

Volunteers: the heart of GUFC

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Volunteers don't necessarily have the time, they just have the heart.

— Elizabeth Andrew

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Many of us have grown up having had our parents coaching or volunteering in the sports we've chosen to play. Each weekend heading off to the football field, netball court, basketball stadium or hockey pitch as a complete family unit with one parent on the sideline and the other in the canteen, or one handing out uniforms while the other ran the line, one offering to manage the team while the other took on a committee role.

So many of us have grown up in community sport and for the children at Gungahlin United, it's no different. Our club exists because of the heart of each and every one of our volunteers.

According to Volunteering Australia, volunteering continues to play a role central to our identity as a nation. "Volunteering is a tower of strength in our communities with 5.8 million Australians or 31 per cent of the population volunteering, making an estimated annual contribution of \$290 billion to our economic and social good."

Given volunteers are the lifeblood of GUFC, we chatted to a few familiar faces to find out why they do it, where they find the time and who they are when they're not walking the fields proudly wearing the Gunners black, white and gold.

TANYA

Tanya shares her thoughts from her many years as a GUFC volunteer.

“ I volunteer because of the people, culture and it's like family. I love contributing to the community and helping others. ”

When she's not managing grounds for GUFC or running the canteen at GEO, Tanya is working full time in her very busy day job, or travelling to and from the central coast where she home-stays and feeds a handful of Central Coast Mariners players and acts as "Mum" while they're fulfilling their contracts away from home.

Tanya strongly believes that communities need volunteers in order to thrive and she recognises that loyalty and commitment are key traits most sports volunteers have in common.

When asked how she manages to fit her volunteer role(s) around work, Tanya said, "It's really challenging but my work knows my passion for my role at GUFC and in return I work doubly hard at my day job in gratitude for their support."



TANYA

JEREMY & FRANCISCO

Jeremy and Francisco endure the pre-dawn frost each Saturday to set up the fields. They tell us why braving those cold starts is so important.

For Jeremy it's quite simple: " I volunteer to support the Club that supports my children in their soccer. I really enjoy my time volunteering, particularly the social side and getting to know other people. Anyone who knows me would know I don't mind a bit of a chat."

He acknowledges that to volunteer, it helps if your family supports you in that role and says that a dawn start and having to work late of a Saturday night in the "day job" can be taxing. His secret? Making sure he can fit in an afternoon nap each Saturday if possible!

For Francisco, football was a big part of his life growing up, both in his home country and in Australia. He says the game builds friendships, memories, happiness, laughter and tears. He believes the key driver for volunteers is passion. Francisco recognises that volunteers are just as busy as everyone else, but having passion for the sport and for volunteering generally, makes it a "walk in the park".

When asked why he sets his alarm for 4.00am every Saturday, Francisco says, "Because I am passionate about the world game of football and I want my GUFC community to be the best football community possible, to bring the joy that I had when I was growing up."



FRANCISCO

JEREMY

The Club can only run with the support of volunteers and it is very special to be a part of this. Without volunteers, there is no GUFC. Even the smallest help goes a long way!

SHARON

Sharon started volunteering for GUFC ten years ago and she's still here! What makes a volunteer return year after year to give their time to our Club?

"For me, it's knowing I'm contributing to the community and helping to ensure kids are able to get out on the field and have a great time with their friends and counterparts. I feel I've been quite blessed in my life and it's nice to give back and to not just think of myself all of the time."

She's coordinated our Senior State League, been a soccer mum, worked in the canteen, managed teams and acted as points registrar. Now she spends her GUFC time at the other end of a computer as the Registrar we can't do without. How does she do it?

"Sometimes it isn't easy - but I get so much enjoyment out of my volunteer work that I just make time."

LOUISE

Louise put up her hand to volunteer as our Events Coordinator and loves the GUFC environment so much, she also provides admin support for our Centre of Excellence and was recently appointed as the new (acting) GUFC Secretary.

We asked Louise how she fits her GUFC roles around her very busy day job, not just from a time point of view, but with the additional level of responsibility. "It helps that I love what I do for GUFC ... volunteering for the club brings me so many happy moments. Helping at GUFC is often a good 'time-out' moment from thinking about work."

With so many roles to cover, we asked her which was her favourite so far. She says it's her CoE role hands-down: "Marcial's passion and drive to build on the youth development program inspired me to add just a little more to my involvement. To help bring Marcial's vision to life each week makes my day."

LUKAS

We know Lukas as a long-time coach in our Community Miniroos & Juniors and now as one of our key Coach Coordinators. What you may not know, is he was extremely nervous when he first put up his hand to volunteer at GUFC.

So with all those nerves, how did Lukas become a coach at GUFC?

"I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to play a few different sports as a child, two of them at a high level, and over that time I always had a coach and the support of administrators who were all volunteers. So when, as an adult, the time came that my son's team required a coach for his second year in the game (U6), I said 'yes'."

