I AM delighted to be part of this celebration of NHS volunteers. This is the perfect opportunity to look at how some of our magnificent band of volunteers, who willingly give of their time and skills, make patients’ lives a little bit better.

We have more than 2000 volunteers of all ages and backgrounds who regularly help out in our hospitals and more and more in our communities.

They are no ordinary people; they are very special people who come from all walks of life with boundless energy and enthusiasm to give support and offer help to others.

This supplement looks at the different types of services our volunteers are able to bring to those — who for whatever reason need someone to visit them in hospital, or even just a friendly word from someone who’s been there before them. There are the wonderful WRVS volunteers who can offer you a cup of tea with a smile as well as serving in hospital shops and manning the ward trolley. There are also those who can pick you up and drop you at hospital when transport is a problem.

Nowadays the type of volunteering we have on offer takes in much more than all of this, essential as it is. Volunteering opportunities are as diverse as the volunteers themselves. From therapists to the fantastic polyphony music project involving some of our youngest volunteers — you are all a credit to us.

Volunteering has a long history in Glasgow and Clyde’s hospitals with many voluntary organisations initially being set up by the better-off to support the poor.

As far back as 1863 the Dorcas Society was formed initially to provide clothing for those in need who were being treated at the hospital. The Society is still active and recently raised money to provide handmade furniture for the Snowdrop Chapel at the new Princess Royal Maternity Unit.

Other more well-known organisations have also volunteered in our hospitals over the past 100 years, including the Red Cross. Another of our most well-established hospital volunteer projects is our hospital radio services which exist in most hospitals across the area, providing a friendly voice to patients and more in our communities.

As we approach the delivery of the new Princess Royal Maternity Unit and continue the story of volunteering in Glasgow and Clyde, you will read about some of these very special people – those featured are just a tiny sample of thousands who work with those in need and help bring a smile to their faces.

The volunteers do not seek accolades or recognition, but that’s no reason to take them for granted — each and every one of them deserves a special thanks. Thanks for running hospital radio broadcasts; thanks for driving patients to clinics or taking elderly or infirm relatives to visit their loved ones.

Thanks for playing a game of chess with a patient or reading a book to someone who can’t do it for themselves.

Thanks for looking after the faithful pet while an owner is ill; for running the tea rooms; for supporting the bereaved and for running marathons to raise funds… thanks for all that and a whole lot more.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde staff and Board members are rightly proud of all our volunteers and want to celebrate the continuing story of volunteering in our hospitals and in our communities.

To mark this very special occasion, we are giving each of our volunteers a commemorative volunteer badge which we hope they will wear with the same pride as we give them.

We’ve developed a new section of the NHS website dedicated to volunteering. Here you will find out how to become a volunteer and support the caring network that supports and assists the NHS in the delivery of its services.

Why not visit: www.nhsggc.org.uk/volunteering
THE EDITOR WRITES

THE Evening Times is delighted to be associated with recognising the work of NHS volunteers. Across many parts of the health service, these individuals make a vital contribution to improving the lives of patients. As Glasgow’s local newspaper we are proud to report on their achievements and to raise awareness about their work.

The sheer range of activity carried out by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde’s 2000 volunteers emphasises what an important part they have to play. Whether it’s driving people to appointments, chatting to patients in hospital or fundraising, the positive results of their work can be seen in most parts of the NHS.

Volunteers are of all ages and come from all walks of life. They make a huge difference to the lives of those they come into contact with and deserve great praise for giving up their time to help others.

It is absolutely fitting then that all of these volunteers should have their own special event and their own publication to spread the good news about their work.

In the pages of this special supplement enjoy reading about just some of the vital work carried out by NHS volunteers.

Donald Martin is Editor of the Evening Times.

Thanks to the friends and fundraisers who make this a healthier place to live

UNFORTUNATELY, we can’t list everyone who volunteers or fundraises on behalf of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. However, we’d like to thank you all for your efforts.

