



2022 Impact Report

Primary Ethics



THINK · REASON · DISCUSS

Primary
ETHICS

Primary Ethics

Our mission

To support children to develop skills in ethical reasoning, critical thinking and respectful discussion by enabling community volunteers to deliver ethics classes in public primary schools.

Acknowledgment of country

Primary Ethics recognises the traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which we work. We pay our respects to Aboriginal elders past, present and emerging and celebrate their ongoing connections to the lands and waters of Australia.

Our values

-  **Respect**
We create learning environments in which children practice respectful discussion.
-  **Integrity**
We employ robust recruitment and screening practices to ensure the integrity of our volunteers and the highest standards in child safety.
-  **Independence**
We provide a secular learning environment in which students of all faiths or no faith can learn together.
-  **Excellence**
Our teacher training and curriculum are continuously improved to ensure excellence in the classroom.
-  **Teamwork**
In ethics classes children learn that ethical issues are more easily understood by talking with others than by thinking alone. Members of the school and broader communities work together to provide ethics education for children.



A message from the chair



2022 was quite an extraordinary year. Natural disasters and the pandemic played havoc across Australia and certainly proved challenging for delivering ethics classes in NSW schools. We are very proud of what was achieved as we rose to the demands of these turbulent times.

Primary Ethics was established to give schoolchildren the space to explore ethical dilemmas. In NSW public schools, a timeslot is set aside each week for teaching ethics at the same time as scripture.

We all have our own values and moral compasses, our own characters. Primary Ethics classes provide a safe space for children to think hard, share their ideas and learn from each other.

Just by discussing big ideas, children improve their critical thinking skills and ability to empathise with others.

This report highlights just some of our work in 2022 across our core areas of recruiting, training (both online and in person) and organising volunteers, our new high school program, a review of our core program in action and our trial in Western Australian schools through the Constable Care program. We also feature the Kinghorn award for outstanding volunteer for which we are so proud to have inaugurated in the last year. That's just some of what was achieved in 2022.

A big thank you to all our committed volunteers and the wonderful staff and Board of Primary Ethics who have worked tirelessly in very difficult conditions. Also a grateful thank you to our valued financial supporters who help make our mission a reality.

It's an honour to bring you this 2022 impact report. Enjoy reviewing the year.

Bruce Hogan AM
Chair of the Board of Directors
Primary Ethics Ltd

“Just by discussing big ideas, children improve their critical thinking skills and ability to empathise with others.”

About Primary Ethics



We are an independent not-for-profit organisation and the sole approved provider of ethics classes to NSW public schools. Ethics classes are delivered free of charge.

In the lessons, children listen to a range of stories and scenarios pitched at their age level and then share ideas on what they think they ought to do in these situations. The focus is on students developing the skill to identify ethical issues and to think critically in developing their own reasoned opinions, as they engage in respectful discussion with the other children.

Children develop skills that are essential in our complex, pressurised world – giving evidence-based reasons for their opinions, being able to disagree without putdowns and the steps for making well-considered decisions.

Thousands of volunteers from all walks of life and of all ages teach ethics classes in their local schools every week. We offer our volunteers

free training, full lesson materials and ongoing support. We rely on parents, grandparents and people who are community minded. It's a rewarding way to get involved, learn new skills and have a positive impact for the future.

Research demonstrates¹ that there are positive flow-on effects from the style of education employed in ethics classes. These include significant improvements in student performance in aspects of numeracy and literacy².

At Primary Ethics we are working towards giving all NSW parents and carers the option of choosing ethics classes for their child.

¹ primaryethics.com.au/references

² primaryethics.com.au/about-us/


The year at a glance

Your support in numbers

2700  Volunteers in schools

43,000  Students taught


500  Schools with ethics classes


91  Curriculum topics updated

70,000  Lessons to students


81  Classes reviewed


12,000  Staff and volunteers since 2010


23  Average days from initial application to commencing volunteering in a school


690  New teachers trained

7  Brand new lesson topics introduced

96  New teacher training sessions held
- 16 face-to-face sessions
- 80 online sessions


13  Team of skilled trainers grew to 13

12  New high school teachers trained

4000  Pieces of valuable feedback given by our volunteers

Our reach

16,000  Supporters reached through our communications

1400  Members of the Primary Ethics Facebook group

The year in review

Our volunteer program thrives

Despite a year of disruptions, we sustained a widespread and vigorous volunteer program in 2022. Thousands of dedicated Primary Ethics volunteers generously provided their time and skills every week in term time. It was an invaluable commitment from local communities to the children in their schools.

