



## Who can be a SNUG volunteer?

Volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds and age groups. They are selected for their caring attitudes and ability to relate to others. Volunteers have a genuine interest in enhancing the enjoyment of family life.

All volunteers must attend a comprehensive training session. All volunteers will undergo required working with children and criminal record checks.

## Why do we need volunteers?

Volunteers are essential to operate our program. We rely on their skills to run many of the activities at the retreat from sporting to craft. There are many opportunities to share their skills with the families while also sharing some laughter and fun.

## Role of the SNUG volunteer

- To be an important part of a program that fosters the emotional and social wellbeing of families who have a child with a rare health condition.
- To provide support and assistance with recreational activities.
- To help create a nurturing and supportive environment that allows families to enjoy the retreat's atmosphere.
- To assist staff with practical retreat tasks, allowing the families time and space to enjoy their time spent together and create friendships with the other families.

## Volunteer Criteria

- A Working With Children Check number
- Attendance at a volunteer training session.
- Have the ability (or willingness to learn how) to work positively with families that have children with additional needs.
- Have an understanding of the difficulties that are faced by families caring for a child with a rare health condition.
- High level of communication skills (especially the ability to listen).
- To be a caring and honest person who values difference and is prepared to listen whilst **not** providing health/medical or other advice or services.
- Have the capacity to show that you regard the parents as the experts in their own lives.
- Have the understanding of how empowering it is for the family to find their own solutions to the challenges that they face.
- Have the ability to know when to allow the family to have their own space.
- Have the ability to assist families to identify the joy in life.
- To be able to participate in and/or facilitate activities that involve all members of the family.

- To maintain personal boundaries that provide the family with dignity and respect.
- The ability to display genuine empathy.
- The ability to contribute and work as part of a team.
- To actively participate in retreat activities, including assistance with meals, children's activities, communicating with parents/carers, fostering a supportive and fun retreat atmosphere.

### **Desirable Criteria**

- Current first aid certificate

### **How will volunteering benefit me?**

Volunteering for the SNUG program will benefit you in a numbers of ways, including:

- Have lots of fun and develop friendships with other volunteers.
- Know that you are assisting a family to have a truly unique and valuable experience to which they may otherwise not have had access.
- Gain knowledge and skills in working with children with rare health conditions and their families.
- Meet other volunteers studying a similar profession.
- Gain an understanding of other degrees and professions that you may need to work with when taking on a multi-disciplinary perspective.
- Be able to build your résumé with voluntary experience and a reference if applicable.

### **Some additional things to note**

- Retreats are currently held at the Point Wolstoncroft Sport and Recreation Centre. Volunteers are responsible for arranging their own travel to and from the centre.
- Retreats are held throughout the year, and generally run over 4-5 days.
- There is no minimum attendance requirement for volunteers. Volunteers are asked to submit their availability prior to each retreat, from which a roster is created.
- Volunteer shifts generally run from 7:30am - 6pm. This is so the children have the opportunity to bond with the volunteers over the course of a whole day. It also allows for important briefing meetings at the start of each day.

Please note that places at the volunteer training sessions are limited. Therefore please thoughtfully consider whether you are able and willing to meet the requirements of this volunteer position, and that this position is the right fit for you, before you apply to attend.

The SNUG program takes great pride in fostering and growing a team of dedicated, passionate and professional volunteers, who take their unique and valuable SNUG experiences with them into their future careers.

## **Volunteer Feedback**

As well as playing an important role in assisting with the retreats, volunteers are learning a great deal about working with children with additional needs and their families.

*Volunteer 1: I guess I learned to take the whole family approach, and not just about the person in front of you. I think that was the biggest thing I learned.*

*Volunteer 2: I think the one thing that I realised was just how difficult things like getting to the hospital, getting to appointments really are - in terms of, you have to have all that extra time to load kids into the van and find a car park, unload them. Just the amount of time that it really takes - and effort to get to all the appointments. It was kind of, just astounding. You've got no idea. And that time you spend in the waiting room. Because I went to an appointment at the John Hunter and spent three hours waiting outside with one of the siblings, just trying to entertain them for that amount of time. It was really difficult.*

*Volunteer 3: I've got a few clients at the moment, at my placement and they'll come in with parents and say, 'oh sorry, we're just so busy, we didn't get time to do the homework [set by an allied health professional]'. Before I was at the retreat I would just think, oh they don't care much or they're just a bit lazy, but you can really see why people just don't get the homework done. When you see people's lifestyle and you forget what it was like when you were a kid, especially when things were a little bit tougher or you can't understand them or whatever.*

*Volunteer 4: I feel more comfortable and more confident to deal with various types of disabilities when I get out. I think most people are scared to think about it. So I feel a lot more confident to take that with me.*