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# Volunteering 'a privilege'

**L**aura Turnbull's colleagues at Volunteering ACT did not hesitate in nominating her as a Local Hero.

Mrs Turnbull, 67, of Hackett, was a little surprised.

"I'm not a hero," she pleaded, but as she reeled off all the community work she has done since she and her husband Fred Turnbull migrated from Sunderland, England, 35 years ago, it was clear she was already a hero to a lot of people.

A primary school teacher at Hackett School before it closed down, Mrs Turnbull has continued to nurture people's talents through various avenues, and plays a vital role at Volunteering ACT in recruiting new volunteers.

### What work do you do with Volunteering ACT?

I've just come off the board there, and I'm now involved with interviewing people that come to us thinking they want to be volunteer, to give them the big picture of what volunteering is about and then seeing if we can find a niche that suits their availability and skills. The impetus to keep going is there because we've grown and it's getting better and stronger. It's a very energising group to belong to.

### You have been with Volunteering ACT since the organisation formed 15 years ago. How did it begin?

We had worked for five years before that to get it going. We fought like mad to get funding from local and national governments to form an ACT volunteers centre, and it was a joy getting that going. MLA Mary Porter was our first chief executive officer. That's where my enthusiasm came from, and that's why it's important for me to keep an eye on how volunteering is going in the ACT.

### What other community work do you do?

The other group that I belong to — I'm acting president — is Mothers' Union. It's been going for 150 years in the world, but here in the ACT we're only 25 years old. We do all sorts of work but it's based mostly on prayer. My particular interest is social responsibility, which is how Christians become involved in work in the community.

### What is the most rewarding thing



Laura Turnbull was instrumental in the establishment of Volunteering ACT. She says it is "the privilege of working with other people" that keeps her involved.

## Send in your hero

Tell us who your local hero is. It needs to be someone who makes life special for you and others. Please send in the details and your contact number to [relax@canberratimes.com.au](mailto:relax@canberratimes.com.au)

### about the work you do?

It's the privilege of working with other people. I don't do anything that isn't done in a group. If I had a gift to anyone it would be encouragement — it was like that when I was teaching little children — I wanted to encourage them to do their best, even if it was learning to read or joining a choir. We all need helpers.

### In 1991 you were awarded an Order of Australia Medal. How did that come about?

I had been working with heart patients. In 1982 we started a group called the Zipper Club, for people that had had heart surgery. It is now called Heart Support, and has grown considerably. When they notified me that I'd been nominated, I realised I was going to be in England on the day of the ceremony, so I wrote back and said, 'While I'm in England I'll take it in Buckingham Palace'. Of course they wrote back and told me it was an Australian honour and had to be given by the Governor General, so I attended the ceremony the following year.

Interview with Victor Violante