



Volunteer Newsletter April 2009

Dear Volunteers,

Welcome to the first Volunteer Newsletter for 2009. We hope this is as exciting a year for you as it is for us.

Firstly I would like to introduce myself. My name is Ian Swift and I am the Volunteer Coordinator. My association with ARA began just over twelve months ago when I was assigned to volunteer here for six months through the Hawke Ambassadors Program at the University of South Australia where I was doing an International Studies degree.

After completing my voluntary time here I was lucky enough to be offered a part time job coordinating the Circle of Friends which was a fantastic opportunity for me. This year I have again been lucky to be given the position I now have, that of Volunteer Coordinator.

Invitation to all Volunteers

ARA welcomes the opportunity to invite you to be a guest of the Governor and Mrs. Scarce at a reception to acknowledge your valuable contribution to ARA and the people we support.

The reception will be held at Government House on June 18th from 5:00 pm until 6:00 pm.

Numbers are limited and your early response will enable an official invitation to be issued from Government House.

Please email me, Ian Swift, ian.swift@ausref.net by Tuesday April 14th if you wish to attend.

My role is that of being the first contact person for new and aspiring volunteers as well as being a contact person for current volunteers who may have questions about their program. I work with all the Managers and Team Leaders to match volunteers with suitable programs and to keep

the lines of communication open at all times. I am also charged with the responsibility of increasing our volunteer numbers so we can better meet the demands placed on all of you. To that end I would really appreciate it if you could direct any of your friends, family members or acquaintances who are interested in refugees or volunteering generally to contact me. Thank you.

CURRENT VOLUNTEER REPORTS

HOMEWORK CLUBS

We have an ongoing need for more **Homework Club Volunteers** to mentor and tutor high school students from refugee backgrounds. **Natalie Matulick** and **Renee Romeo** are always keen to receive new volunteer applications. We currently have four Homework Clubs operating in suburban Adelaide. Student numbers are growing and they really do get a lot out of having volunteers helping them. It is a fabulous way of 'giving something back' to society in a structured and time fixed environment as well as enriching yourselves. Below is a section of

an email from one of the Homework Club Volunteers;
“... As much as I hope the boys get something out of it, I feel that I've learnt a lot from them in the short time I've been around homework club and always come out of it feeling refreshed and energized!!...”

What better endorsement is there than that?

FAMILY SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS

Those of you already in the **Family Support Program** know how important your visits are to your families. They might not see any other people all week and your visit may be a real high point for them.

Craig Heidenreich is always working hard at matching volunteers up with families. Geography works against us here as many of you live in areas with low refugee populations, and many refugee families live in areas many kilometres from you. We must continually try to introduce new volunteers to this essential program. Reports back from existing Family Support Volunteers

highlight the essential nature of their visits. Below is a letter from a Family Support Volunteer

“...My family are coming along well. The children are doing so much better at their English. I can actually have a conversation with them now which is great.

The children went on a school camp. When the list of items was sent home, the daughter did not know what to do. I reassured her that I would help in every way. My husband now refers to me as the “Garage Queen” of Adelaide. I bought sleeping bags and essentials from garage sales. I visited several OP shops to purchase jackets, tracks pants etc. I then labelled every item of clothing, and bought a bag for each child and packed all that was needed. I went the night before to show them how to use the sleeping bags. I arrived at their home on the morning of the camp at 7.30 am to make sure they had everything. They were so excited. The school bus arrived and with lots of hugs and kisses I waved them goodbye, with tears running down my face. Yes, I am guilty of being a real

sook!!! They thoroughly enjoyed the camp.

I took them to the Pageant in the city. They loved every one of the floats, especially when the clowns were laughing with them. We had to go early to get a good position. They were ready when I picked them up at 7.30 am, loaded with drinks and goodies. They were ever so good...”

You can see how rewarding Family Support is for the both the volunteer and her family. It has opened doors for all of them and allowed them to appreciate each other better.

PARENTS AT PLAY

Michelle Meinel is coordinating parenting workshops which are being very well received and attended. Michelle is keen to hear from any of you who may be available to help her out with general crèche duties.

