



Medway African Volunteering Network and the 'African Communities Volunteering Challenge'

HACO, an organization working with African Communities in Medway, are running a project funded by The Peoples Health Lottery. Tina Murphy, Director for HACO, talks about their project:

"Get Involved! Volunteer! This is our organisation's determination to address the low turnout of individuals from the African communities when it comes to volunteering. This volunteering project challenges all Africans in Medway to make a difference by doing "good" in their communities and beyond to make Volunteerism and community service part of your daily life, and part of the life of this community,"

Why don't we Africans volunteer? Here are some of the top reasons:

- *Not feeling qualified- "I don't know what to do."*
- *Afraid it will take too much time- "I am over committed right now as it is."*
- *I have small kids and can't get away-*
- *Not knowing where to go or what cause moves you-*
- *Maybe we don't volunteer because of the WIFFM (What's In It For Me?) factor.*

Here's a reframe: does feeling happier, more contented and satisfied with your life intrigue you at all? Plenty of studies have shown those who volunteer actually have improved health. HACO understands this, and created this volunteer 'network' to get us out of the drone zone, and rolling up the proverbial sleeves. A fantastic start to get you moving

Here's some of the WIIFY (What's In It For You) in volunteering:

Meeting people you never would have met. Volunteering offers a vital experience of putting roots in the ground. Feeling a part of something larger than ourselves can transcend the heavy emotions of isolation and loneliness – even once a month makes a difference.

If formal volunteering is not possible or of interest, does this mean you can't "dare to care?" How about applying the volunteering challenge daily with our families, friends, neighbors and co-workers? Make each day an opportunity to connect with someone in pain, lend a hand before being asked, or spread some joy in the daily doldrums."

You can sign up to find out about volunteering opportunities in Medway through the Medway Volunteering Network website www.mva.org.uk/volunteering – and to find out more about the African Volunteering Network Project contact HACO on 01634844044 or e-mail info@healthaction.co.uk.