Here are a few of those groups and organisations who regularly give to our patients, wards and hospitals:

- All the volunteer DJs and befrienders who work for our hospital radio stations right across NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.
- The Order of St John and Forrester’s fundraise and donate to the Acorn Centre, Vale of Leven Hospital.
- The Yorkhill Foundation which raises funds for medical equipment, research, and treatment facilities and the Motorcycle Action Group which, every year, donates Easter Eggs to the sick children in our care. There are also groups who raise funds for different groups of children with specific needs, for instance Cystic Fibrosis.
- SANDS (the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society) volunteers provide support to families experiencing the loss of a baby.
- Scottish Care and Information on Miscarriage (SKIM) provide specialised support to families experiencing early pregnancy loss.
- The Friends of the Beatson, the Teen Cancer Trust and Macmillan Cancer Support, The Robertson Trust and Trades House fundraise and donate funds to the Beatson Cancer Centre.
- Volunteers from OHAT project, the two Health Projects in Easterhouse and the East End, the two healthy living centres (East End and Barlanark). Public Partnership Forum, Community Mental Health Network and Patients’ Forum.
- West Dunbartonshire Friends of the Deaf run a hearing aid repair clinic in Clydebank Health Centre.
- The Dorcas Society fundraise for patients at Glasgow Royal Infirmary.
- The Glasgow Royal Infirmary’s Cardiac Rehab service has been well supported by the St Roch’s Cardiac Support Group, the Easterhouse Masonic Lodge, Group, the Anderson McMillan Lodge in Shettleston. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde also has Cardiac Rehab volunteer drivers who contribute significantly to the service at Stobhill Hospital by bringing our higher risk patients who do not have their own transport to the Rehab Centre by car.

Volunteers from OHAT project, the two Health Projects in Easterhouse and the East End, the two healthy living centres (East End and Barlanark). Public Partnership Forum, Community Mental Health Network and Patients’ Forum.

- West Dunbartonshire Friends of the Deaf run a hearing aid repair clinic in Clydebank Health Centre.
- The Dorcas Society fundraise for patients at Glasgow Royal Infirmary.
- The Glasgow Royal Infirmary’s Cardiac Rehab service has been well supported by the St Roch’s Cardiac Support Group, the Easterhouse Masonic Lodge, Group, the Anderson McMillan Lodge in Shettleston. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde also has Cardiac Rehab volunteer drivers who contribute significantly to the service at Stobhill Hospital by bringing our higher risk patients who do not have their own transport to the Rehab Centre by car.

Visit: www.nhsgggc.org.uk/volunteering

Contents

page 32-33
Therapets bring bounce and comfort into hospital wards

page 34-35
Feathers fly as children are cheered up with puppet magic

page 36-37
Polyphony sounds a welcome note for mental health patients

page 38-39
Tradition of help for sick began in the nineteenth century

page 40
Want to be a volunteer?
Top therapy can make a difference

The English Springer Spaniels Eilidh and Poppy

All shapes and sizes with many different skills, abilities and experience. However there is no doubt that among some of our most popular volunteers are the four-legged ones!

English Springer Spaniels Eilidh and Poppy – along with owner Anne MacDonald – are popular volunteers at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children and the Spinal Injuries Unit and the Physically Disabled Rehabilitation Unit (PDRU) at the Southern General Hospital. Eilidh is actually an award-winning volunteer, walking away with the Therapy Dog of the Year in 2001.

The therapeutic benefits of animals visiting people in hospital or care homes has been well documented. Anne is an enthusiastic advocate of pet therapy and was awarded the prestigious Iain Whyte Memorial Award in 2005 in part for her work in persuading the Royal Hospital for Sick Children to take part in the Therapy Project.

Anne explained that while the personalities of the two dogs are very different – both have made a positive impression on patients. “Eilidh has been a great advert for the Therapy and has appeared in newspapers and in STV’s television documentary about the hospital. Eilidh will be retiring from visiting this year as she is now 77-years-old in dog years and has probably made about 1000 visits over the last ten years.” “Poppy is two-years-old and still new to hospital visiting. Being a young dog she is slightly bouncer, everything is an adventure, but she very quickly calms down and is extremely gentle and loving with everyone. Poppy is involved in ‘phobia visits’ with children who have a fear of dogs. It is important for them to experience a liver dog, under control.”

