

Volunteers Week is fast approaching and there is now less than a month to go. Events are being planned and finalised; here at Voluntary Action we are doing our part in lots of ways.

My own contribution is going to be four articles in the lead up to Volunteers Week itself, followed by recaps during Volunteers Week.

One topic that affects us all is Health, and that is the topic that has been selected for the first article. Volunteers Week also happens to be Patient Participation Awareness Week and Heart Rhythm Week, making health and health related volunteering the perfect introductory topic for the lead in to Volunteers Week.

Health isn't just medicine, health is mental, physical and emotional – it's about the whole person. Volunteering can be an important tool in helping to maintain a person's mental and emotional health; it can also help with their physical health, depending upon the role undertaken. It's not only the mental and emotional wellbeing of the volunteer that is impacted, but in many cases the mental and physical wellbeing of the service user as well.

One of the most well-known ways that we see this is through befriending with organisations such as Friendship at Home and Grimsby and District Live at Home Scheme. Grimsby Food Kitchen and Harbour Place Day Centre also provide similar benefits through the services that they provide and are more recognised for their work with those who have substance misuse problems.

Health can be so much more than either of these extremes; Healthwatch is the organisation that sits in the traditional health niche, looking at the hospital, care homes and GP's. This does not always appeal to people; a new way of volunteering for health is through the promotion of health by the public, to the public. Opportunities to volunteer in this way can be found with the Health Collaboratives and Community Health Champions.

Healthy eating and lifestyles can also be a part of volunteering; there are a range of sporting opportunities and with gardening groups that grow their own vegetables. Green Futures offer healthy vegetable boxes and a range of organic produce at their site on Bradley Road and GHoPA (Get Hooked on Positive Activities) work with young people in order to offer them sporting activities.

One of the ways in which Voluntary Action supports its staff to keep healthy is through the Healthy Workplace Award, which we have achieved Gold in, is an unfunded way which enables the organisation to promote mental and physical wellbeing of its entire staff; something that has encouraged us to bond together as a team.

Another way in which we can make a big difference in a small way is through micro volunteering; one of the most obvious way to do this is via an app on your phone, such as the app that Cancer Research released which by playing you are helping to search for a cure to cancer.

As I said earlier there is also the traditional aspect of health, which covers the Hospital and Hospice; Healthwatch involve their volunteers in various aspects of this with their enter and view role.

As we all make use of the health service we should all take the time to be informed about the health and social care sector, to help with this why not try taking this quiz to see just how much that you really know about it and then read up on what the Kings Fund have to say -

https://www.networks.nhs.uk/news/facts-figures-and-views-on-health-and-social-care?utm_source=LINX+373+-+30+April&utm_campaign=LINX373&utm_medium=email