

Young People & Volunteering Activity Supplement

by Gina Halpin

The EU has designated 2011 as the **European Year of Volunteering**. For young people volunteering can offer a great way to help build their personal and professional development, while at the same time giving them an opportunity to build on skills or interests they have. It is also a fun way to meet new people.

This activity supplement looks at the positive gains young people can get from volunteering, and, what they can contribute by volunteering.



Activity One Why Do People Volunteer?

Aim: This exercise encourages young people to see the personal and social benefits of volunteering.

Materials: Flipchart paper and markers.

Start by suggesting that young people often engage in voluntary activities, even if they do not label them as such. For example, they might help a charity raise money, get involved with a political campaign or fundraise for their school or sports team. Have the young people discuss in small groups the following:

- Any voluntary work that they have done.
- Why they got involved.
- What they get out of it.

After 10 minutes hand out the flipchart paper and markers and ask the young people to list their reasons under the following headings “**Personal**”, “**Family/Friends**”, “**Community**” and “**Social**”.

Start a discussion that considers the most powerful motivators for young people offering their time free of charge. **Remind them of the things that can be gained such as:**

Skill Acquisition - Job & Communication Skills

Personal & Professional Development - Training
Confidence

Experience - Could be added to their C.V

Having Fun - Meeting new people

New Challenges - Great life experiences

Satisfaction - By making a difference

Widens Horizons - Through the ability to explore different sorts of career or job opportunities in a voluntary capacity

And the things young people could bring to an organisation:

- **Energy**
- **Enthusiasm**
- **A Fresh Perspective**
- **Skills and Abilities - particularly in I.T**
- **A Youth Point of View**

Conclude that volunteering comes in many forms and levels of commitment and is often linked to personal values and a wish to help a cause that people are linked to by experience or family and friends.

Source: Youth Work Now, January 2011



Activity Two

Volunteer Action Diamond Nine

Aim: This is a sorting activity to explore the reasons why young people don't volunteer.

Materials: Enough sets of the *Volunteer Action Diamond Nine cards* (see below) for the young people to work in small groups and some information about local volunteering opportunities.

Divide the young people into groups of fours or fives and hand each a set of the "*Volunteer Action Diamond Nine*" cards.

The task is to read the cards and then rank them in the order of what they believe to be the main barriers to volunteering, through to those that they think are not so likely. These should then be placed to make a diamond shape, with the top reason at one end, and the least at the other.

When every group has finished, start a round robin, taking a ranking from each group and comparing it to where other groups have placed the same card.

Start debate about the reasons given and ask the young people why someone might choose not to volunteer. Sum up the session by discussing the wide range of opportunities available from local and national campaigns.

Volunteer Action Diamond Nine

They don't know about the opportunities available
They don't have the time
They hold stereotypes about the type of people who do voluntary work
They don't know anyone else who does voluntary work
They think they don't have any skills to offer
The advertising for the organisation puts them off
They do not believe that anything they do will make a difference
They would prefer to be paid for work
They think it will be boring and a waste of time

Source: Youth Work Now, January 2011

Activity Three

A Check List for Young People

For young people who are considering volunteering here is a Check List the youth worker could use to go through with them

How much time do I have to give? - How much time can they spare for volunteering? It is up to them, remember other commitments like family, study and hobbies.

What period of time can they commit to volunteering? For example, one hour a week, more or less? Summer? Some charities may require their volunteers to stay for a minimum period of time so check before you commit.

How will they get there? - Do they have their own transport? If not, is it easy for them to use public transport?

What kind of Volunteering would they like to do? Do they have a particular interest in animals or art, or working with children. This would ensure they enjoy the volunteering work and it could give them a better insight into a potential career option.

Taking the first steps... advice from Volunteer Centres Ireland

There is currently no standard age at which young people in Ireland can volunteer. The decision is left to the voluntary organisation. There are a number of ways in which you may consider getting involved as a volunteer:

1. Contact a local Volunteer Centre to see if they have volunteer opportunities appropriate to your age group.
2. Some organisations may be willing to take on youth volunteers as long as they have an adult supervisor.
3. You may wish to consider volunteering with a parent, older brother, sister or friend who is 18 years or older.
4. Talk to your teachers about how your class or school can get involved - your school may have a club that has a community service component where students volunteer together as a member of a group.
6. Your local youth group may have a programme for youth to volunteer.

Source: www.volunteer.ie