“Eilidh and Poppy love the company of people, are very gentle and will lie quietly on a patient’s bed. Both like lots of fussing and tummy tickles are most welcome.”

She first got involved with Therapets when her children started school.

“I wanted to do something positive. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to give my time voluntarily and to have dogs that are gentle, obedient and people-friendly. Some people can spend a long time in hospital, away from family and friends, the dogs and I are regular visitors and hopefully break up what can be a very long day in hospital.

“In the children’s hospital, the dogs can take the pressure off the parents for a few minutes and if they make their child smile or sit up in bed for the first time in a few days, that’s a bonus.”

Anne explained what she gets out of volunteering: “I enjoy feeling that people are very pleased that someone is prepared to give a little time to think about others who find themselves in extremely difficult situations far from home and family.

“Many of the people I meet make me feel very humble as any one of us could find ourselves in their situation.

For people interested in volunteering, Anne has only this advice: “It is very rewarding – you bring a smile to people’s faces, often for some the first time in days. He totally committed, whether it be one visit a week or month, long-term volunteering is extremely difficult situations far from home and family.”

The organisation, set up 50 years ago, fundraises for the ‘wee extras’ and husband Douglas, an equally young looking 81, are testament to the fact that you can volunteer at any age.

Douglas said: “We both get a lot out of volunteering and would encourage others to do it. It’s great for your mental and physical health. It keeps us both going.”

Maureen, who is the GRA’s Treasurer, revealed that the support it receives from local people is overwhelming. She said: “Most of us who volunteer for the Therapy are also members of local churches, bowling clubs and other groups and we get a tremendous amount of support from them and from the general public. People are extremely generous when asked to donate and we can’t thank them enough.”

Befriending someone can be fulfilling

Simon Kyle, 21, is one of our younger volunteers, and, until his recent graduation, volunteered one-day-a-week at the Young Physically Disabled ward at the Southern General Hospital.

Simon, with a friend Chris Graham, were both studying for an MA (Hons) in Psychology when they decided to volunteer. They believed that the befriending programme running in the ward would give them an insight into both physical ill-health and the mental health issues that underlie such disabilities.

Volunteering for the last year, both Simon and Chris have found the experience to be very worthwhile offering them not just an insight into cognitive conditions which Simon has a particular interest in, but also the NHS as an organisation.

However, Simon admitted it was difficult in the beginning as some of the patients in the ward are severely disabled.

He said: “The first day was rather daunting – befriending patients who have communication impairments can be incredibly challenging, and thoughts such as ‘maybe I won’t go back’ are definitely understandable. However, I think it was slightly easier for me as I was volunteering with a friend and we became a bit of a double-act. I think this benefited patients, it certainly made things a bit easier for me as I was volunteering with a friend and we became a bit of a double-act.”

Simon believes while everyone can volunteer, it can take a while to find your niche and what is right for you.

“Not everyone is suitable for this type of volunteering, but it’s definitely worth persevering with. Once you develop a rapport with a patient, whether through verbal interactions or even smiling and blinking, then the voluntary experience doubles in enjoyment.”

As well as meeting and working with patients, Simon explained that for him another big plus for volunteering was the staff he met in the ward.

“For me, I was at university all week so this was something different. It was good to come in and meet up with staff and have a coffee. They always looked like they were glad to see us! Hopefully, it lightened their load a bit as well.”

Little things make a difference

EVERYTHING from cosmetics, arts and crafts materials to wellie boots, garden tools and gardening equipment – these are just some of the things provided by Gartnavel Royal Auxiliary (GRA).

GRA volunteers have also provided DVDs, extra televisions, Play Stations, music videos, planters and board games, all of which help to improve patients’ stay in hospital.

The organisation, originally set up some 50 years ago, fundraises for the ‘wee extras’ for patients in Gartnavel Royal Hospital and for people attending Resource Centres and Day Units for older people in the community.

