



UNITED BY
2022

VOLUNTEERS
COLLECTIVE

FINDING PURPOSE AND BUILDING COMMUNITY:

A VOLUNTEER'S JOURNEY WITH THE VOLUNTEERS COLLECTIVE

United By 2022 Charity, a legacy of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, champions the West Midlands by connecting businesses with community groups. Funded by a £5 million investment, it has continued five impactful programmes supporting volunteers, young people, and local grassroots organisations. The charity upskills community groups, enhances their resilience, and focuses on marginalised communities. Through civic engagement and community development, United By 2022 preserves the Games' spirit of pride and inclusivity across the region.

The Volunteers Collective, launched in June 2023, connects dedicated and passionate volunteers with West Midlands event organisers, continuing Birmingham 2022's volunteering legacy and providing opportunities for volunteers to come together to support the region.



We've become a community within a community.
Bali, Volunteer



After retiring, Joan found herself at a crossroads. Her days, once filled with the hustle and bustle of a teaching career, now stretched long and quiet. The Birmingham Commonwealth Games offered her an opportunity to step out of her comfort zone, and she eagerly signed up to volunteer. Little did she know that this decision would spark a profound journey, one that extended far beyond the Games.

Joan's experience at the Games was exhilarating. She was part of an event that brought the city alive, meeting people from all walks of life and witnessing the teamwork that powered the sporting extravaganza. The camaraderie among volunteers and the joy of contributing to something bigger than herself left a lasting impression. Yet, when the Games ended, Joan felt a familiar emptiness creeping back. **"I missed the buzz,"** she admitted. That's when United By 2022 (UB22) stepped in.

The Volunteers Collective, a UB22 Trailblazer programme established as a legacy project of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, offered Joan, and others like her, a way to keep their spirit of volunteering alive. With its easy-to-navigate portal, UB22 presents a variety of opportunities to engage with different organisations and communities, and the events they deliver. For Joan, the Volunteers Collective became more than a platform; it was a lifeline.

Through UB22, Joan signed up for events that challenged her to grow and gave her a renewed sense of purpose. One standout experience was her role in a school triathlon organised by the Brownlee Foundation. "Some of these kids had never done hardly any physical exercise," Joan recalled. **"The look on their faces when they came through that run, it was amazing."**

Her role wasn't just about logistics; it was about cheering on the children, encouraging them, and watching them discover their own strength. It reminded Joan of why she loved working with young people.

For Hardip, another UB22 volunteer, the journey was deeply personal. Having spent years volunteering in different capacities, from music therapy in schools to environmental clean-ups, he saw UB22 as a way to amplify his impact. For Hardip, volunteering wasn't just about giving; it was about the joy and connection it brought to his life.

The collective also became a space for people like Mel, who discovered that volunteering had always been part of her life, even if she hadn't labeled it as such. As a secretary for her local bowls club, she had long contributed her time and energy to her community. The Volunteers Collective, however, opened doors to entirely new experiences. As an ex-primary school head teacher she was thrilled when she was given the opportunity to chaperone young people with disabilities at the School Games in Alexander Stadium, she was struck by the resilience and joy of the young participants.

The social bonds formed through UB22 became another unexpected gift. For Bali, who had initially joined to "get out of the house," she found herself building lasting friendships. "I see familiar faces at every event," she said. "We've become a community within a community." The diversity among volunteers, spanning age groups, cultures, and life experiences, enriched the Collective's dynamic. Hardip noted, **"I've learned so much just by talking to other volunteers. Everyone brings something unique to the table."**

For some, UB22 provided a crucial lifeline during difficult times. Joan shared how volunteering helped her navigate the loss of her husband. ***“He made me promise I’d keep volunteering.... It gave me a reason to get up in the morning and reminded me that life still had so much to offer.”***

As UB22 continues to evolve, its volunteers remain at the heart of its mission. Their stories, marked by resilience, joy, and a commitment to making a difference, inspire others to join the collective. In their own words, ***“Volunteering isn’t just about what you give; it’s about what you gain.”***

Today, UB22 stands as a testament to the transformative power of volunteering. It’s not just a platform for opportunities but a gateway to connection, personal growth, and shared purpose. UB22 volunteers exemplify how giving time and energy can enrich one’s life in unexpected ways. Whether it’s cheering on children at a triathlon, playing music in a school, or simply picking up litter at a community event, the act of volunteering becomes a bridge—connecting individuals to their community and to each other.



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