

## **Make This The Year You Volunteer: Spring 2019**

Greetings everyone.

I hope spring is lifting your hearts and voices.

I've been thinking lately about volunteers and it strikes me that we aren't just a network of peers but also a network of volunteers.

The whole Network and all of its activities swings and turns on the actions of members who give their efforts for no financial reward. That's such a powerful interlocking idea and amazing in the "Me First" world in which we live.

It's worth reminding ourselves of this now and again and giving praise where it's due.

Everyone knows that the Trustee Board works hard to develop and steer the running of the Network and, apart from our wonderful paid administrator and bookkeeper, we do it only for love.

But it's not just us on the Board.

Everyone who contributes to regional networks; everyone who uploads and shares a song on the website; everyone who gives time and effort to help colleagues; who helps on our new Facebook page; who shares ideas and passes on information. It's all done for love not gain.

It's worth thinking about that for a moment. Not many professional organisations run on love.

The Annual Gathering is the biggest example of the role of volunteers. It's an enormous event to organise. Every piece of work - large or small - has been done voluntarily by a member for the benefit of everyone else, from booking the rooms to buying the Sharpies. Every role and responsibility has been taken by volunteers willing to try and make the event work. The difference between volunteer and ordinary attendee is invisible. We are all equal in this - just some have stepped forward to take a turn on the wheel.

The feedback from the Annual Gathering is such useful information and one of the things we learn from it is that when something in our planning or execution falls short it's because we didn't have enough

people to pull on the rope. That is so easily solved - even right then on the hoof - by someone spotting the shortfall and then filling it!

Someone asked why the buddies were all female as if we had somehow engineered it! Or “Why did a warm up disappear?” When a volunteer or system stumbles, the rest of us can either have a moan or help fill the gap. Any blokes want to be buddies? We would love that. Anyone want to volunteer to help at the Gathering? Brilliant! The more of us there are to help, the less we all have to do.

It's often the same stalwarts who sign up. It's a bit wearing when Gill asks for help come Gathering time and no-one replies. It's a bit like gathering a harvest. You can't do it unless your neighbours come around to help and they can't do theirs unless you help them in turn. It's an old-fashioned way of doing things but exactly right for a network based on love.

So, members/volunteers - Thank you sincerely for being the glue that holds us together, and if you haven't yet volunteered, then welcome aboard. It's a great feeling being able to put something back and it says something important about what it means to be a member of the NVN.

Share the love, Songsters!!

Jules Gibb  
Chair of Trustees.