities allows for intergenerational relationships to be developed across a diverse volunteer base.

The volunteer program also has corporate volunteers from National Australia Bank, PriceWater House Coopers and Deloitte Accounts, who volunteer for 'a day' type opportunities. The program for corporate volunteers includes visiting the residents, board games, gardening, and socialising over a BBQ lunch.

In addition, student from nearby schools and universities volunteer in the program depending on their availability and requirements. These students may be involved in visiting residents, Wii Sports or even utilising their university competencies such as education or accountancy, thus gaining valuable work experience whilst contributing to community groups.



Volunteer Recognition



Twice a year (during National Volunteer Week, and International Volunteers Day), the volunteers are recognised and rewarded for their involvement in the program and commitment to the Rest Home through a 'Get out of Town' day. A busload of volunteers goes on an outing to have a picnic/BBQ lunch in a location around Brisbane and have the opportunity to socialise, and get to know other volunteers who they might not normally see during the course of the week. These outings are immensely popular with the volunteers who provide suggestions of places to go to the coordinator.

Summary

The Trinder Park Rest Home volunteer program offers a classic example of effective intergenerational activities occurring within the Rest Home's community. The ages and backgrounds of the volunteers, varies dramatically from students to seniors with each contributing time, knowledge and skills to enhance the quality of life for the residents.

The success of the program can be attributed to many factors including the culture of social inclusion and the ability to develop specific projects for volunteers. As this case study has highlighted, there are far broader outcomes that just the provision of social activities and outings. Through the projects and activities volunteers are able to interact with residents and others creating meaningful interactions based upon shared experiences and outings. The outcomes of these intergenerational friendships and associations include feeling of belonging, esteem associated with being a valued, integral member of 'the family at Trinder Park' through enhancing the quality of life for elderly residents in the rest home's community.

Trinder Park Rest Home is an example of how different generations are working together to benefit the elderly in the community. Ultimately, it is through meaningful intergenerational activities and projects such as those created and managed by Trinder Park volunteers, that communities are able to address issues, meet needs and create a cohesive, less fragmented society.

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*This case study was derived from interviews with Jan Bell, Volunteer Coordinator.
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