Newcomers lend a hand in their adopted home

Many recent immigrants and new citizens have volunteered during Covid-19, helping with tasks like distributing meals and taking temperatures

Venessa Lee
Founder of Parenting

Mr Radzi Trivedi, 33, has been busy managing teams of volunteers in organising the delivery of groceries, food, meals and other items to foreign workers hurt by the pandemic.

Over the last two years, he has been a full-time volunteer at food banks, helped to organise meals and groceries for migrant workers, and is part of a task force in the pharmaceutical industry.

"After working and living in Texas and California for six years - she took a course in 40-hour electrical engineering and worked in the production department of a semiconductor company - she could see that it was difficult to find a job," he says.

"I was lettering for a purpose. I could identify with that. I had moved abroad to study and work. When you see your family and friends, it's emotionally hard to imagine what they're going through.

Mr Trivedi, 33, was in the US. She misses her support of family and friends to share the challenges and achievements of her job search and career.

"But the best way to get in touch with people was through Facebook and Instagram," he says.

Many recent immigrants and new citizens have volunteered to help out during the pandemic, including distributing meals to vulnerable Singaporeans and supporting local workers.

When she joined as a volunteer in the HMCI, as a response to the pandemic, she says, "I was a little bit lost at first, but I thought it was important to help out in any way that I could."

Singaporeans acquired Singapore citizenship in recent times, even after leaving decades abroad in foreign countries.

"To be able to support my family in times of crisis is really important to me," she says.

Mr Trivedi says that the experience has been very rewarding.

"The drive to help others is something that I've always been passionate about. I've seen how the community has come together in times of crisis," he says.

A student at a local university, she became involved in a volunteer programme at her university.

She says, "Volunteering is something that I've always wanted to do, but I never had the time to do it before."

New Citizen Lim, 32, was a volunteer with the Volunteer Hub in February, helping to organise "coronavirus" relief.

"I was in the US and I wanted to help out. I saw that there were a lot of volunteers who were needed," she says.

Family is top factor in deciding whether to take up citizenship

Mr Radhakrishnan Balakrishnan, 43, took close to 30 years to become a Singapore citizen. He moved to Singapore on a job offer in 1990, but the recession of 1997 delayed his plans for a permanent resident five years later. Two years after his 40th birthday, his wife Balakrishnan saw, from Tamil Nadu in India, they have been married for 30 years now.

"We decided to become Singaporeans in 2008," he says. But the family decision was not without its challenges.

Mr Balakrishnan says that his family was not fully on board with the decision, but he believes it was the right choice for their family.

A Spokesperson for the People's Association (PA) says many volunteers from grassroots organisations and community programmes, as well as volunteers from migrant associations, took part in activities like temperature screening and essential goods distribution in community centres during the peak of the pandemic.

"We are really proud of our volunteers who have contributed to the fight," the spokesperson said.

A volunteer, 47-year-old housewife, was inspired to volunteer in Singapore after her husband, who works as a consultant, said that it was important to give back to the community.

"I feel that if we want to make a difference, we need to start at home," she said.

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