The number of schools offering ethics classes grew to 500 and the number of schools with classes across all education stages was 180, an increase over previous years. Our goal remains to help more schools offer ethics classes across all years.

The Primary Ethics curriculum is divided into four stages to mirror the NSW system across the seven years of primary school – Early Stage 1 is Kindy, Stage 1 is years 1 and 2, Stage 2 is Years 3 and 4 and Stage 3 is Years 5 and 6. We have two full years of curriculum for Stages 1, 2 and 3. Our new high school program is Stage 4, across years 7 and 8.

“Teaching ethics is the best thing I do all week. It is so enriching.”

“Being an ethics volunteer is rewarding, thought-provoking and fun. You’re sure to learn as much as the children do.”

Training

In 2022 we ran 96 new-teacher training sessions, including 16 face-to-face sessions and 80 online sessions. As a result, we trained 690 new teachers, equipping them with valuable facilitation and classroom management skills. Additionally, we trained 12 new high school teachers, allowing our high school program to continue to grow. Our team of skilled trainers grew to 13 in 2022.

“I am motivated to continue teaching ethics to ensure that this opportunity is available to as many students as possible in years to come.”



The team from Bourke Street Public School in inner Sydney. We were especially pleased to hear that they were presented with their certificates showing years as an ethics volunteer at the end-of-year assembly. This is a school which shows that it values its ethics program and appreciates the volunteer contribution.



Curriculum

Our curriculum aims to give students from kindergarten into high school the opportunity to discuss and think for themselves about ethical issues relevant to them. Volunteer ethics teachers use highly detailed lessons to deliver this. We aim to help students develop a deeper understanding of ethical issues and develop skills in ethical reasoning, critical thinking and collaborative inquiry.

In 2022 we significantly enhanced our curriculum by updating 91 topics (each topic may hold anywhere from three to four weekly lessons) as part of our commitment to continuous improvement. We also introduced seven brand new topics. These new topics challenged high school students to consider environmental ethics, civic responsibility and more. Additionally, our post-lesson reporting system allowed us to collect more than 4000 pieces of valuable practical feedback from teachers, which greatly informed our curriculum review process.

Online training grows

Online training, which we fast-tracked during the lockdowns, continued to prove its value, providing faster access to training to those outside the Sydney region, as well as eliminating travel expenses for trainers.

Smaller groups meant trainers were able to closely monitor trainee learning and provide more targeted feedback. Our ability to deliver this as and when needed displayed how nimble and responsive we are as an organisation.

We are particularly proud of the consistently high evaluations and excellent feedback we received from our participants, both for the content of the training and for the support and inspiration from our trainers.

“Possibly the best structured and most professionally delivered training course I have ever attended.”

“I was amazed with how much practical training was present and how ready I feel now to take the class.”

The year in review



High school program

After a successful pilot teaching ethics to Year 7 students in three schools in 2021 (Fort Street High School, James Ruse Agricultural High School and Katoomba High School), our high school ethics program continued to grow in 2022. We delivered lessons for Year 7 and Year 8 students at our pilot schools and added classes in two more schools (Brisbane Water Secondary College, Umina Campus, and Inner Sydney High School). We held face-to-face training workshops for two more groups of new volunteer high school teachers to keep up with the need for more teachers and relief teachers. The author team and curriculum review team were also busy – writing, reviewing and submitting more Stage 4 topics to the Department of Education for age appropriateness. We look forward to even further expansion of our high school ethics program in 2023.

