

Youth Volunteering

Katie Brown | CEO, Awards WA Inc.

Not every young person wants to be an activist or be a revolutionary leader. There is however, a strong need for young people to be motivated and supported to be valued and valuable as a volunteer.

The benefits of volunteering:

TA recent study by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) found that if a child is involved in volunteering before the age of 13, the odds of having poor mental health are reduced by around 28%.

As well, children who demonstrate 'prosocial' behaviours, such as caring for others or doing acts of kindness, were 11% less likely to experience mental ill-health.

The presentation focused on:

- What does a young person's volunteering experience look like
- What they are currently doing
- What are their motivators/inspirations/values
- What are the enablers for youth volunteering
- The role of adults/organisations/youth volunteers/Volunteer Managers
- What will bring a young person to/back to volunteering
- What recognition is valued by a young volunteer

Explorations through case studies and example of what is working and what are the challenges to enable youth volunteers was used as well as real stories from The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award and Ignite Youth Award frameworks.

Key takeaway #1

Volunteering should align with a young person's motivations and values (often not manifested as yet). Let's compare that to what often motivates an adult – I volunteered to enable my children to take part in activities and I was down there anyway.

Key takeaway #2

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Key takeaway #3

Structure of support – yes, it can mean a lot of investment up front, however, let's put it in a longer term vision of what does volunteering look like with young people who eventually become older and are a committed and trained volunteer.

- Invite the young people to drive the ideas and volunteering project.

- Short term investment for longer term value
- Match the volunteering to the person
- Provide lots of opportunities for both short/medium term
- Believe in the change that occurs for the young person and not just the

benefit to your organisation (pay it forward)

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