

# ORDINARY PEOPLE. EXTRAORDINARY TIMES.

*Photographic Series*



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Volunteer Now Chief Executive**

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# INTRODUCTION

2020 has been a year like no other. Who could forget the striking images from across the world of overcrowded hospitals or the harrowing images of people falling victim to a new and deadly coronavirus – COVID-19.

Here in Northern Ireland, we have also experienced loss and we continue to feel the pain that coronavirus has inflicted upon our society. My heart goes out to every individual who has lost a loved one and to those who continue to live with the long-term effects of this terrible disease.

Thanks to the combined effort from the Executive, public health agencies, partners, businesses, and the people of Northern Ireland, we will emerge from this crisis stronger than ever. But the impact of Covid-19 will be felt within communities across Northern Ireland for many years to come.

Life as we know it changed forever in March 2020 when the Northern Ireland Executive announced a public lockdown and restricted social and business activity in an effort to halt the spread of COVID-19. Overnight, our lives were turned upside down and we awoke to find ourselves in a brave new world.

## AND WE WERE BRAVE. EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US.

We all have our own personal story of life in lockdown but for most of us the enduring memory will be those months when we were unable to hug our loved ones or visit our elderly relatives. For the vulnerable in our society, those memories are of a time of fear, uncertainty, isolation and loneliness.

## BUT EVEN IN THE DARKEST DAYS, THE SPIRIT OF THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND SHONE THROUGH.

Across Northern Ireland, food bank packers, prescription delivery drivers, soup kitchen workers, telephone befrienders and even online children's storytellers, volunteers rose to the challenge and united communities through their actions. Many of these roles are still continuing.

In the 10 years that Volunteer Now has been established in Northern Ireland, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly been our greatest challenge and we

are immensely proud of the work of the volunteers in helping to navigate this crisis.

As future generations look back on this unprecedented period of time, we want to ensure the effort of Northern Ireland's volunteering community is celebrated and remembered.

During the summer of 2020, Volunteer Now embarked upon a photography project to capture volunteers in action at **a time when ordinary people did extraordinary things.**

On behalf of the entire team at Volunteer Now, I am humbled to now unveil the result of this work and present to you the *Ordinary People – Extraordinary Times Photographic Series.*

The series is a fantastic testament to the spirit and generosity of the people of Northern Ireland and is our way of saying a huge thank you to the dedicated volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations who continue to make Northern Ireland a better place.

Each year, voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland do work worth more than half a billion pounds, but the herculean effort of the COVID volunteers has been priceless.

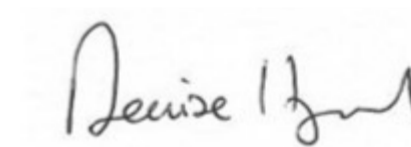
From all of us to you, the volunteers... a heartfelt thank you.

As Northern Ireland continues to grapple with the greatest health and economic crisis in living memory, I wish each and every one of you good health and prosperity.

I hope you enjoy this photographic series. May you look back upon this period of our history with a sense of pride at the unwavering resilience of the people of Northern Ireland and our humbling capacity for compassion in the face of adversity.

COVID-19 may have kept Northern Ireland apart, but its people stood together.

Denise Hayward



Chief Executive Officer,  
Volunteer Now

[www.volunteernow.co.uk](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk)





# BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

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# BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

## NORTH AND WEST BELFAST SOUP KITCHEN

North and West Belfast Soup Kitchen provided a hot meal every day for members of the community.

"We set up the soup kitchen to provide nutritious meals for members of the community. We soon had 50 volunteers, including chefs and drivers. The guarantee of at least one meal a day reassured members of the community and they were always happy to see us arrive with a friendly face."

*- David Aruitage, Volunteer*





# BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

## BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Belfast City Council coordinated a multi-agency response with the help of the Red Cross and SOS Bus to deliver over 50,000 food parcels to the most vulnerable people in the city.

"Delivery of the food parcels provided a lifeline to vulnerable members of our community. The food distribution programme also gave our volunteers a way to take action and make a meaningful contribution during the pandemic. The hard work and resilience of the volunteers is a credit to the city of Belfast."

- Alison Cooper, Distribution Hub Manager at Belfast City Council





# NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

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# NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## HEAD INJURY SUPPORT

Aiabha Loughran, 6 year old resident of Newry, cycled every day in June covering 80km, to raise funds for Head Injury Support, and simultaneously raise awareness of the importance of wearing a helmet.

"The COVID-19 crisis has severely impacted the fundraising efforts of many charities, including Head Injury Support. Aiabha's amazing cycling challenge raised over £1,800 which will help us continue supporting people in the local community who have an acquired brain injury."

*- Aune Murphy, Service Development  
Manager at Head Injury Support*





# LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

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# LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

## SOUTH EASTERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST VOLUNTEERS

South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust Volunteers supported shielding patients by picking up and delivering cardiac monitors, enabling them to have cardiac investigations safely at home.