“The lively discussions which emerge from our high school classes give me confidence that the future of our world is in good hands, with such engaged ideas and opinions countering the common thought that young people will be unable to cope with the legacy they’ll inherit.”
Kevin Farmer, ethics teacher

“The skills children are learning are helping them navigate modern day living. Things have changed so much in the last few years and our younger generation need to feel empowered to speak up and provide evidence for their arguments, all of which ethics classes encourage.” *Kevin Farmer*

Program review

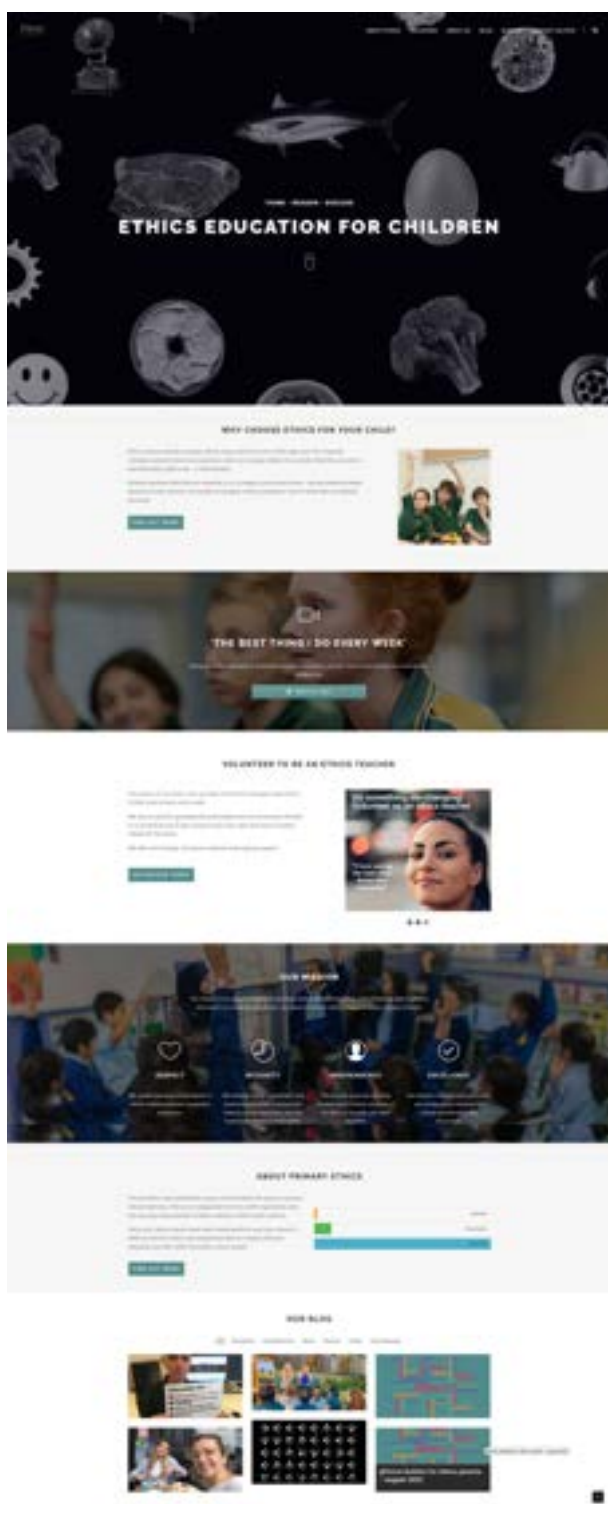
In 2022 we reviewed our ethics program in action, visiting more than 80 classes to observe our dedicated volunteers delivering lessons. The review found that our program is in good health and that thought-provoking and rigorous ethical discussions are taking place statewide. We were thrilled to discover that student engagement was particularly high, and the great majority of classes observed were rated satisfactory or exceptional in terms of the quality of the community of inquiry and level of student engagement. The review also identified opportunities for further professional development and ongoing teacher support, which we will actively pursue in 2023 to ensure the continued success of our program.



Our new look website

During 2022 we undertook a long overdue overhaul of our Primary Ethics website, with the invaluable help of ethics volunteer and web developer Adam Bennett. In November 2022 we launched our revitalised site, which

provided lots of new engaging information about our program. It is a much more immersive and visually fresh user experience for volunteers, supporters and the public.



