

Volunteers make a huge difference at LRH

Photo

Driving force: Volunteer Dianne DeGuara helps transport patients to and from the hospital.

On the wards of Latrobe Regional Hospital (LRH) you will find volunteers who visit cancer patients and pump-up tyres on wheelchairs.

It is these little things that make an enormous difference to patients and helps reduce the workload on nursing staff.

Another valuable service run by volunteers is the hospital's driving program in which patients are driven to and from appointments.

Volunteer driver Dianne DeGuara said the service is vital to people who have no other way of getting to and from the hospital for treatment or an operation.

"It may be an elderly person in Moe who has had a hip replacement and needs to attend a physio appointment at the hospital. They may not have a friend or relative to help out, public transport is uncomfortable and a taxi is too expensive," she said.

"Really I don't know what many people would do without the service. It really takes the stress off the patients and gives them a bit of company in the car and helps take their mind off things," she said.

The service is run entirely by volunteers, two cars operate five days a week picking up patients in the Latrobe Valley, East Gippsland and South Gippsland.

LRH customer service officer Pam Galea, coordinates the volunteers. She said volunteers help out in many ways.

"Other volunteers visit the hospital's Macalister unit (nursing home) and take the elderly residents out for lunch. Often they are accompanied by a nurse," she said.

"One lady volunteers her time to patient services and helps make folders and does craft with the patients.

"The volunteers on the chemotherapy and dialysis wards deliver the morning teas and lunches to the patients. The volunteers sit with the patients and bring them magazines and books to read during their treatment," she said.

Jackie Dalrymple, associate unit manager in chemotherapy said the volunteers are wonderful.

"We see them as our guardian angels they are the extra eyes, ears and hands of the unit. They make the patients comfortable and secure, not only the patients they support us as well and they do it in their own special way," Ms Dalrymple said.

"The volunteers see to the comfort of the patients, bring them cuppas and lunch and if we were doing it, it would take us away from closer patient contact," she said.

LRH has 30 volunteers and is in the process of recruiting more.

The hospital will thank volunteers for their valuable contribution by hosting a special dinner during Volunteers Week.

If you would like to become a volunteer at LRH phone 51 73 8003