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Singapore

Leadership, management roles for volunteers could help in manpower retention, new study shows

The study was conducted by the National Council of Social Service and the Singapore Management University, to help social service agencies attract and retain volunteers by identifying what drives people to volunteerism.



The study is the first of its kind in Singapore, and aims to help social service agencies attract and retain volunteers.



Cherie Lok & Fabian Koh

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SINGAPORE: Senior volunteers contribute more time to causes here than their younger counterparts, a new study has shown.

The results of the study conducted by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) and the Singapore Management University, were released on Monday (May 29).

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It also revealed that giving more responsibilities to volunteers in the form of leadership and management roles could help in retaining them.

Leadership, management roles for volunteers could help in manpower re...



The study is the first of its kind here, and aims to help social service agencies attract and retain volunteers by identifying what drives people to volunteerism and areas for their own growth.

SENIORS MORE CONSISTENT

The study surveyed 180 volunteers from 112 social service agencies across different stages of life to find out why they choose to contribute their time and efforts.

It revealed that while younger volunteers may be enthusiastic about helping, they could be constrained by a lack of time as a result of work or family commitments.

The study also looked into the benefits that volunteering brings to each group, such as improved career prospects for younger volunteers and companionship for seniors.

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While there are fewer senior volunteers, the study showed that they are more consistent, contributing three times more hours than their younger counterparts on average.

One such volunteer is retiree Cyril Ong, who helps out at HCSA Community Services three times a week.

Volunteers at work in the garden on the premises of HCSA Community Services.

He guides a team of four other volunteers at the garden on the premises, where they grow vegetables which are given to vulnerable families in the neighbourhood and also used in cooking classes that the organisation holds for ex-offenders.

The 76-year-old said he used to be in the corporate world before retirement, and wants to try his hand at things he has never done.

“There were so many things that I wanted to do but I couldn't do it. But as I've retired, I've had so much time and I just want to give back to society, and what better place to get back in rather than in this operation,” he said, adding that seeing other people happy motivates him.

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But Mr Ong admitted that at his age, the role can be physically demanding, as he has to wake up at 6am to begin his tasks at 7.30am.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT ROLES

The study also urged social service agencies to understand their volunteer pool better, and suggested letting them fill leadership and management roles within the organisations.

A New Life Stories volunteer at work.

At New Life Stories, a non-profit body that aims to prevent intergenerational incarceration, volunteers play a role in co-creating programmes, and can also rely on the organisation's relationship managers for support.

Its CEO Saleemah Ismail told CNA that giving the volunteers more responsibilities helps to retain them.

"At six months we have 100 per cent retention and at one year about 97 per cent retention. So definitely, getting them involved in how we support the family or the child, particularly, is important," she said.

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New Life Stories' efforts are supported by NCSS, which funds the salaries of its relationship managers.

Social and Family Development Minister Masagos Zulkifli.

Social and Family Development Minister Masagos Zulkifli said on Monday that the government will continue to provide such support, as volunteer management becomes increasingly important.

"Good volunteer management can have an enormous impact on the work that we do. It can enable SSAs (social service agencies) to scale up their programmes, sustain their efforts and in fact serve even more beneficiaries," he said.

He also encouraged the social service groups to tap on the available resources from NCSS and SG Cares Volunteer Centres.