

HANGING OUT

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Australian Government

MEDIA ARTICLE

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How Gia and Eddie are harnessing the power of volunteering

INTRODUCTION

Volunteering can be a fantastic way to connect with people who share your interests. It can also provide a sense of fulfilment and help you develop unique skills.

We spoke with young volunteers Gia Huynh and Eddie Sanad, who shared the impact volunteering has had on their lives.



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BECOMING A VOLUNTEER

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Gia moved to Australia from Vietnam as an international student studying health. While she loves her course, she faced the challenges of adjusting to a new environment.

"I really missed my family, and then through volunteering, I got to meet other international students from so many different backgrounds who were all feeling the same feelings," she says.

Gia volunteers at The Couch – an international student centre in Melbourne's CBD. She first heard about the position at a conference and has been volunteering there for over a year.

"I love connecting with people, that's what keeps me coming back every week," she says.

Meanwhile, Eddie found his way to volunteering through his friends and second-generation Egyptian-Arabic speaking family. Inspired by the people around him, he's stepped out of his comfort zone and found an activity he loves.

"I joined in because all my friends were doing it! But both my parents have also volunteered. I could see how it made them feel, and that has had a big influence on me," he says.

When he's volunteering, Eddie engages with seniors at an aged care centre, spends time doing recreational activities with youth organisations and distributes care packages to those in need.

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

Eddie notes that the biggest change since he started volunteering is how much his confidence has grown.

He continues, "It's a lot easier once you have people with you. You may not know how to start, or you might be nervous about it, but doing it as a group makes it a lot easier."

For Gia, what she appreciates most is the relationships she's built.

"When you volunteer, it has to come from your heart, it's about sharing with other people and the connections we make," she says.

Since starting volunteering, she's developed her public speaking, presentation skills, practised her English and become more immersed in Australian culture.



"I've been able to meet so many people who I otherwise would never have crossed paths with," says Eddie.



VOLUNTEERING IS FOR EVERYONE

Both Eddie and Gia see volunteering as a great way to build up their skills and experience and connect with like-minded people. They've grown personally and professionally and are ready for whatever the future may hold.

Gia advises having an open mind, a willingness to learn and a passion for giving back.

"Find an organisation or a role that you're passionate about, and the rest will fall into place," she says.

The pair say that no matter your interests, there are volunteering opportunities for everyone in a wide range of fields, including sports, aged care, animal welfare, climate change, and many more.

"I encourage other young people to get this same feeling of fulfilment that volunteering brings. If you want to give back to the community and do something meaningful, volunteering in any form is the way to go," says Eddie.



LEARN MORE

To discover volunteering opportunities near you, visit **volunteering.gov.au**