Although GRA is relatively small with 11 volunteer members and a handful of ex-officio members, the pleasure the organisation brings to patients is immeasurable.

Apart from items for the wards, GRA also raises money for outings, and ‘wee extras’ for patients in and Day Units for older people in the community.

For people interested in volunteering, Anne has only this advice: “It is very rewarding – you bring a smile to people’s faces, often for some the first time in days. He totally committed, whether it be one visit a week or month, long-term volunteering is extremely difficult situations far from home and family.”

The GRA team, left to right, Maureen Wood, Catherine McMillan, Anne MacGregor, Christine Trott, Laura Allan and Douglas Wood

The GRA team, left to right, Maureen Wood, Catherine McMillan, Anne MacGregor, Christine Trott, Laura Allan and Douglas Wood
be four-legged
help young children cope with life in hospital

A haven of friendliness and funding

TUCKED in behind the main reception of the Vale of Leven Hospital is a little haven of friendliness and refreshment.

To refer to it simply as a tea bar is to overlook just how important a place this is for so many patients, visitors and staff in the Vale – and what a wonderful service the volunteers actually provide.

Since 1996, the tea bar has been thriving with the amazing support of around 350 volunteers who give varying amounts of their time to keep everything ticking along.

The entire operation is coordinated by two local ladies, Grace McDermid and Nessie Copeland. Grace said: “The volunteers cover a 13-week rota and most of them come from churches of every denomination in the Vale of Leven, Dumbarton and Helensburgh areas. We also have representatives from the Soroptimists, the Inner Wheel and the Townswomen’s Guild.”

Grace revealed that over the past ten years, a whopping £100,000 has been raised which is donated to NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde’s Endowment Fund, which gives cash grants.

She said: “As well as that money, we’ve also raised an additional £5000 to give directly to the hospital wards at Christmas or to buy items such as DVDs. This money was raised from our customers’ spare change.”

Grace McDermid helps hand out the cakes to Ann Carson, Nessie Copeland and Jean Walker at the Vale of Leven tea bar

THERESA MURRAY volunteers at the Princess Royal Maternity and in her local community with the Breast-feeding Initiative.

She loves working with mums interested in breast-feeding because she’s been doing it for eight-and-a-half years.

She said: “It’s mostly just about encouraging breast-feeding, assisting them to get started, talking about any possible problems and just offering mums a little bit of much needed reassurance.”

The initiative has a busy community base so Theresa also sees mums at home and is available to them by phone on an almost 24-hour basis.

“I have been phoned on Christmas Day and at four in the morning! However, it would be hard to do this without the support of my husband Paul. I really couldn’t do it without him. Mums often phone up and find themselves talking to him, and he is very good at taking messages.”

Theresa also has two daughters – Amy 13 and Hope eight. Theresa claims she just fell into volunteering.

“I was approached to see if I was interested after my second child was born. I had breast-fed my first daughter for quite a while with no problems and then I had my second, but it was just trying to remember everything.”

Training for breast-feeding volunteers is always ongoing and when Theresa first trained it was with friends so was a lot of fun.

“There is a clear programme to follow and the training is brilliant. It gives you lots of background and knowledge so the idea is to learn and then pass it on.

“I just get out so much out of my work, I’ve made lots of friends and you’re always meeting kids that you helped mums with when I’m dropping my girls off at school and stuff like that.

“If people are interested, I’d say give us a phone. Just think about what you can do and what you can pass on to others. All you need is breast-feeding experience.”

“When I’m in the hospital and I wear my Breast-feeding initiative tee-shirt, I’m proud of what it represents and I like that I’m seen as a valuable part of the team in the hospital and in the community.

“If I’ve a problem, I can talk to anyone from the Breast-feeding Initiative and know I’ll be listened to and be supported. The reward for all of it came last year when a mum just said: ‘You made all the difference and I was so pleased!’ I think that really sums it up.”

The Breast Way

GRACIOUSLY lining their plates with the most delicious of cakes to ensure that patients enjoy the most comforting of experiences,/graceful volunteers/ were the stars of the Vale of Leven tea bar.

