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### All Praise to the VOLLIES

#### Where would we be without volunteers?

They come in all shapes and sizes and from all walks of life. Their efforts fill the gaps left by organisations and institutions that are often stretched to perform the tasks they have been set. Totally dedicated, volunteers give up their own time to help out in soup kitchens, fight bushfires, save lives as paramedics and run drug rehabilitation centres. Yet they receive not a penny for the many services they provide. Why would anyone do that? Volunteers do it perhaps because it makes them feel good; because they know that without them, disadvantaged people would suffer; but mainly because they care.

We often take them for granted, and it is not until the need arises and they are there to help that the volunteers are genuinely appreciated. In some of the more dramatic scenarios such as bushfires and floods the heroic actions of these people seem quite glamorous to us sitting in our lounge rooms watching news reports on the television; but, believe me, from personal experience I can testify that these emergencies are very real, and very scary. Anything can happen to change what might at first have been regarded as a training drill into a life and death situation. Once it takes hold a fire has a mind of its own and may soon be out of control. As for earthquakes, storms and landslides, these are Mother Nature's reminder that facing off with her wrath is a challenge that very few ordinary folk would be prepared to take up.

But that's what the VOLLIES are – ordinary people like you and me. Most have jobs; yet at a moment's notice they will respond to the call, dropping everything to attend the latest emergency. From serving behind a counter or compiling a set of accounts, they will suddenly be in a fire truck heading for a blazing inferno; or preparing themselves to crawl through the rubble of a collapsed building in search of survivors. Others will be on hand too – paramedics to take care of the injured, perhaps transport them to hospital; and let's not forget charity organisations such as The Salvation Army which provide essential on-the-spot food and drink for both victims and volunteers who are frequently struggling with fatigue.

Behind the scenes, however, the work still goes on. People volunteer their time to sort clothing and other donated items to either be sold for funds to support worthy causes, or to be distributed directly to those in need. They are there to prepare and serve meals to the homeless; be on hand to pick up the phone, extending guidance to someone in crisis and at breaking point; and when a family member or friend has suffered a debilitating or fatal disease, fundraisers are organised by those close and concerned for immediate comfort and medical research. Individuals and groups set up rehabilitation centres and care facilities for those affected by drugs; and continue to campaign vigorously to combat rising addiction. Occasionally, they might make the

evening news; all-too often their tireless work goes unrecognised except by the ones who benefit by their efforts.

There are organisations and institutions which employ professional staff to fight fires and save lives; but without the help of the unpaid volunteers they would be hard pushed to do the job soon enough, or well enough. Be mindful of the possibility that one day you may be in need of their services. They will be there for you at the drop of a hat; so treat them with the respect they deserve, and don't take them for granted.

And who knows, you may fancy becoming one of them, so don't hesitate – there can never be too many Vollies.

**For a look at some more informative articles on a variety of subjects just return to the webpage**



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