

Red Connect



ELAINE IN A VAUXHALL 12. ELAINE OWNED A SIMILAR CAR WHEN SHE FIRST STARTED DELIVERING MEALS ON WHEELS IN THE 1960S

Six decades of kindness: Elaine's Meals on Wheels journey

After nearly 60 years delivering Meals on Wheels, Elaine Utting, QSM, still isn't ready to hang up the keys.

Elaine first started volunteering in early 1967, after seeing a call for Meals on Wheels volunteers while she and her husband were building a house in Takapuna.

"I knew nobody in Takapuna at that stage, so I thought to myself, 'Oh, that's something I could do,'" she says.

What began as a way to contribute to her new community soon became a lifelong commitment. Over the years, Elaine has delivered thousands of meals, taken on coordination roles and introduced generations of her family to volunteering.

Her two young sons accompanied her on deliveries in the early years, often chatting with recipients while Elaine delivered meals from her Vauxhall 12.

"One was four, one was one," she recalls. "I found that the older people living on their own, they just loved talking to the children."

Her mother also joined her on deliveries, later volunteering herself into her mid-80s. Elaine's

grandchildren and great-grandchildren have joined her during school holidays, helping count meals and read addresses.

"I think it's taught them compassion," Elaine says. "It's shown them that there are people in need."

Over six decades, Elaine has seen Meals on Wheels change dramatically. In the early days, meals were delivered in reusable metal containers.

Today, the process is much simpler, but one thing hasn't changed: the importance of human connection.

"Sometimes we're the only people they see all week," Elaine says. "They like the daily contact."

That connection is at the heart of what makes Meals on Wheels so special. And it's made possible by people who give their time, alongside supporters like you who help New Zealand Red Cross continue this vital service.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Because of you, volunteers like Elaine can keep showing up for people in their communities, delivering not just a nutritious meal, but a friendly face and a moment of connection.

As Elaine approaches her 60th anniversary as a Meals on Wheels volunteer, she has no plans to stop. These days, she delivers meals with a friend and says she'll keep going for as long as she can.

"I've still got my licence and I still drive. I don't see why I have to give up," she says.

Elaine has shown what one person can do when they choose to keep showing up for others.

And because of you, that kindness can continue, one meal and one visit at a time.



ELAINE WITH HER GRANDSONS, SHARING A LIFETIME OF SERVICE



RED CROSS RED CRESCENT RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE ONGOING VIOLENCE

Humanity in the Hardest Places

Your partnership is one of the quiet, generous acts that helps keep humanitarian work moving — here in Aotearoa New Zealand, and through the wider Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement around the world.

Recently, we spoke with Felicity, a New Zealand nurse who spent nine months in Gaza with the International Committee of the Red Cross.

She worked as deputy health coordinator for health programmes, supporting teams delivering care in one of the most difficult places imaginable. She is home now, back among the green hills and quiet beauty of New Zealand, but Gaza is still very close to her.

She speaks about her time there with honesty and great tenderness.

"My nine months in Gaza was the toughest, toughest time of my working career, both mentally and physically. And it also was probably the most amazing time of my working career."

That sentence holds so much of what humanitarian work can be. It can be exhausting and heartbreaking, but also full of courage, hope,

teamwork and the simple act of walking alongside someone who needs you.

At the Red Cross Field Hospital in Gaza, Felicity saw what happens when a health system is stretched beyond anything most of us could imagine.

"We had pretty much daily mass casualty incidences. The smallest one was 40. The biggest one was 244."

These were not numbers on a page. They were people arriving injured, frightened and in need of care.

To help us comprehend the scale of the situation, Felicity compared it with something familiar:

"If you can picture going to your primary health care facility and having 3,000 people through a day, it's unbelievable."

Imagine your local clinic suddenly trying to care for thousands of people in one day, while supplies run low and more people keep coming through the door.

Some of Felicity's memories will stay with her for the rest of her life. One is of a child she met during a day of terrible pressure at the hospital.