Grace McDermid helps hand out the cakes to Ann Carson, Nessie Copeland and Jean Walker at the Vale of Leven tea bar
HELP TO RAISE SPIRITS

WHEN Arshad Khan retired he was looking through his career and he didn’t want to just sit back and be working like his father.

The former bus driver decided that he wanted to help others, but he didn’t know exactly how he would.

Then last year, through his mosque, Arshad heard that the Victoria Infirmary’s Chaplaincy Service was looking for volunteers to talk to patients. He applied and was delighted when he was accepted.

Arshad said: “I then went on a one-month volunteering training programme and started volunteering in August this year.”

“Arshad’s very picky to talk to and very easy to talk with. He helped out in areas and helping patients with their的精神.”

The father-of-three goes on: “He’s been really useful in helping patients with their spirits. He’s been working within the public hospital, talking to patients and lending a listening ear.”

“We need a lot of people to do that, Arshad does it all. Whether that’s telling the children about their diagnosis, or talking to patients when they’re going through surgery and even after, Arshad does it all. We need to have more people like him.”

“I love it, Arshad,” said the Victoria Infirmary’s Chaplain. “He’s one of the people’s home, said: “It’s like a home, like a home.”

The Victoria Infirmary currently has 25 regular volunteers providing befriending services to patients and their families.

There are also a larger group of volunteers from a variety of places of worship who assist in caring for patients in and from the weekly services.

BROADEN YOUR EXPERIENCE, SKILLS AND CV

When you volunteer you can broaden your experience, skills and CV.

You can choose to volunteer at different places, in different ways and for different periods of time.

You can find out more about volunteering at the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde website.

Find out about volunteering across NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde tel 0141 201 2748 or email voluntary.services@sgh.scot.nhs.uk

In terms of volunteering, you can choose to volunteer at different places, in different ways and for different periods of time.

If you want to find out more about volunteering at the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde website.

You can find out more about volunteering across NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde website.

Find out about volunteering across NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde tel 0141 201 2748 or email voluntary.services@sgh.scot.nhs.uk.
Music helps to calm

The therapeutic use of sound is harnessed by Polyphony Project

Of the most recent volunteer projects to get up and running within NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is the Polyphony Music Project at Gartnavel Royal Hospital.

Polyphony is a project that uses music to provide therapy entertainment to patients in the hospital’s mental health wards. In addition to recognising the established calming effects of making music, the project is also part of a wider academic research study into the medical benefits for both mental health patients and those in Care of the Elderly wards.

Among those involved in volunteering with the project, are four students from Strathclyde University: Fiona MacDonald, Stefanie Frame, Carol Brown and Fiona Thain. The girls spend about three hours a week volunteering.

Carol works with Care of the Elderly at Gartnavel Royal Hospital and Canniesburn Care Home on various different music activities, including singing, percussion and just listening to music.

She said: “We try to do similar activities each week so the songs etc are familiar to the patients. “I think the Polyphony Project is really worthwhile, it is good to see the patients recognising songs from week to week and just seeing how much they gain from a 30 to 40 minute session. Also, because it is something different from the patient’s normal routine, most of them have a great time in the sessions.”

Stefanie Frame has worked with a young singer/songwriter who plays his own music and they both recently performed at The Arches in Glasgow.

She said: “I enjoyed playing at the Arches and thank Polyphony for giving me this opportunity even though we were there to help someone else.

“IT also helped me to realise that there is another way of giving people with mental health problems a way of accessing music that is not necessarily music therapy, but has the same benefits and outcomes.”

“I think that the clients I work with enjoy having us around as we are not actual members of staff so perhaps they feel that we are like friends to them.”

Joyce Curtis, right, is sharing a joke with WRVS volunteers Margaret Lodge and Margaret Sharp at the WRVS shop

“The jobs our volunteers perform are varied. They staff the gift shop, serve tea in the tea-room and take the trolley round selling a variety of things that patients need.”

