

## MEDIA RELEASE

November 27, 2009

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### Volunteer workforce invaluable

Managing a large team of volunteers is all in a day's work for Guide Dogs Volunteer Manager Rex Alexander.

The volunteer workforce at Guide Dogs SA.NT in Adelaide has had a rapid expansion in the past two years, growing from 130 to 175 people.

It is estimated that they have performed \$5million worth of unpaid work in the past 12 months, based on base-level pay rates.

"With International Volunteer Day on December 5, we would like to acknowledge our volunteers for their commitment and dedication. We will be holding a simple luncheon as our way of saying thank you." says Rex.

"Guide Dogs wouldn't be able to provide the breadth of free services and programs for people with vision and hearing loss without their help.

"Our costs would rise substantially. A guide dog already costs more than \$25,000 to purchase and train. Imagine how much they would cost if we didn't have our volunteer workforce."

Guide Dogs will begin a recruitment campaign early in the New Year for 35 new volunteer education officers for the Guide Dogs Discovery Centre, a fun, interactive education centre aimed at teaching schoolchildren about preventative eye and ear health care.

The volunteer education officers will take children through the centre, under the supervision of teachers and parent support.

"These will be highly challenging and rewarding roles. They will be affecting the children's long-term health outcomes."

Volunteers will also teach children about the role of guide dogs, which will be enhanced with a viewing area for puppies and training dogs.

Rex says volunteers will be given appropriate training and will assist with test audiences before the centre officially opens to schools on July 20.

Please contact Guide Dogs SA.NT on **8203 8333** for more details or visit [guidedogs.org.au](http://guidedogs.org.au)

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