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It's the small differences that count

For Joy Neary, it's the small differences that only she sees which makes volunteering her time worth every second.

For nearly three years Mrs Neary has happily given up her days to provide support and an understanding ear to the residents at Churches of Christ Care's Golden Age Aged Care Services.

Part of the Pastoral Care team at the service, Mrs Neary was thanked last week for her dedication and tireless efforts at a luncheon to celebrate National Volunteer Week.

"On Tuesday and Thursday mornings I go over to the hostel or the independent living units and sit and talk with the residents," Mrs Neary said.

"I am here to support them with whatever they need. Some people like to discuss their Christianity, but some don't want to talk about religious topics at all, they just want to chat."

Mrs Neary said the friendships she had made over the past few years were very valuable to her.

"It has taken a long time to build up trust from some of the residents, but now as soon as I open the door their faces light up and they say 'come on in!'

"I always give them a hug at the end of our chat; because for some of them that is the only human affection they receive."

Mrs Neary said it was the smaller things that showed her the difference she made.

"A few weeks ago I was visiting one of the ladies from the independent living units, whose husband was in palliative care at the nursing home," she explained.

"Unfortunately he wasn't doing very well, and while I was there she got the message to say he didn't have long to live. So I asked the lady if she wanted to go and see him, and she said yes.

"So I brought the car around and drove her there. She sat with him and spent time with him, and I suggested that she say goodbye to him. When we got back to her house, within two hours she received a call to say that he had passed away.

"When I went to see her the next time she said to me, 'oh someone took me to say goodbye to Alex' (her husband), and I said, 'yes that was me.'

"She didn't remember who took her but she remembered she said goodbye to him. So when I have moments like these I know that we are making a difference to people's lives and that gives me great pleasure."

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Aged Care General Manager Jeanette Evans said the organisation's 700 volunteers played a crucial role.

"All our volunteers help out in so many ways and each contributes to enriching the lives of our residents," Mrs Evans said.

"Volunteers bring fresh perspectives and enthusiasm to daily activities and can bring a positive change to the day-to-day living and working experience. Many also bring specialised skills and knowledge, new ideas and a fresh insight to the tasks at hand.

"They are vitally important to us, and we are always looking for more people who may be able to give a few hours of their time, even if it is only once a month. It makes such a difference to the lives of our residents."

National Volunteer Week ran from 9 -15 May and provided an opportunity to highlight the role of volunteers in our communities and to say thank you to them.

Around 40 volunteers from Churches of Christ Care's Lady Small Haven Aged Care Services, Golden Age Aged Care Services, Marana Gardens Aged Care Services, Homesteads Aged Care Services, as well as the Gold Coast Community Care Program and members from the Pastoral Care Team were recognised at the celebration last week.

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About Churches of Christ Care

Churches of Christ Care is a division of Churches of Christ in Queensland—a group of churches that is part of the worldwide Christian church.

We strive to create an inclusive, caring, compassionate environment that meets our clients' needs without discrimination or prejudice. Everyone is welcome to call on our help regardless of their religious background.

Churches of Christ Care is one of Queensland's leading providers of early childhood, child protection, affordable housing, retirement living and aged care services. We are a not-for-

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profit organisation that supports more than 27,000 clients each year in urban, rural and remote areas.

We operate 137 services throughout Queensland with the support of more than 2,800 staff and over 700 volunteers.

Churches of Christ Care is built on a foundation of Christian values, commitment to quality care, and trust and respect for clients and the community.