"Volunteer contact was very positive for our patients. Not only did our service keep them safe and healthy, but it also helped to combat the loneliness and isolation felt as a result of shielding."

*- Souya Duffy, Volunteer Services Manager at South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust*





# LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

## DRUMBO COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

Drumbo Community Action Group met regularly to support the people in the Drumbo area by packaging and delivering vital food boxes as well as providing companionship.

"Many days our deliveries took longer than expected because people who were isolating were so happy to have company. We often stayed longer to have a chat with them through the window, or from a safe distance. Volunteering brought our community closer together."

*- Jill Conn, Volunteer*





# ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBIEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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# ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## FARESHARE NI

FareShare NI redistributed surplus food from industry, equating to 475,000 meals delivered to those in need across April, May and June 2020.

"As demand for our services soared during the pandemic, our volunteers were essential in helping us to combat food poverty and food waste. Using spare time to help others during the pandemic is something all our volunteers can be extremely proud of."

*- Siobhau Rocks, Volunteer Co-ordinator at FareShare NI*





**ARMAGH CITY,  
BANBRIDGE  
AND CRAIGAVON  
BOROUGH  
COUNCIL**

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# ARMAGH CITY, BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON BOROUGH COUNCIL

## ARMAGH RURAL TRANSPORT

Armagh Rural Transport delivered necessities such as food and medication to local residents, personal protective equipment (PPE) to local nursing homes and breast pumps from the charity Tiny Life.

"Everyone was impacted by the pandemic, which encouraged volunteers to do what they could to help. Many people we helped were so grateful for support as they weren't used to having to stay indoors."

*-Diane Irwin, Project Manager at Armagh Rural Transport*





# ARMAGH CITY, BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON BOROUGH COUNCIL

## CRAIGAVON AND BANBRIDGE VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Craigavon and Banbridge Volunteer Centre undertook over 11,000 deliveries of essential supplies to people in need during the lockdown period, as well as providing counselling services to those struggling with feelings of loneliness or fear.

"There is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer. Our community came together to make a difference at a time when an invisible enemy left people very vulnerable."

*- Douua Stewart, Manager at Craigavon and Banbridge Volunteer Centre*





# MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL

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# MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL

## COALISLAND COMMUNITY COVID-19 RESPONSE GROUP

Coalisland Community COVID-19 Response Group delivered food parcels, personal protective equipment (PPE) and prescriptions to people who were shielding.

"The pandemic revealed that there were a lot of vulnerable people who needed support, as well as underlying poverty. Coalisland has an amazing community spirit, and people really stepped up to the plate to help those people in whatever way they could."

*- Councillor Dau Kerr*





# ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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# ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

## VOLUNTEER BIKERS NI

Volunteer Bikers NI delivered life-saving prescriptions to shielding members of the community across Northern Ireland.

"Our riders were ready and waiting to help- we started deliveries the day after lockdown was announced. The people we helped were so grateful to receive their medication as they hadn't had their essential prescriptions delivered on time as a result of the pandemic and the pressures placed on pharmacies. We were entirely self-funding and encouraged donations to NI Children's Hospice by way of thanks."

*- Paul Johnson, Co-Founder of Volunteer Bikers NI*





# CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL

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# CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL

## AGE CONCERN CAUSEWAY

Age Concern Causeway launched the Community Care in Action initiative, offering telephone befriending services, grocery delivery and prescription collection for local residents.

"Volunteers are the lifeblood of this organisation. With their hard work and sacrifice, we were able to provide 7,500 acts of service during lockdown. We helped to combat fear, anxiety and confusion in older people, as well as working together with local businesses to provide essential services."

*- Fergal Quinn, Manager at Age Concern Causeway*





# CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL

## LIMAVADY VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Limavady Volunteer Centre offered a range of services to people in need including dog walking, newspaper delivery, food and meal deliveries and companionship.

"As the crisis worsened, we immediately put in place a volunteer response prior to the lockdown announcement. We had 32 volunteer coordinators and over 300 volunteers to help people in need."

*- Councillor Ashleen Schenning*





# FERMANAGH AND OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

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# FERMANAGH AND OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

## HOME-START OMAGH

Home-Start Omagh supported families with young children across Omagh by providing food parcels and telephone support services.

"Many of our volunteers have families themselves and they know how tough it can be. We wanted to provide practical help during the pandemic, so we started the food deliveries and offered emotional support over the phone."

*- Alison Spriggs, Coordinator at Home-Start Omagh*





# FERMANAGH AND OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

## OAK HEALTHY LIVING CENTRE

Oak Healthy Living Centre provided one-to-one calls, essential deliveries and the community outreach Fun & Fitness Project.

"The pandemic left people feeling disconnected from their family, friends and community. Our volunteers came together to help others in their time of need, using the time to help reconnect with their community."