"I do not know his name. I do not know his age. But I do know that I was holding his head when he died."

There is no easy way to read those words. But they remind us why care, dignity and presence matter so much. Humanitarian work is not abstract. It is a person being there, in the hardest moment, so another person is not alone.

Felicity speaks with deep respect for her colleagues in Gaza, many of whom were living through the same crisis as the people they were caring for.

"I see my Gaza colleagues who are living this nightmare, supporting and giving dignity to people that are dying."

They had families, worries and losses of their own. Yet they kept turning up.

Your support helps keep this spirit alive. It helps make sure Red Cross can be ready before crisis strikes, present when people need help most, and steady when the world's attention begins to move elsewhere. You are part of that. You help make it possible.

Felicity is clear that when attention shifts, life does not suddenly become easier for the people left behind.

"Just because the onus is off Gaza and on to another situation doesn't mean to say that the lives in Gaza are any better."

People still need health care, clean water, medicine and places of safety. Injuries, fear and loss do not fade simply because the headlines do.

Felicity's story is a reminder that behind every humanitarian response are people caring for people — often in circumstances that are difficult to comprehend. Your support can help make that care possible. Thank you for being part of a movement that chooses to help people through their darkest days.



RED CROSS DELEGATION TALKS TO A YOUNG MAN INJURED IN AN EXPLOSION



FELICITY SITS DOWN TO REFLECT ON HER TIME IN GAZA

A New Beginning Made Possible by You

Elie was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country he loves deeply, but violence and insecurity forced his family to flee. For 12 years, they lived in a refugee camp, far from everything they had ever known.

Your support helps families like Elie's find safety, dignity and hope when they arrive in Aotearoa New Zealand to begin their lives again.

Food was scarce. Their ration was barely enough to last a month, and then the family was taken off the food list altogether.

They began going whole days without eating. Elie's wife, caring for their two-month-old baby, struggled to get through each day.

When the rain came, their mud-brick house leaked so badly they moved from room to room, chasing a dry corner.

"I suffered a lot," Elie says. "I have never experienced any suffering like that in my life."

Every night, his eldest boy, Primo, would ask the same question: When can we leave?

Elie is not a helpless man, and he would not want to be seen as one. His story is one of courage, leadership and generosity.

Even under severe restrictions, he found ways to help others.

He started a small rabbit-farming project, provided young rabbits to people with little support, taught families to grow vegetables in sacks, founded a community health promotion organisation dedicated to improving health, hygiene, and well-being in the camp, and taught himself English late into the night.

This is who arrives in New Zealand: an extraordinary father and his family, carrying courage, skill and determination after unimaginable hardship. What they need from us is a warm Kiwi welcome and a helping hand for the first stretch of their settlement journey.

That is exactly what your support helps provide.

Each year, New Zealand Red Cross teams help around 850 people begin new lives here. They meet families on arrival, help them enrol with a doctor, find libraries



and community centres, navigate buses, and support children through their first days at school.

It is practical help, but it is also something deeper: someone walking alongside them while everything is unfamiliar.

When Elie's family reached Masterton, the Red Cross team was ready. They had asked what the family would like to eat and arranged for another Congolese family to prepare the meal.

After more than a month of eating little more than maize and boiled eggs, Elie's family sat in their new home and ate until they were full.

"Being in a community where people respect human dignity, where our family lives safely, means a lot to me," Elie says.

That is the Kiwi welcome your generosity makes possible. And for families beginning with almost nothing, small acts of care can mean everything.

Elie's story is not finished. He is determined to find work, contribute to his new community, and build a secure future for his children. One of his sons, who lives with a disability, is now starting to receive support the family could never access in the refugee camp.

Thank you for standing with families like Elie's as a Humanitarian Partner. Your ongoing support helps turn insecurity into safety, uncertainty into confidence, and a house into a place a family can finally call home.



**HUMANITARIAN
PARTNERS**
Together in every hour of need

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