

Joy of friendship

The volunteer friend visitors bring joy to persons feeling lonely

The strategic objective of the Finnish Red Cross; to strengthen health and safety

We will promote health, safety and well-being of people by reducing loneliness and improving everyday security

For this we have developed different volunteer friend visiting services and group activities

The objectives of the Volunteer Visiting Service

- Provide opportunities for social interaction and support, especially for those who are at risk of being left alone and need to interact with others.
- The Volunteer visiting service is based on regional and local needs. It strengthens people's well-being and increases the sense of community.



Friendship conqueres everything – also loneliness

- Through the Finnish Red Cross it is possible to get a volunteer friend visitor
- Volunteers bring joy to the everyday life of elderly, youth, immigrants and many others



Katja Lösönen

Voluntary friend service at the moment

- In 350 Finnish Red Cross branches
- Around 8 100 voluntary friends, supporting around 25 000 persons
- 98 trainers in social services
- In groups or one to one
- Long-term or short-term

Groups and activities for

- Elderly, youth, immigrants, family caretakers, people living in institutions, prisoners

Volunteers role

- A volunteer friend visitors uses time based on their own availability
- The activities include for example going for a coffee, theater or walk
- A voluntary friend visitor can also accompany a person to the doctor etc.
- For some the volunteer can be the only contact to the outside world



Reijo Hietanen

Important to remember

- Being a voluntary friend is based on a free will. Volunteers can stop any time they want.
- Voluntary friend is not a medical professional or a housekeeper. Volunteers don't generally clean, give treatments, take care of money etc.
- Volunteers are not "always available". Meeting times are scheduled.
- Volunteer is trustworthy -> meetings are confidential and promises are kept.

" It is important that there is someone to whom you can talk, someone who listens."

Terttu Sinipuro, volunteer friend visitor, Tampere.



Petteri Kivimäki

"I also have my own grandchildren but they live far away in Varkaus. As a voluntary granny, I can keep in contact with the children's world.

Marjo Nissinen, volunteer, Varkaus



Petteri Kivimäki

“We have visited the art museum, had a picnic, gone to the beach, flea market or for a walk, we send SMS messages and do the same things I do with my other friends”

Emma Koivuranta, 16, volunteer friend visitor, Oulu



New activities

- **Koko Suomi – leikkii** project together with the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare to strengthen the culture of playing from one generation to another
- "Living life to the fullest as a pensioner" – project as part of the Finland's Slot Machine Association's Active Age funding program
- Training retiring people to participate in voluntary activities

Future challenges – marketing?

- Recruiting more volunteer visitors – especially male visitors
- Making the loneliness issue and FRC Volunteer Visiting Service better known to general public in order to:
 - reach the lonely people
 - inform the general public about the work that FRC does for the Finnish citizens



Future challenges – marketing?

- There is a strong social stigma connected to being lonely
- When marketing the service for new volunteers it is important to understand that also the “lonely” reach the message
- Reducing the social stigma of loneliness should be part of the marketing plan no matter who is the target

Something extra to consider:

Voluntary friend service online –
how to develop?

Contacting the ones who find it impossible to
meet face to face



Donate your time and become a friend

- All kinds of voluntary friend visitor are needed: different ages, men and women
- You can participate in the activities with your family members
- Trainings are organized around Finland
- More information: redcross.fi or punainenristi.fi



Petteri Kivimäki

Please join!



Inka Porttila

