

Volunteers 'can-do' attitude to the fore during the pandemic

An army of volunteers has stepped up to support the Canterbury Health System by helping meet vital needs during the pandemic.

At Christchurch Hospital, volunteers are packing RATs; doing tea and coffee rounds; screening on the door at Outpatients; acting as 'runners' delivering parcels that have been dropped off for patients on the wards; as well as supporting the orderlies and the Wellfood cafes.

Regular Burwood Hospital volunteers are providing a wonderful service delivering gifts and messages from whānau who haven't been able to visit their loved ones.

Helpers from Volunteering Canterbury, Age Concern and the Cancer Society are working out of various sites in Christchurch assisting with:

- › Transporting rapid antigen tests (RATs) and other supply items for Canterbury DHB's Supply team
- › Making up homecare packs for people recovering from COVID-19 at home
- › Driving to deliver signage to the RAT distribution sites around Canterbury
- › Collecting food parcels from the City Mission to deliver to the Community Hub for community distribution.

Volunteer Julie Archie, who has been making up Home Care Packs, says she is happy to help and be doing something useful in these "tricky COVID-19 times". "The work is mundane but supportive, so ideal for volunteers, as it releases paid staff to do their busy jobs."

Volunteering Canterbury Outreach Manager Glenda Martin says volunteering is about connecting as well as giving time.

"An unexpected event, like a pandemic, is an occasion when we are humbled by the generosity of Cantabrians. Planning for volunteers to help out in a community outbreak during a pandemic has been slightly different."

Volunteering Canterbury contacted people who have come through its usual recruitment platform in the past 18 months asking for those who were interested in specifically supporting Canterbury DHB.

"We were delighted with the result."

Some requests for assistance were "a little complicated" – such as picking up over 40 signs and their bases from one location and distributing to five other sites. This was completed smoothly by a volunteer who has a 'can-do' attitude and had experience with similar roles in the past.

"Other roles we have been approached for help with are preparing packs. All the roles that come through are at short notice," Glenda says.

Christchurch Hospital Volunteer Coordinator Louise Hoban-Watson says the volunteers are amazing people who are going above and beyond at this extraordinary time.

"Their selflessness, generosity of spirit and positive attitude is such a wonderful thing as we progress through this pandemic."

Organisational Development Specialist Jacqui Benter-Lynch who is currently seconded to the Emergency Co-ordination Centre (ECC) Volunteer Staffing, says volunteers have been supporting our health system wonderfully for years.



Volunteers Allison and Wendy at Christchurch Hospital making up single RATs for staff to use with patients who are being discharged to aged residential care or hospices



Tea and coffee rounds for patients on the wards at Christchurch Hospital. From left, Volunteers June, and Heather, WellFood Catering Assistant Ann-Maire Adams and Volunteer Halina. Ann-Maire is training a lot of the volunteers coming in to help with this service



Volunteer Lesley on the door at Outpatients, asking if people coming in are well, if they have household contacts and if they know where they are going



Volunteers Lois Barclay, Julie Archie and Carmen Derekamp putting together Home Care Packs containing pulse oximeters, thermometers, gowns, gloves, hand wipes, hand sanitiser, masks and an information book.

