Volunteer Voices: Celebrating Belfast's Creative Extremists

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Volunteer Voices, a two year oral and social history project undertaken by VSB (now Volunteer Now) and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, has recorded and preserved the story of volunteering in Belfast during the forty years: 1967 to 2007.

Rita Harkin, member of the Heritage Lottery Fund Committee for Northern Ireland, said: "This exciting project has captured the memories and experiences of ordinary people whose selfless and often inspirational actions have brought real benefits to local communities right across the city for generations. The exhibition is a fantastic way to acknowledge and celebrate their contribution and will help to raise awareness of this previously untold part of our unique social heritage."

Volunteer Voices has provided the opportunity for individuals, ordinary people who did extra-ordinary things, to tell their story; to have it preserved as a golden nugget of Belfast's positive social history in difficult and challenging times.

Against the background of violence and hardship that was part of every day life in Belfast during those years, there ran in parallel the admirable, selfless, passionate, enthusiastic and enduring ethos of volunteering. At the very heart and core of it all were 'the people' whose stories, until now, had remained untold, undiscovered and unrecorded. It was these people who in small ways and large ways, engineered positive change and made a difference, impacting on their neighbourhood, the wider communities and ultimately Belfast as a whole.

Speaking at the event Bill Osborne, Director of VSB, said: "Volunteer Voices – Belfast's Creative Extremists is a collection of individual stories of personal acts of volunteering during Belfast's fractured past. In the midst of economic gloom and despair it is a timely reminder that single acts of compassion when seen collectively demonstrate the resilience of the human spirit in times of adversity and are powerful acts for good. The hope that these individuals brought to many through their precious gift of time is immense. As we celebrate their contribution they challenge and call upon us all to become 'creative extremists'."

The Exhibition is open at Square Space Gallery, 34 Shaftesbury Square Monday to Friday 9 am to 4 pm.