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Greek Orthodox Community of SA celebrates volunteers with Morning Tea



Within the framework of the National Volunteer Week 2021, the Greek Orthodox Community of SA – Community Care Services honoured and acknowledged their volunteers with a Morning Tea in a beautifully set up Olympic Hall on Wednesday 23rd June 2021.

The event was attended by approximately 50 volunteers along with Mr Bill Gonis OAM, President of the Greek Orthodox Community of South Australia; Mr David Jacquier on behalf of Mrs Tracey Fox Acting CEO of Volunteering SA & Northern Territory; Mr Constantinos Papaconstantinou, Vice President of the Greek Orthodox Community of South Australia and Mr Panagiotis Ppiros, General Secretary of the Greek Orthodox Community of South Australia.



The event was opened with the Acknowledgement of Country by Community Services Manager Mrs Jacqui Bowden, who in her succinct speech expressed her appreciation towards the volunteers for their commitment to supporting and honouring our older people.

In his speech, the President of the Greek Orthodox Community, Mr Bill Gonis OAM, highlighted the valuable and tireless contribution of GOCSA's Women's Fellowships (Taxiarchis, St. Constantine & Helen, Panagia, St. Nicholas), thanks to which GOCSA's mission is much smoother.

"You share your time and talents without any compensation, and we are not exaggerating if we say that you are worth your weight in gold!", Mr Gonis said.
The President also thanked our independent volunteers who assist with transport, shopping, friendly visits, exercise classes or help in the kitchen of our social support groups. Mr Gonis acknowledged and welcomed the volunteer committees of the affiliated groups of the Greeks of Egypt and Middle East Society, the Greek Union of Aged Pensioners of Thebarton & Suburbs, the Colossus Pan Rhodian Society and the Pan-Ikarian Brotherhood.



Mr Gonis said that it was “an honour to be here today to celebrate the enormous contribution that you and almost six million Australian volunteers make each year, and each year, these volunteers dedicate over 600 million hours to help others.
The theme for National Volunteer Week in 2021 – was and still is to “Recognise. Reconnect. Reimagine… In the current changing environment, where Australians are time-poor and experiencing higher degrees of uncertainty and stress, we need to reimagine how we do things. We need to collaborate more and adapt our volunteering practices and programs so we can better support and engage volunteers to continue the necessary work that they do.”

Mr David Jacquier, representing Mrs Tracey Fox, A/CEO at Volunteering SA & NT mentioned in his speech that “at the height of the pandemic last year, two out of three volunteers stopped volunteering which added to the existing decline in volunteer numbers which was down 7 percent in 2019/2020.

Many volunteers were temporarily stood down, and as volunteer programs get back up and running, some of these volunteers are sadly, not returning… Volunteering SA&NT, along with other State and Territory peaks are working with Volunteering Australia to engage with Government and non-Government decision makers to build an understanding of the impact of the pandemic on volunteering."



He ended his speech adding that it was now vital for the sector to continue working together to support our amazing and invaluable volunteers – to look at ways to make volunteering easier and more accessible for time-poor South Australians.

After the speeches, delicious savoury pies and Greek sweets were served in small bamboo boats, followed by luscious fruit platters placed on the finely decorated tables. As a token of GOCSA's appreciation, volunteers also found on their tables a Volunteer Certificate with their names printed on them, along with a "Thank you" cookie, which many volunteers said that they were not going to eat but keep as a souvenir.

Lastly, within the framework of GOCSA's Ageing Well Community Network, the event concluded with a presentation by Mrs Annelise Van Deth from Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS) who spoke about the role of ARAS, the rights of older people as well as elder abuse prevention.

In this way, GOCSA Community Care Services feel confident that our volunteers, as community leaders, are aware and can assist older Greek people know and understand their rights, can help them access information and supports, can assist in raising awareness against elder abuse in the community and understand what it

means to age well in a safe and respectful environment.
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