

# GIVE A LITTLE BIT...



With so many young women wanting to give something back to the community, we're asking you to join our do-good campaign to get that feelgood factor. Because volunteering can definitely improve your life - and even your career

**W**e've got a confession to make. Before this article, none of the *Company* team had really volunteered - regularly at least. We did a straw poll and one person had helped at a soup kitchen at Christmas (just the once), another had entertained at an old people's home (by playing a recorder, aged 10) and 4ft 11 Commissioning Ed Tracy climbed 19,340ft Mount Kilimanjaro to raise money for kids in Africa (hats off to her). But it hardly makes us all Mother Theresa does it?

One of the enduring images of the recent UK riots was that of the local community coming together afterwards to volunteer. People stood, wooden brushes held high, and helped with the clean-up effort. It was inspiring, and just one example of how a growing number of people are finding that being selfless can selfishly make you feel good too. That's a win/win situation, right?

As Dr Christine Sprigg, a psychologist at the University of Sheffield, explains, "Scientists have found that doing good for others produces one of the most reliable increases in personal well being." That's because altruism is associated with good health, boosting your immune system and helping you live longer. Studies even show donating money to charity triggers the same reward systems in the brain as eating food and having sex - something psychologists call the "helper's high".

Raisa Karolia, 23, a student from West Yorkshire, experienced this when she started volunteering in a hospital shop at weekends when she was just 16. At first, she admits she did it to make her application for university look better. But, after a while, she realised how much it brightened patients' days to come in and buy their favourite magazine and have a chat. While Erika Bell, 26, from Chester found volunteering as a literacy tutor for the homeless helped land her a full-time job as a support worker. See - what goes around, comes around!

Of course, we're not saying you should volunteer PURELY because you'll get something out of it - we should all be doing it for the greater good and all that - but there's no harm in pointing out the fact that we all benefit from giving too.

So whether you've got just one hour you can spare every month or two hours per week (OK Mother Theresa, you're showing us up), there's no better time to start doing good...



Ameeta with Cleo, one of the dogs she helps to look after

## "I TRAIN DOGS ON MY WEEKENDS"

**Ameeta Waters, 28, an HR Co-ordinator from Kent, has been a Re-homing and Welfare Volunteer for Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, Brands Hatch, since April 2010**

**Do good:** "I used to have my own dog, but I wanted to give something back that involved my love of animals. So, for four hours a week, I help Battersea Dogs and Cats Home by walking the dogs, playing constructive games with them, grooming them and helping the more stressed-out ones adjust to the kennels. We even play them classical music!"  
**Feel good:** "Seeing the dogs transform is amazing. We cared for 470 dogs last year, though sadly five still haven't been re-homed because they're older."

**Over to you...** The home has three sites and recruits new volunteers twice a year. Visit [www.battersea.org.uk](http://www.battersea.org.uk) to apply. Otherwise, search for a local dog or cat home near you. It helps if you are experienced and confident with animals.

## "I USE MY LOVE OF FASHION TO HELP OTHERS"

**Jacky Hall, 27, an Office Temp from Manchester has volunteered as an Oxfam Shop Assistant and Festival Steward for the past six years**

**Do good:** "I started as a student, when I didn't just want to watch daytime TV in my spare time. I help run Oxfam Originals, an Oxfam shop that specialises in vintage clothing and I volunteered selling clothes at Latitude and Bestival's festival shops."

**Feel good:** "Knowing you've made a positive change to customers' lives, and to the world at the same time, is great. I once helped a thrilled customer choose a fabulous 1950s frock for a family wedding. And I met Alexa Chung in Latitude's festival shop. We raised £32,000 that weekend - mainly selling second-hand wellies!"

**Over to you...** Fill in an application form at your local Oxfam shop (there are over 700 in the UK), or apply to volunteer at festivals next spring at [www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)



Jacky shows off some of her retro-fabulous stock

Four hours spent volunteering in an Oxfam shop will pay for seeds for two families in need to grow fresh food for their year.



Rosina wants to give something back to her community

## "I'VE MADE A FRIEND FOR LIFE"

**Rosina, 30, a PR manager from Kent, has been volunteering as an Independent**

**Visitor on a mentoring scheme for children in foster care with Action for Children for three years**

**Do good:** "I see Serena, the 13-year-old young person I mentor, about twice a month. We go for lunch, to the cinema, museums or the seaside - and sometimes even get manicures together. I felt guilty living in my community and seeing the locals being forced out by rising property prices, so I thought I'd give something back."

**Feel good:** "It's not like hanging out with a kid - Serena is more like a friend. Seeing her sing a brilliant solo in a workshop made me feel proud because she wouldn't have had the confidence before. She trusts my opinion and that means a lot."

**Over to you...** Speak to your local council and find out which children's charities run mentoring schemes in your area. Action for Children ([www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)) and Barnardos ([www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)) are always looking for volunteers.



Calypso and Julia at one of the tea parties they run

## "WE THROW TEA PARTIES FOR OLD LADIES"

**Calypso Rose, Director of an accessories brand, and Julia Saunders, a Model, both 30 and**

**from London, have run tea parties since January for Contact The Elderly**

**Do good:** When her grandmother broke her hip last year, Julia visited her in hospital and noticed there were several elderly patients who had no visitors. Calypso also remembers her gran feeling lonely, so when she spotted a poster about the Contact The Elderly charity, it felt right to get in touch. "Now we organise tea parties once a month at our flats. We invite eight ladies from our area. They've gone so well, we're planning to take them on trips out too."

**Feel good:** "We love hearing about our guests' lives - we've spoken to women who worked at the BBC and the Ministry Of Defence during WWII. The hardest part was when a member confessed to wishing she didn't wake up in the mornings."

**Over to you...** "We set up our own volunteer group in our area through [www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk](http://www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk). If you want to be a host you need a loo on the ground floor and no steps."



Jenny with the rest of the Radio Lollipop ladies (and men!)

## "I HELP POORLY KIDS TO LAUGH AGAIN"

**Jenny Spraggett, 27, an Office Manager from London, is a Ward Volunteer for Radio**

**Lollipop at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital**

**Do good:** "I noticed how happy my boss looked on Thursday mornings after volunteering at the children's hospital, so thought I'd check it out! Now I volunteer two hours every Wednesday and do anything from singing with babies, to making flying saucers with toddlers, to playing Jenga and performing magic with the older kids. It's about making them smile because it's been shown that when they do, they recover faster!"

**Feel good:** "I've met some of my best friends volunteering - and when you've made a child in hospital giggle, it feels great. One girl hadn't smiled for days, but soon she was laughing so loudly the nurse came in to check everything was OK! The toughest part is seeing poorly children in pain."

**Over to you...** Sign up at [www.radiolollipop.org](http://www.radiolollipop.org). You have to apply to do two hours a week and have a CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) check.

Words: Catherine Bennion-Pedley

## JOIN THE DO GOOD FEEL GOOD CAMPAIGN!

Log on to [www.company.co.uk](http://www.company.co.uk) to share your Do Good Feel Good stories, get information about volunteer schemes near you and see how members of the *Company* team are making a difference! ☺