

Media Release

13 May 2024

Carol celebrates almost a century of volunteering

We all know time is precious. So, the fact that Carol Pickering has spent more than half of her life volunteering with VMCH speaks volumes of her character.

The 80-year-old joined the for-purpose aged and disability organisation as a volunteer at age 35. Next week, as part of National Volunteer Week celebrations, Carol will be one of 44 volunteers receiving a service award. At 45 years, it's one of the organisation's longest serving awards ever given.

When Carol joined VMCH in 1979, it was known as Villa Maria Society for the Blind.

"There was one woman, Doris, who was blind and deaf," Carol recalls. "I learnt how to do the letters of the alphabet on her hands so she could understand me. She was so wonderful; I'd take her dress shopping and she'd know all the materials of the outfits. She was almost like a second grandma at the time."

In fact, it was Carol's own grandmother who inspired her to volunteer.

"I grew up with my grandmother for a little while and she was always very loving. Whether I like volunteering with older people because she was a much older person and I'd been around that, I don't know. I just enjoyed volunteering so much, being able to be affectionate and to help people. There are so many people out there who don't have anybody."

Carol volunteered within VMCH's Disability Services for some time, before returning to aged care at our Berwick residence six years ago.

"A typical day would see me going around to say hello to everyone. I'll then spend time with residents Anita (Lifestyle Coordinator) suggests. For example, there's a French couple who speak very little English, so we have a game of Uno. There are some people who are very lonely. One man is blind, so I go and sit with him, and we play games.

Carol believes volunteers are vital to the fabric of our community, bringing joy to those who may otherwise feel alone.

"Doris would often say that to me, 'you have no idea what a dark world it is'. Sometimes people need someone to be able to give them encouragement, a cuddle, a bit of warmth."

She encouraged others to give volunteering a go.

"I've gotten so much happiness from volunteering. It's been a great experience."

Bron Summers, VMCH Senior Manager Volunteer Engagement, describes Carol's strength and compassion in helping others as "extraordinary".

"Luckily for VMCH, we have so many wonderful people like Carol who dedicate their time, skills and passions to brighten the lives of others," says Bron. "Whether through engaging with our aged care residents, helping out in our op shops or supporting people with disabilities with community activities, the dedication and kindness of our 440 volunteers continues to humble us. We thank them for everything they do as part of our extended workforce, not only during National Volunteer Week, but every day."

If you would like to join VMCH's Volunteering team, call 1300 698 624.

Media enquiries

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About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic, for-purpose organisation, love, joy, hospitality and courage aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