Although now a full-time manager for the WRVS, Joyce knows only too well how rewarding volunteering can be... she used to volunteer herself for a lunch club outwith the hospital. She said: “It was one of the best times of my life...I loved it. When volunteering, you’re there because you want to be there not because you have to and it makes you feel good helping others.”

Joyce revealed that the WRVS has raised more than £1 million for the RAH in its £1 million for the RAH in its time, including maternity equipment. She added: “Volunteering is hard work, but really rewarding and you don’t have to give up a lot of time to do it, just a couple hours a week.

Joyce Curtis with WRVS volunteers Margaret Lodge and Margaret Sharp at the WRVS shop

Many have joined the WRVS because they have some kind of connection to the hospital: it’s their local hospital, they’ve been a patient there or had a loved one who was cared for there before they died. I think they feel they want to contribute, to give something back.”

“For the past 14 years, Pat McAuliffe has been a familiar face on the wards of Parkhead Hospital. Pat lives locally and thinks nothing of giving up some of her free time to help out at the hospital’s Mobile Trolley Shop. She’s a regular sight around the wards, pushing her trolley full of refreshments.

Pat provided friendly service.

For patients with little or no family or friends, the mobile trolley service provides a service and gives them the chance to have a chat with a friendly face. Pat said: “I love my voluntary work and over the years have made a lot of friends.

“In 2000, along with two other volunteers, we were nominated by the patients and staff of Parkhead Hospital for the Nationwide Award for Voluntary Endeavour, for running the mobile trolley shop service. After winning the Scottish Regional Award, we went forward to the UK finals in London and won the runners-up award. It was very heart-warming to be nominated and was much appreciated.”

Pat provides friendly service.
Radio strikes a chord with patients

HE Hospital Broadcasting Service, (HBS) to give it its Sunday name, has been providing music and entertainment to those in hospital since 1970.

Hospital radio is one of the biggest and most popular of our volunteer organisations with more than 350 volunteers giving up three to four hours a week to brighten up someone else's day or night.

There are six other hospital radio organisations in the NUSGSSC area: Victoria Infirmary Radio, Southern Sound, Royal Infirmary, Radio Lollipop Inverclyde Hospital Radio, and Radio Lennox at Vale of Leven.

The majority of volunteers work on a team to deliver the nightly request programme. Chair of the HBS is Niall Anderson, who has been involved with hospital radio since 1979. He said: “The nightly request show is the main focus of our activities as this is where we can really interact with the patients spending time to have a chat and then brighten up their evening with a record that is often incredibly significant to the person and brings back many happy memories.

“We collect record requests on the wards each night and also get some phoned in by friends and relatives, tel: 0141 221 4043 or sent via our website at: www.hbs.org.uk”

As Chair of HBS, Niall also spends considerable time on the admin side of the organisation, he says that his reasons for volunteering have changed over the years. “Initially it was about what I could get out of it, but now it’s about giving something back to the community where I can use my skills to help provide some therapeutic distraction to patients during their time in hospital.

“The reason that I’ve remained a volunteer is because of the huge benefit that I see, not only for the hospital patients, but also the many people who join as volunteers and through their time with the Hospital Broadcasting Service develop so many skills that they can use in other areas of their life.”

Anyone interested in volunteering with HBS can contact the organisation to find out more.

“The most important thing Niall believes is to enjoy volunteering and remember the people it helps. He tells with fondness some of the stories he has heard over the years about listeners: “There have been poignant moments too. I recall one patient who was a loyal listener and in her final hours asked staff to put her headphones on. She passed away listening to our programme.”

Niall Anderson is HBS Chair and has been in hospital radio since 1979.
Proud history of volunteering in Glasgow

A tradition of giving that started early

Volunteering has a long, proud and fascinating history in Glasgow and Clyde’s hospitals and it is a tradition that continues to flourish today.

Back in the 1800s the scene may have been very different from the modern world we know today – but the key role of volunteers to help those in need and support the vulnerable has changed little.

