

Volunteer Central and the Salvation Army



Collaboration and volunteering are highly valued in the charitable sector and COVID-19 has only underlined their importance. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Aotearoa, the charitable sector has come together to support those in need. Volunteers have been a vital part of this. In this sector showcase, we tell the story of volunteering in the Manawatu-Whanganui region through two registered charities active in the area: the Salvation Army (CC37322) and Volunteer Central (CC32932).

When lockdown began, the Manawatu-Whanganui Civil Defence Group was overwhelmed with requests for help from members of their local community. They reached out to several charities, asking for volunteers to deliver essential supplies to those in need.

The Salvation Army responded to the call and began managing the operations. Essential supplies are directed to a warehouse, where volunteers organise the goods and sort them according to the requests. Local organisations and businesses have also played a critical role by providing donations including food, blankets, clothes, firewood, or offering their assets, like vans to be used for deliveries.

After the goods are packed into parcels, volunteers get to work delivering them. They work in pairs, driving around the city to distribute the goods. Volunteers have created a “well-oiled machine” to guarantee families have food, blankets, and clothes through difficult times.

Talking about her work as Event Manager for Volunteer Central, Juliana Chang says: “The lesson I learned is that how you do something is as important as what you do. Volunteers are teaching us that actions executed with love have greater outcomes; and that treating others with respect is the most valued interaction one can offer another.”

Many of the volunteers packing and delivering parcels have taken on different roles than normal to meet demand. It’s a great example of the importance of being adaptable and flexible. Two volunteers in the area weren’t able to keep their usual roles helping at the hospital and supporting senior citizens because of lockdown. They still wanted to help their community, so they contacted Volunteer Central, a registered charity that connects communities through volunteering. Volunteer Central gave them roles delivering parcels. After receiving appropriate training and personal protective equipment, they started their new volunteering journey.

When asked about why they wanted to volunteer during the pandemic, one person answered: “I want to help out, give back and do good. I’ve been here every day since the operation started and I’ll be here for as long as they need me.”





The people who received parcels have been extremely grateful. Tracey (not her real name) has received parcels from volunteers and says they're a "lifeline". Lockdown has been hard for Tracey. She is looking after three grandchildren and three foster children, and underlying health conditions meant Tracey had to resign from her job before lockdown. Tracey says "I never felt judged and I was always treated with respect" by the volunteers who delivered the parcels. She also noted that the volunteers have been great examples to the children. It has been especially positive for her foster children to see good role models, as they've come from challenging backgrounds. Tracey says that the volunteers have helped her children see that "there are good people out there who are kind and want to care for others".

The inspiring work of volunteers has spread positivity amidst COVID-19. The pandemic stopped our "normal" lives, but it increased kindness and generosity. It has shown us the power that collaboration and volunteering can have.



You can find out more about Volunteer Central [here](#).



You can find out more about the Salvation Army [here](#).