



Organisation:

Volunteer South West

Website: <https://volunteersouthwest.org.au/>

Focus: Youth

“It was really good to hear the perspectives of young people in terms of the challenges they face and also what is important to them. It has shaped the way we view volunteering with actual feedback.”

– CJ, Tuart Forest Toy Library

Tuart Forest Toy Library, located in the Shire of Capel, was established because the existing toy libraries in Bunbury and Busselton were too distant for local families to access easily. When Volunteer South West first partnered with them, the volunteer roles were quite simple and closely aligned with typical toy library duties. The library's founder and President, CJ Aston, is highly innovative and embraces fresh ideas. She was especially enthusiastic about engaging young people as volunteers.

Approach

Volunteer South West connected CJ to their Youth Engagement Officer and there was much discussion on how she would like to see changes at the toy library. As these were being discussed, Volunteer South West also connected her to their LinkED program where a brainstorm was happening with Year 11s and 12s at Manea Senior College. This sparked a number of comments and new ideas from youth.

They pointed out that young people like creating things, they wanted relatively easy tasks with an element of challenge to it, hands on activities, fitting in around the time after school or weekends, working with friends, structured, and something where they could potentially develop new or practice existing skills.

Outcomes

- Processes were adapted to make young people feel welcomed
- New volunteer roles were created relevant to youth
- Updated existing volunteer roles to ensure they were youth friendly
- More roles were created that were shorter that could easily be done at home.
- Tuart Forest Toy Library also expanded their training to give more guidance but still keep the roles flexible.
- CJ started sharing everything she has learned from LinkED with her fellow volunteers and other branches
- Not only did the new positions attract young people but they also attracted time poor mums (especially those that work)

Key Learnings

- Challenges have included that young people are unable to volunteer during their open hours .
- New ideas were brought into their organisation through being connected to young people.
- Working with young people is an enrichment for the organisation
- Young people want to better understand the purpose of the organisation and also the available positions.