

Dear Team

Over the past 2 weeks, we have invited more than 200 youths for some snacks and a conversation to understand why they have volunteered their time and energy to assist others in their neighbourhoods. Each of them received an invitation card to a meeting of “Community Champions.” On the reverse, there were columns of check boxes such as *delivered items to neighbours, took care of younger children, coordinated food distribution exercises* and so forth. The last checkbox read “*You are a volunteer!*”

While the young people were appreciative of the invitation, many told us that they did not think it was a big deal to be helpful. They did not regard themselves as volunteers but simply as neighbours doing what came naturally. They said that it felt good to be helpful and they would continue to do so. One teen shared that her 6 year old sister who would usually not leave her flat now follows her whenever she needs to deliver a bag of rice. Once, to enable her 6 year old sister to help, she repacked a 5 kg pack of rice into smaller packets that she could carry. The 6 year old felt good helping a neighbour and now looks forward to doing so again.

The responses of these young people got us thinking “Do we have an innate inclination to be helpful like them?” *National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre’s (NVPC) 2012 study of individual giving behaviour has found that 1 in 3 persons, or 32.3%, volunteered. This is the highest rate since such research began in 2000; compared to the previous high of 23.3% in the 2010 survey. Volunteering grew across most demographics such as age, education and income levels.* This is good news that has come about from the relentless efforts of NVPC and others promoting voluntarism as a way of life. The fact that we have to encourage voluntarism says something about who we are. Helping someone appears not to be something natural and has to be encouraged.

Maybe this weekend, we should all try to get in touch with this “helpful spot” within us.

Enjoy your weekend.

Gerard

*“No one has ever become poor by giving.” - Anne Frank*