There is a new program starting in term two this year called the ‘Incredible Years’ and it will be held at Nazareth College. Michelle is keen to hear from any of you who may be able to help out

transporting the participants to the sessions or with baby sitting or other duties, If you would like more information about these very exciting and worthwhile sessions, please either call Michelle on; 8161 3317 or email her at; Michelle.Meinel@ausref.net

FUNDRAISING/ MARKETING/ EVENTS TEAM

A new initiative we would like to get off the ground is a dedicated group of volunteers with a flair for marketing, promotion or fundraising to help us promote ARA and to perform some of the day to day functions of fundraising. For example, we have fundraising chocolates that we sell at various locations around Adelaide. It means that someone has to call in weekly to pick up the money and replenish the supplies. We would love some volunteers to be able to take over this operation. Badge Days are another area of fundraising that needs many helpers to achieve success. We are looking for people who are able to either spare a few hours occasionally at a shopping centre to 'rattle a tin' for the cause. Perhaps you could organise a

collection at your workplace? If you think you may be able to help in this way, we would love to hear from you. Badge Days are generally run on a Friday and depending on volunteers we will attempt to secure a site close to you. Suggestions for sites would also be appreciated. If you feel you and your friends and colleagues are happy to select a site and manage it yourselves, please contact us. ARA will support this project with tins, stickers and promotional material.

Assistance is also required on occasion with database support, research and design support for preparation with events. These are occasional volunteer opportunities but of great value to ARA and your intentions of interest would be appreciated.

A dedicated team of volunteers in the Marketing/ Promotions/ Fundraising area would support our **Marketing Manager, Erika Marshall** and work towards ARA's fundraising and promotions' targets.

Our volunteers are occasionally called upon to help out at functions or events.

Recently, ARA was represented at the annual '**Man Alive Festival**' at Semaphore. A huge thank you must go to all the volunteers who took up the challenge to 'man' the stall there by the way. The day was quite successful with many brochures and volunteer information packs being given out to the interested members of the public. The volunteers also got to experience the wide range of activities and other stalls that were there on the day. I think that the Burundian Drummers alone were worth the trip there!

DONATION CENTRE

The Donation Centre is based here at our office on Henley Beach Road. We have a team of volunteers who do a fantastic job picking up and delivering household items and furniture. It is not always as easy as it may appear to coordinate such activities and the volunteers always give it their best shot.

We have started selecting some items for sale through auctions so as to generate supplementary income for ARA. We are, of course careful to only offer for sale items we think refugees and their families

would not like to have. We have recently been able to generate quite a sum of money by selectively clearing out the shed area at the back of our offices which had an ever growing pile of largely unwanted items. It is a great way to clear out and clean up!

ADMINISTRATION/ RECEPTION

The administration and reception volunteers deserve a pat on the back for the jobs that they do here often in very trying circumstances! There is nothing quite like several people with no appointments at the front desk insisting that they speak to someone about their cases.

We acknowledge the importance of each and every individual case but need to respect appointments and general office policy.

The administration volunteers do a wonderful job keeping everyone happy and fielding calls and queries as a normal part of their days. **Semira Julardzija** says that without her volunteers she would get no sleep at all!

HELP DESK

Help Desk volunteers assist people who walk in off the street. No appointments are necessary there, so understandably it can be a pretty popular place!

Sandra Dzafic is the Team Leader for Help Desk Volunteers and she always makes sure that each individual is thoroughly briefed on how to go about helping the people who walk in. We can assist people directly and/ or we can refer clients to other agencies for services we cannot provide. It is an extremely valuable service and one that is taken up by many refugees and their family members.

MIGRATION

Our Migration Team, headed up by **Edvania Lopes**, also benefits by having volunteers as well as Law students on placement here to help out with the mountains of paperwork required to submit a visa application or a split family application.

Their work ensures that people from refugee backgrounds already resident here can be reunited with family members they may not have seen for years.

It is a painstaking and tricky process and we are lucky to have such good support from within your ranks.

Farewell to Kevin Liston

Kevin Liston is leaving ARA after 26 years of service. Kevin has been an important part of ARA and we will all miss his incredible knowledge of the refugee community.

Below are a few words from Kevin

“After 26 years at ARA, guiding, directing, managing and leading the organisation, I will be leaving at Easter.

ARA is a fantastic organisation and it has achieved great things since 1975. It started with volunteers in a lounge room in St Marys and volunteers are still at the heart of what ARA is about – helping refugees and transforming lives.

It has been a privilege for me to work with so many wonderful people in the past and in the present. Your great achievements are often taken for granted but, always remember that you do make a difference in people's lives.

I would like to thank you all for your care, concern and good work with and for refugees. As helping refugees is part of the way Australians see themselves, I know that your commitment and involvement will continue as this country continues to respond to the needs of persecuted and displaced people.

With appreciation and gratitude,”

Kevin Liston

We all thank Kevin for the tireless work he has done over the years as well as wishing him every success in the future.