

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2004**

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### **The secret of keeping New Year's resolutions revealed**

New research <sup>(1)</sup> shows that although only a fifth of people manage to keep their resolutions, there may be ways to dramatically improve their chance of success.

Almost three quarters of people say they are more likely to stick to a resolution that benefits others, according to a MORI poll commissioned on the eve of the Year of the Volunteer 2005 <sup>(2)</sup>

TV psychological expert, Dr Sandra Scott, who believes that volunteering can help people improve their lifestyle, said:

"Helping others can be a very powerful motivator. Linking your goal to volunteering can help you stick to it and more importantly achieve it."

In the survey of over 1000 British adults 72% said they would be more likely to keep a resolution that has a positive effect on others while two thirds (67%) feel they have a better chance of keeping a resolution if it involves doing things with other people. Two thirds (66%) also said they would rather make resolutions throughout the year.

Dr Sandra Scott (*Big Brother, I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out of Here*) said:

"The vast majority of us fail to stick to our resolutions. This is often because they are inappropriate to our real needs, are unachievable or we lack sufficient motivation. An alternative would be to turn to something that comes with a much better guarantee of improving our lives.

"By being a volunteer and improving the lives of other people we get positive feedback and this motivates us to continue. Increasing your activity levels via active volunteering - a community garden project or helping at a riding centre for disabled children - could be a positive and far more rewarding alternative to just going to the gym."

The research <sup>(1)</sup> found that three in ten people intend to make a New Year's resolution in 2005. Of those people planning resolutions this year:

- 51% want to get fitter and lose weight
- 43% want to spend more time with the people they love
- 42% want to get less stressed
- 40% want to improve their career/ education
- 37% want to take up a new hobby/ learn something new
- 30% wanted to help others or get involved in voluntary/ charitable work
- 27% want to stop smoking
- 12% want to drink less alcohol

Volunteering could help you achieve many popular resolutions. Recent research <sup>(6)</sup> shows it can have a positive effect on people's health, particularly in beating obesity and stress, cutting down on smoking and even improving sex lives! Voluntary work can help you ring fence time with your family – for example, volunteering together at a city farm or hospice; it can also give you confidence or skills for a new career – for example, marketing for a local theatre or supporting children with their reading.

GMTV's Dr Hilary Jones said:

"We are finding out more and more that volunteering is actually good for your health. Other research shows that giving time helps to beat stress and it's clear that keeping physically and mentally active can often improve your state of mind. The research indicates volunteering might help achieve this, especially if it's done on a regular basis."

As part of the Year of the Volunteer 2005, celebrities are making it their New Year's resolution to give time. Celebrities pledging to volunteer include singer Mylene Klass, model Nell McAndrew, personal finance guru Alvin Hall, R&B group Big Brovaz, Davina McCall, and novelist/actor/comedian Alexei Sayle, who already volunteers at a nature park.

Nicola, 28, from South London decided to volunteer at the beginning of 2004:

"I made it my New Year's resolution to volunteer to gain the experience I needed for a new job. Being a volunteer at 'The Squad' which provides fun social activities for young people with learning disabilities, helped me change direction from working at a picture library to a new role at an educational charity called Tree House. I love my new career but I've also carried on volunteering, as The Squad has become part of my life now. I love 'The Squad' and its members and I've made friends with the other volunteers."

This year, don't stop doing something you enjoy, start doing something you'll love. Make a change – try volunteering instead. Go to [www.stopstart.org.uk](http://www.stopstart.org.uk) or call 0845 456 1668 to find out about opportunities near you.

The Year of the Volunteer is funded by the Home Office and will be delivered by two consortiums led by Volunteering England<sup>(3)</sup> and Community Service Volunteers.

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For more media information on the Year of the Volunteer, celebrity quotes, volunteering statistics and case studies go to [www.stopstart.org.uk/YOTVpresspack.doc](http://www.stopstart.org.uk/YOTVpresspack.doc) or call Fiona McBain on 020 7785 6389 or Jason Tanner/Martin Walford on 020 7643 1428 1338. Out of hours please call 07941 433 598. Further comments from Dr Sandra Scott are also available. The official website [www.yearofthevolunteer.org](http://www.yearofthevolunteer.org) will go live on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2004.

#### Notes to Editors

1. MORI interviewed a carefully selected representative cross section of 1,006 British adults aged 16 and over. Data has been weighted to the known profile of the population. Interviews were conducted by telephone between 29 and 31 October 2004.
2. Year of the Volunteer 2005 is owned by volunteers, led by a partnership between Community Service Volunteers (CSV) and the Volunteering England Consortium, and supported by the Home Office.
3. The Volunteering England Consortium consists of Volunteering England, TimeBank, YouthNet UK, The Media Trust, Bitc and Youth Action Network.
4. To find out more about events and activities during the Year of the Volunteer 2005, please visit the official website at [www.yearofthevolunteer.org.uk](http://www.yearofthevolunteer.org.uk) (available from 20<sup>th</sup> December 2004) and watch The Community Channel 24 hours a day on Sky 585 and Telewest 233. It's also on ntl 14 and from 6-9am on Freeview 46.
5. To find out more about how to volunteer in your area, please contact [www.stopstart.org.uk](http://www.stopstart.org.uk) or call 0845 456 1668.
6. A recent ICM poll commissioned for CSV Make a Difference Day found that a quarter of people who volunteer more than five times a year say volunteering has helped them lose weight, while nearly half of all volunteers say volunteering has improved

their physical health and fitness. 48% who have volunteered for more than two years say volunteering makes them less depressed. 22% of 18 – 24 year olds say volunteering helps them cut down on alcohol. Nearly a third (30%) of 18 – 24 year old smokers say volunteering helps them smoke less. 63% of 25 – 34 year olds say volunteering helps them feel less stressed. 62% of over 65's say volunteering reduces stress.

**7. For media queries please contact:**

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