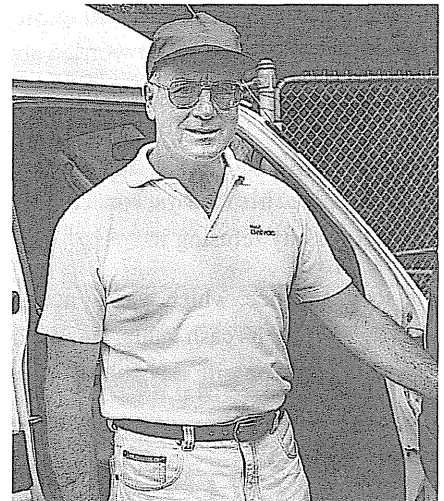


Volunteers

play an important role in the life and work of the Brotherhood of St Laurence. In the lead-up to National Volunteers Week to be celebrated in May, we feature some of the 500 men and women who give their time, talents and energies to the Brotherhood.



Family Friends is a pilot project initiated by the Brotherhood which aims to reduce the isolation felt by many new mothers. The project matches volunteer women with first-time mothers to develop long-term emotionally supportive friendships. Since the birth of her child last year, Jodie has been enjoying the companionship and support of volunteer, **Moira Chalk** (pictured below), who visits Jodie at her home for regular get-togethers and the occasional social outing. For Moira, the relationship is like "having a younger sister".



According to husband and wife team, **Gwen and Bill Polanske**, helping other people is the main motive for volunteering at the Brotherhood's material aid centre in Whittlesea. Last year the Centre provided emergency relief, clothing and furniture to nearly 1,500 local families. Gwen and Bill have been involved for more than two years and work at the centre two days a week. They serve and chat with clients, sort clothes and keep the centre's stock tidy and accessible.



The Brotherhood's Coolibah Centre in Fitzroy provides a comfortable and friendly place for people over 50 years, with meals, activities and a range of support services. On Monday and Thursday of each week, Centre staff welcome volunteer **Gary Donnellan**, (pictured above), who takes the wheel of the Centre's bus. Gary drives clients to a local shopping centre for shopping and banking, and on organised day trips which have included a Yarra cruise, a trip to the Fairfield Boathouse and the Healesville Sanctuary.

Volunteers wanted!

There are currently a number of opportunities for readers interested in volunteering for the Brotherhood. If you would like to discuss any of the positions below, please contact **Marilyn Joyce**, Manager of Volunteer Services on (03) 9483 1390.

Ongoing needs

- Help in community shops around Melbourne. Support and training is provided to each volunteer who is asked to work a four-hour shift once a week. The work includes retail sales, sorting, stock replacement and pricing.
- Assistance with recreational programs in Brotherhood hostels for frail aged in Fitzroy and Clifton Hill. Support from staff is provided. A few hours of your time each week would be greatly appreciated.

Special projects

Combined Charities Card Shop: a special person is needed for a half-day per week commitment from September to December 1996.

Raffle sellers at the Galleria, City on 6-10 May, 8-12 July, 12-16 August, 9-13 September and 7-11 October.

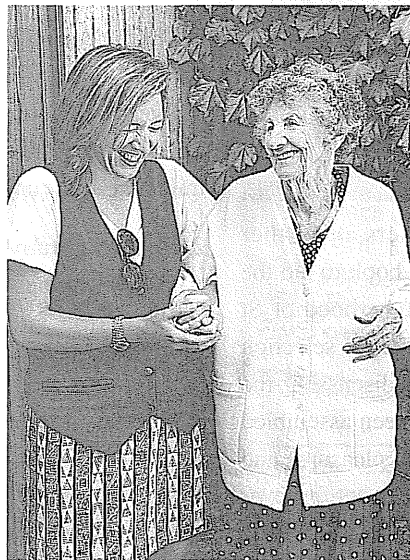
Volunteers



Working at the Brotherhood's Community shop in Brunswick gave **Catriona Baker** (above) experience in dealing with the public before commencing a hospitality course almost two years ago. Since then Catriona has worked at the shop during school holidays, sorting clothes and helping on the counter. She enjoys her work at the shop, which she describes as "a great place with a real family atmosphere".

"...there are many personal benefits for those who are able to spend time as volunteers."

Sambell Lodge in Clifton Hill is a Brotherhood facility providing residential care for elderly people on low income. **Janet Nixon** says she has gained much from the friends she has made at the Lodge since commencing as a volunteer late last year. She spends one day a week helping with the Centre's activity program, reading to residents, playing cards and assisting them on day trips. Janet, pictured on the right with Ula, a Sambell resident, says that there are many personal benefits for those who are able to spend time as volunteers.



Other opportunities

A range of volunteer opportunities are available in other areas in which the Brotherhood operates. For readers in the Peninsula region, contact the Volunteers coordinator, Barbara Coleman, on (03) 9782 1203. For those living closer to Geelong, the volunteers coordinator, Anne Dance, will be pleased to hear from you on (052) 82 1405.

Getting the message across

Since its inception over 60 years ago, the Brotherhood of St Laurence has advocated on behalf of people on low incomes, undertaking research into poverty, developing policy proposals for governments and giving people a voice. It has worked in many different ways to counter the sources of poverty and disadvantage.

In the lead-up to the Federal election, the Brotherhood took the opportunity to ensure that issues it believed to be important to Australia remained on the political agenda. In February, the Brotherhood published *Tasks for a new government*, a brochure listing the major tasks it believed would face the incoming government after 2 March.

These tasks included ensuring that citizens do not miss out on the basics for decent lives; that young people get a fair go at school and at work; and that Australian society was not allowed to be driven apart by the increasing inequality of income distribution. How a new government responded to these challenges would affect the future society of Australia.

Almost 17,000 brochures were distributed around Australia: to every major party candidate, to churches and community groups, social welfare agencies and the media. The brochure did not endorse any particular political party. Rather it encouraged citizens and their candidates to consider the issues before casting their vote.

In late February the Brotherhood published *Choices & Consequences*, a 27 page analysis of the major parties' policies. Media releases were issued, radio interviews conducted and community discussion was encouraged on what the Brotherhood believed to be the issues facing voters on 2 March.

Copies of *Tasks for a new government*, which will remain relevant well beyond the election, may be obtained by writing to the Brotherhood of St Laurence or by contacting Andrew Jeffrey on (03) 9483 1393.