*- Davina Coulter, Health Promotion Coordinator at Oak Healthy Living Centre*





# MID AND EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL

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# MID AND EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL

## MILLBROOK COMMUNITY CENTRE

Millbrook Community Centre supported the elderly, vulnerable and shielding members of the community by providing food parcel deliveries.

"Our volunteers went above and beyond in reassuring shielding members of the community that they weren't alone, making sure they felt supported and connected as well as ensuring they had enough supplies of food and other vital items."

*- Councillor Gregg McKeen*





# DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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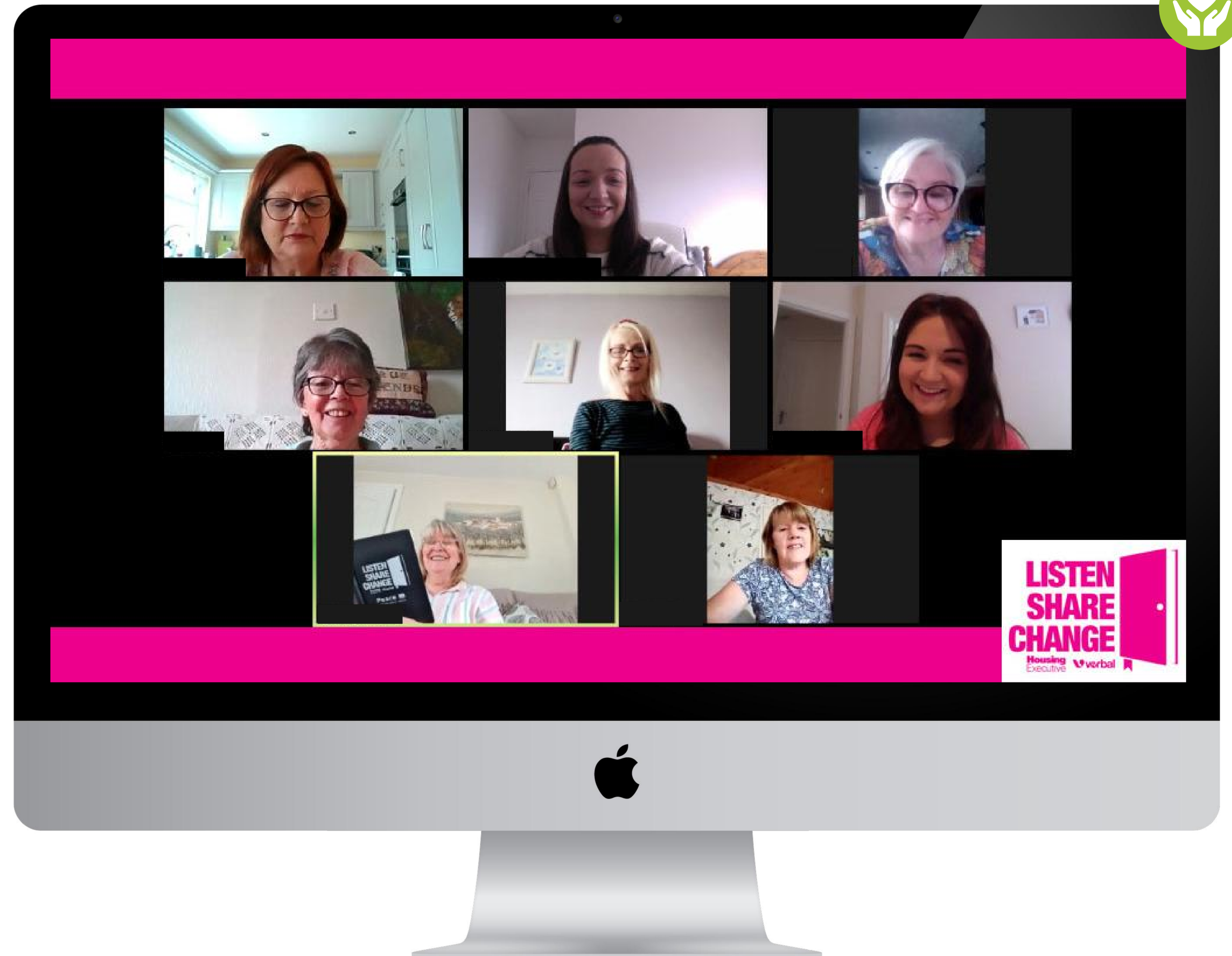
# DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

## VERBAL ARTS CENTRE

Verbal Arts Centre kept storytelling and conversations alive, entertaining children and adults alike right across Northern Ireland through their virtual online art sessions.

"Our sessions helped both our volunteers and service users to combat social isolation, all whilst feeling safe. Online video technology kept us all connected and encouraged children and adults to stay creative and engaged during lockdown."

*- Holly Clements, Volunteer Coordinator at Verbal Arts Centre*





This publication is a snapshot of the incredible volunteering and social connection which emerged during the pandemic and which continues to enrich our communities every day.

THANK YOU



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