

Citizen volunteers

Just for the love of it

For a city and its services to run smoothly, it's imperative to have a forward-thinking government willing to invest in smart healthcare and law enforcement programmes. Development from the private sector can also play a part in transforming pockets of rundown areas into bustling and friendly neighbourhoods. Yet the buck doesn't stop there. As citizens we must ask what we can do for ourselves and our communities. Here we take a look at the volunteers helping to improve their cities, from saving lives to collecting litter.

1. **Cuerpo de Bomberos** *Santiago*

In the Chilean capital, firefighting is farmed out to volunteers. The Cuerpo de Bomberos de Santiago is mostly funded by private donations and, while the drivers, cleaners and office workers are paid, firefighters do the job for free. Volunteers work nights at firehouses, enjoying a tradition-rich environment between emergency calls.



2. **GoodGym** *UK*

GoodGym's programme is as heartwarming as it is healthy. Volunteers combine exercise with efforts to help the community, capping off 5km sprints with visits to a pensioner's house to help with the gardening. The programme kicked off in 2009, when founder Ivo Gormley began doing odd jobs for a pensioner after his own jogs.

3. **Emergency Response Team** *Wellington*

New Zealand's capital city is precariously positioned near two tectonic plates and surrounded by ocean. Each week, groups of volunteers train in casualty welfare and search and rescue. Started by residents in 1971, the Wellington Emergency Response Team, funded by the city council, is part of the first line of response in a disaster.



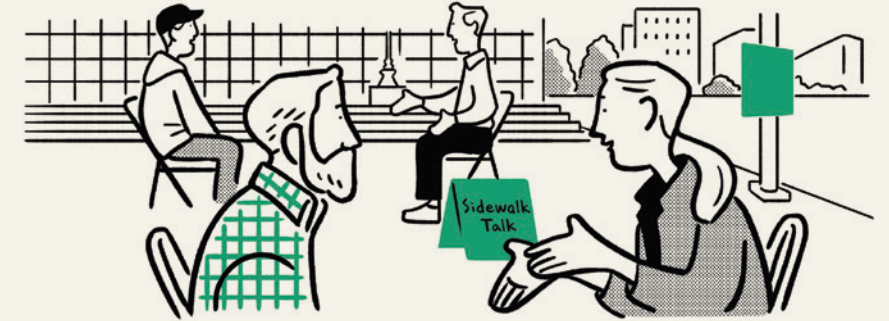
4. **Green Bird** *Tokyo*

Alongside the Goth-Lolis, Forest Girls and other fashion tribes that parade around Omotesando there's a group in green bibs, holding metal tongs and plastic bags. These are the Green Bird volunteers, a litter-collecting non-profit set up in 2003. The initiative has spread across Japan and further afield to Paris, Boston and Singapore.



5. **Sidewalk Talk** *San Francisco*

It's a Friday evening and two rows of chairs are facing each other in a square in the Financial District. What looks like a speed-dating event is in fact an outpost for Sidewalk Talk. In 2014, two therapists gathered 26 colleagues to provide free one-on-one listening sessions. By 2018 the project had 700 volunteers in 19 cities worldwide.



6. **Surf Life Saving Australia** *Sydney*

Helping professional lifeguards patrol 21 Sydney beaches is a brigade of volunteers from the Surf Life Saving Club, which was founded in 1907. The lifesavers in their iconic yellow-and-red caps help to keep the beaches safe and dedicate their Saturdays to training the next generation of lifesavers.

7. **White Hat Volunteers** *Calgary*

Whether you're returning home or visiting a place for the first time, the airport is often your welcome to a city. Calgary's White Hat Volunteers, a group of cowboy hat-clad seniors who traipse through the airport offering directions, not only provide a valuable service but are also the perfect ambassadors for the city.



8. **Joy 94.9** *Melbourne*

Independent radio station Joy 94.9 has built a solid reputation while being run almost exclusively by volunteers. Its success is down to its identity as a true representative of its listeners: the LGBT+ community. Melbourne has long been known as a progressive city and Joy has been a big part of that since hitting the airwaves in 1993.



9. **Paseo Nocturno** *Mexico City*

Every Wednesday since 1998, cyclists have been gathering at 21.00 at Mexico City's El Angel de la Independencia monument to pedal around the city. The Paseo Nocturno (Nocturnal Promenade) encourages cycling in a traffic-choked city. Its volunteers fill in as mechanics and ushers to make sure no one gets lost along the way.

10. **Neighborhood Watch** *New York*

This community-driven watchdog was founded in the wake of a murder in Queens in the 1960s. Residents and shop owners are the eyes and the ears of a neighbourhood and report any suspicious behaviour to local law enforcement. It's proven an effective means to reduce crime and has since gone global.