While in many cases voluntary organisations are developed by people of wealth to help the poor, the real story of selfless support for the needy is one that enriches all sectors of community from the poorest themselves to the most affluent.

In 1863, Miss Beatrice Clugston, the daughter of a wealthy Glasgow businessman, formed the Dorcas Society at the Royal Infirmary in Glasgow. Inspired by the Biblical story of Tabitha, or Dorcas, she initially set up the Society to provide clothing for those in need who were being treated in the hospital; very poor patients would often be admitted wearing clothes that would disintegrate on washing. The Society also carried out a range of other good works, including:

- Providing an invalid chair in every ward
- Supplying surgical appliances (eg artificial limbs) for patients to take home once discharged from hospital
- Raising money to pay for the travelling expenses of those who couldn’t afford to get to clinics within the hospital
- Providing a tea room for out-patients
- Financially supporting the medical-social department

Members of the Society also visited wards, and convalescing patients in their own homes, to lead prayers and Bible readings. In 2002, the Dorcas Society commissioned a Linwood-based furniture makers to create handmade furniture for the Snowdrop Chapel at the new Princess Royal Maternity Unit at the Royal Infirmary.

On the other side of the city, at the Western Infirmary, the Samaritan Society was founded in 1875 to provide support, clothes and other comforts to needy patients both within the wards and in their own homes. Members kept in touch with patients when they left hospital and, when necessary, helped them with finding employment. Latterly, the Society set up a tea bar in the Western’s out-patient department.

The Voluntary Association was an active part of the Victoria Infirmary for a number of years. It set up a tea bar in the hospital’s older people’s unit and regularly fundraised to provide extras for patients including a garden area in the unit’s car park.

Other, more well known, organisations have also volunteered in our hospitals over the past 100 years, including the Red Cross and the Women’s Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) providing support and help to all those we care for.
It's not just patients who volunteer...our staff do too! At home and abroad, our staff regularly give up their time and efforts to help people.

Among those who regularly give up their own free time is Western Infirmary Pathology Technician Alison Anderson who gives up her annual leave to set up “disaster mortuaries” in war-torn countries.

The Royal Alexandra Hospital’s Dr Eileen Reilly is fundraising to set up a maternity service in Liberia.

We also have staff who regularly go to Africa such as The Queen Mother’s Dr Lena Macara who helps post-natal women in Uganda. Lena has given up some of her annual leave for the last five years to work there.

“My visit in 2005 allowed my colleague Helen Findlay and I to scope their educational and practice development needs and plan for the future. We spent our time there by working alongside staff on the wards in an educational role and provided them with a variety of educational material including textbooks, journals, posters and other relevant teaching material.”

“The hospital has since been supplied with a resource pack, including key articles, assessment tools and contact details of key personnel here in Scotland and other relevant documentation.”

In May of this year, Beverly returned to Malawi with another colleague Sarah Renton to provide further orthopaedic nursing education to staff and assist in clinical work and outreach clinics.

Inverclyde Royal Hospital (IRH) eye consultant Dr Sadhu Gupta takes his team on an annual pilgrimage to poverty-stricken countries suffering from inadequate health facilities.

“Throughout the visits to India, Nepal, Pakistan, Burma and most recently Ethiopia, the team operated on 148 people, including children, during the five days they were there. Dr Gupta said: “As our time was limited we have to make the difficult decision of operating just on those with the most serious problems. These were the worst we had ever encountered over the nine years and we think this was because of the terrible poverty.”

“However, it was very satisfying for us all to operate on so many. We just wish we could have done more for the others who queued up every day.”

Of course, many of our staff also take part in a range of charity events to raise money for various health causes both at home and overseas.

Staff who have raised money have taken part in the New York 10K Scotland Run on behalf of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary Appeals Trust; ran the women’s 10K on behalf of a number of organisations including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde; completed a 24-hour row-a-thon on rowing machines at Gartnavel General and the Western Infirmary on behalf of the Parkinson’s Disease Society; our physiotherapists got on their bikes for Barnardos and Children 1st; and our Finance department raised money for Childline during the Great Scottish Run; to name but only a few.