Lukas admits that saying 'yes' didn't come easily though. Despite his many years as a sportsman himself, he was still very nervous about coaching other people's kids how to play football.

"I had no specific football playing or coaching experience. Even though it was for little kids, I was very nervous that I would be guiding them down the wrong path – turns out kids have a pretty blunt way of telling you when you get it wrong."

What has kept Lukas coaching at GUFC? "Not only do I obtain personal growth through volunteering but I also greatly appreciate the position I'm in – that being a positive (I hope) mentor for the children I coach. For many of my players, football is it – the single most important activity in their lives outside of their families – and for me to be in a position where I get to help shape them into not only good, fair players, but into great young adults of the future is a very fulfilling position."

"Just being involved with a team led to me getting involved with the Summer Development Program, gradings and then finally both an Age Group Coordinator and Club Coach Coordinator. All of which, from a personal perspective, have been enriching experiences that I thoroughly enjoy."

“ I've learnt over the years that without nervous mums and dads putting their hands up to help, there is no community football. ”

NOEL

Noel felt very similar to Lukas when he first began coaching for an Under 5s team. Now the U10s & U12s Age Group Coordinator, plus a coach and one of our main Community Coach Coordinators, we find out what keeps Noel volunteering at GUFC.

"Although when I started, I worried I had no skills and no idea of what I was doing, I have enjoyed my coaching from the beginning because I was supported by good mentors. GUFC Technical Director's and coaches were always there to help with ideas and answer questions."

This mentoring and guidance has helped shape who Noel has become as a volunteer coach at GUFC. "I am here to give back to the Club by helping coaches enjoy their time on the pitch as much as I do."

Noel agrees that to be a volunteer you have to find a way to juggle your many priorities. He has noticed that volunteers have two things in common - commitment and a desire to create a better community for everyone.

RACHEL

With three boys all playing football for GUFC, there was a time when Rachel was actually managing three teams at once. We talk to one of our long-time Team Managers about how she manages to fit in her volunteer role while also running a family business and being taxi-mum to three kids in multiple sports.

Rachel has been at GUFC for 13 years and loves the role of Team Manager. She first arrived when her eldest son was 4 years of age. He now plays in our Under 18s National Premier League Youth team and she's no stranger to volunteering.

We asked Rachel what keeps her coming back to her managerial role(s) year after year.

"I love watching our boys and their teams play and have loved watching our Club thrive to be where we are today! Plus, I love meeting people and the social side of volunteering."

Given she's been volunteering for so long, not just for GUFC but she was also heavily involved in a local BMX Club, we asked her why volunteers are important.

"I feel it's important to help others and give back to our community. It also teaches our own children the value of volunteering and helping others without expecting anything in return."

We asked Rach if there was any volunteer in particular she wanted to give a shout out to. Without hesitation she said, "I would love to shout out to ALL of our GUFC volunteers. Volunteers are what makes our club run and without each and every one of you, we wouldn't have the most fantastic Club we have today!"

NICOLE

Another long term volunteer, Nicole tells us what got her started at GUFU and why she's still here volunteering after a decade of supporting the Gungahlin black, white and gold.

As with most of our volunteers, Nicole started because of her child's desire to play football. She felt (and still feels) a great deal of gratitude to the coaches and club officials who give up their time to enable kids to play sport, so wanted to give back her own time as a way to say 'thank you'.

Nicole's daughter, Jade, now plays for our National Premier League Women's First Grade team and was recently chosen to represent Australia internationally. It would be easy for Nicole to start to step away from her role with so much going on in her daughter's world but this just spurs her on.

As our NPLW Coordinator, Nicole says, "I continue to volunteer to this day as I really enjoy seeing our players play the game they love and for them to enjoy the benefits of healthy competition, working hard, achieving their own goals and making new friendships. We have an amazing group of girls/ladies in our NPLW program and I am very proud to be a part of the program and watch them play throughout the season."

When we asked Nicole if this is her only volunteer role or if she also volunteers elsewhere (as if her many hours at GUFU isn't enough), she said, "I also love to assist my eldest daughter with her netball when required, however, with the large amount of hours I contribute in my current role with NPLW and with working full time, I think this is all I can fit in right now."

Well, we think you fit in plenty Nicole, as do all of the volunteers we've featured in this issue of GUFM.

We look forward to showcasing more committed, passionate and compassionate GUFU members who truly are the life blood of our organisation.



“ Every little bit of time and effort someone can volunteer goes a long way to supporting the Club and their respective team/s. ”

*Would you like to volunteer for GUFU?
Email volunteers@gufu.org.au
to find out what positions are available,
express your interest and chat about how
you can become an active member of
this incredible sporting community.*

Three cheers for our volunteers who truly are the heart of Gungahlin United!