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Sutherland and St George Hospital volunteers get the thanks they deserve

Grace Volkens, 89, from Cronulla knows a thing or two about helping patients. She has pushed the Kiosk patient trolley through the wards of Sutherland Hospital for 25 years.

She is one of 87 award recipients, with a collective 940 years of service, who will be acknowledged as part of NSW Health Volunteers' Appreciation Day this month. The celebrations will honour the many volunteers who dedicate their time and energy to help others.

Grace Volkens said like many of the volunteers she has had a personal experience with the hospital and as a way of appreciation she volunteers her services.

"Life is about helping people who are not as fortunate as yourself. The most rewarding part of volunteering is seeing the patients smile as you leave their room, and at the end of the day going home and feeling as though you've helped someone in need," Mrs Volkens said.

"I'm proud to be a volunteer at Sutherland Hospital. It's all about giving something back, helping out and hoping we can make a difference."

St George Hospital volunteer Eileen Ellsmore, 79, from Heathcote, is a long-serving volunteer who has clocked up 35 years of volunteer service working at the volunteers' desk located outside the Emergency Department.

Wearing a pink apron and affectionately known as a 'Rose Lady,' Eileen Ellsmore said she finds volunteering to be very satisfying.

"The people I work with, friendships made, and knowing that you're helping people are all highlights of volunteering. Volunteering is about giving back to the community, interacting with people, making friends and feeling you have made a worthwhile contribution," Mrs Ellsmore said.

Cath Whitehurst, Director of Operations at Sutherland and St George Hospitals, said that it was important to acknowledge the 740-strong volunteer force for their valuable contribution to both Sutherland and St George Hospitals.

"Our volunteers provide service, support and good cheer to patients, visitors and staff, with some volunteers giving more than 40 years of voluntary service to their local Hospital. We are indeed very fortunate to have such devoted helpers," Ms Whitehurst said.

"Our volunteers give many hours of unpaid work. We should never underestimate how important they are and the difference they make in helping us provide quality healthcare services to our patients."

Volunteers can be seen working hard in many different areas of the hospitals including patient services, administration, retail outlets, fundraising, retail, general duties and chaplaincy services.

For more information about becoming a volunteer, call 9540 7251 or 9113 2726.