



Volunteer Fair returning for its second year in Romsey

Why not start something new in 2024 and make a difference to your community, gain new skills, improve your health and wellbeing, and by doing so make new friends?

We have many amazing charities and volunteer organisations in and around Test Valley which rely on their volunteers to help the community.

Romsey Town Council and Unity present their second Volunteer Fair this Sunday 21 January 2024 at Romsey Town Hall. It will cater for the many varied voluntary positions which help our local towns and villages in Hampshire. There is no need to book, it is a free event, just turn up between 10.30am and 3pm and browse the stalls to find your opportunity to have fun and give something back.

Romsey Town Mayor, Cllr John Ray, said: 'It is fantastic to see the Volunteer Fair returning for their second year. Having spent years volunteering for Romsey Good Neighbours and Romsey Carnival, I personally know how important volunteers are in the community. Without people giving their time none of our events over the years would have happened and it is such a feeling of accomplishment when you see everyone having such a great time on something you have worked on.'

'We are so lucky to have some fantastic charities in our area who are desperately in need of those willing to give just a few hours of their time, some opportunities may be more regular and others more ad hoc. You can make a real change to people's lives which is a great win win for both parties.'

The Volunteer Fair has opportunities such as helping to lead healthy walks, help organise and contribute at music and cultural festivals, explore and research local history, and helping to care for our local community. There really is something for all ages, skills, and passions.

Christianne Ireland, Voluntary Sector Support Manager for Unity said: 'This is such an inspirational Volunteer Fair. Last year we saw over 250 people at this fayre alone. Over 30% were looking at getting involved for the 1st time, which was really encouraging. Our job is to convert those into real volunteering hours, with the help and support of all the wonderful groups, charities, organisations in the Test Valley.'

'Since end of 2021, one Andover Health hub, had 159 individuals sign up to do 4,698 shifts, equating to 13,550,83 hours of volunteering. I still volunteer and fit in around a full-time job. My reason for doing this, is that volunteering helped me turn my life around when I had no hope. So please make 2024 the year you make a difference'.

Volunteering is beneficial on so many levels, according to Volunteering and Charitable Giving - Community Life Survey 2021/22 approximately 55% of people in England have volunteered in any way in the last 12 months, with 34% of people in England giving their time at least once a month. Sadly volunteering in England has been declining since 2013/14 as then approximately 70% of the population said they volunteered.

According to the Royal Voluntary Service, volunteering brings huge benefits to the community, it helps people:

- **Gain new skills**
Whether you are studying, starting a career, looking for work or trying to improve your promotion prospects, volunteering can be a fantastic way to learn and develop the skills you need, both practically and personally.
- **Make new friends**
Sometimes life changes leave us a little isolated. You may have recently moved to a new area, lost a partner or you might just have lost touch with people as their circumstances change. Volunteering reconnects you with your community and helps create new friendships that keep loneliness at bay.
- **Mental and physical health and wellbeing**
Keeping active, mentally as well as physically, has a powerful influence over our health and wellbeing. Volunteering can improve their mental health and sense of wellbeing.
- **Gives something back**
Maybe you have benefited from volunteering services at some time in your life, or you just feel like you have been fortunate, and you would like to share that with others. Volunteering gives you that opportunity to 'pay it forward' or to give something back.
- **Improves confidence**
Sometimes life can knock your confidence, for example losing a job or needing extended time off work. Sometimes people are just a little shy and want to improve their personal skills. Volunteering gives you a change to find your feet in your own time and at your own pace, allowing you to build your confidence in a way that works for you.

If you are unable to attend the event you can sign up for volunteering on the Unity Online website <https://unityonline.org.uk/volunteering/>

- Ends -

Romsey Town Council

Romsey Town Council is the local government office for Romsey managed by the elected councillors to cater for the residents of Romsey and look after local amenities.

www.romseytc.org.uk

Unity

First established in 1987, Unity is a non-profit incorporated UK charity part-funded by Test Valley Borough Council and Hampshire County Council, working with local organisations to support vulnerable members of the Test Valley Community. With offices based in Andover and Romsey, we aim to bring people together.

www.unityonline.org.uk/

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