SCAN TO VISIT
WEBSITE

Recognition awards



In 2022 we were delighted to announce the inaugural Kinghorn Award for a Primary Ethics volunteer, which is based on peer recognition and appreciation for the often unsung efforts of our wonderful volunteers. The shortlisted nominees for the 2022 Kinghorn Award:

- Margaret Crowther** – Canowindra Public School
- Nicky Heap** - Vincentia Public School
- Jim Neely** – Monaro area
- Derek Russell** – Blue Mountains area
- Swee Goh** – Ryde area
- Penelope Jope** – Umina Beach Public School
- Bryce Hawley** – Wyrallah Rd Public School in Lismore
- Denise Palmer** – Armidale area
- Luke McElnea** – North Sydney Demonstration School
- Sandy Grekas** – Oatley area (recently retired)
- Faith Weisbrot** – Clovelly & Crown Street Public Schools
- Jill Hennessy** – Hurstville & Connells Point Public Schools

The award went to ethics volunteer **Swee Goh**, regional manager for the Ryde district in northwestern Sydney, who is an inspirational role model for our whole Primary Ethics organisation. The award also meant substantial prize money for the recipient’s chosen school and Swee decided to split this money. Firstly she chose a school in her Ryde region, Smalls Road Public School, for its strong commitment to and support of the ethics program.

Swee also wanted to give to a school that had been badly affected by floods – that school is Mullumbimby Public School in the northern rivers. This school was closed and non-operational for several months in early



Swee Goh

2022 while they waited for flood waters to recede and basic repairs to be made. Children were reallocated to attend nearby schools. The school is now open again, but has been functioning at minimal levels as not all classrooms are operational. Obviously, there was no ethics program at all in 2022, though we are hoping to restart in 2023. Thanks go to Swee for nominating such a deserving school outside her region. We’re very grateful and impressed that she chose to assist students in a disaster-affected area. Not just ethics students but all children at the school will benefit.

“Swee you truly deserve to win the Kinghorn Award – to be recognised and valued for the wonderful work you do and to acknowledge and celebrate the amazing person you are!”

Primary Ethics Northern Rivers Area Manager

Reflections from two outstanding volunteers

We asked Kinghorn award nominees Margaret Crowther and Leah Seed to reflect on their time in the classroom in 2022. Here is what they told us:

Margaret

What do you think your Primary Ethics classes achieved for the children in 2022?

The community of inquiry formed by the children in each lesson really works. The students definitely benefit from practising their critical thinking skills in an environment which is free of adult judgement. The discussions help them expand on the ideas brought up by the curriculum and as they talk to each other they become more rational about what is okay and not okay.

What did you enjoy most about teaching in 2022?

I loved hearing our children actually display better leadership thinking than many of our current politicians, CEOs and other leaders. It gives me hope for the future.

Leah

What do you think your Primary Ethics classes achieved for the children in 2022?

The simple act of sitting in a circle and learning to listen and speak to the whole group is surprisingly more difficult and also more valuable than it would first appear. At the end of the year, some of my students articulated that being listened to felt good, they really liked this in ethics classes. One student remembered a fable from two years ago!

What did you enjoy most about teaching in 2022?

Teaching is hard work, but I really value the ethics program and I want that opportunity for my kids, so I've stayed on as both a teacher and volunteer coordinator to make this possible at our school. It's great when one of the kids gives a particularly insightful or thoughtful response and I'm reminded again why I value doing this. Some of my favourite times are when students start to engage with each other, like the 'aha' moment when they saw that an outspoken student was being contrary for the sake of it and a fellow student turned and said "but what are your reasons?"



2022 Kinghorn Award nominees featuring Leah Seed

Our staff reflect on high impact ethics

In 2022 the Primary Ethics staff grew to 23, most of us part-time. Nearly all staff came to the organisation via volunteering for their own children at their local school and continue to teach ethics while working for us.



Anuya

"After two years of no ethics lessons because of the pandemic, I found it particularly rewarding to teach the younger children who had never had ethics before.

It felt great to introduce them to sharing ideas, collaborating and learning to disagree – but respectfully."

Anuya

"The children in my class clearly loved ethics – it made them think hard about subjects they'd never considered before and look at issues from all angles.

I found it extremely rewarding when every child in my class, including those with special needs and those with English as a second language, eventually spoke up with their ideas – and everyone else listened to them."

Susan

"I felt it was a great grounding experience for children who have had to face so much upheaval over the past few years due to Covid and lockdowns, with constant change and uncertainty.

Having a voice, a say in the discussion, gives children a sense of power and connection. I believe that provides them some much needed hope and a greater sense of their own autonomy.

My greatest joy came from the difficult students in my classes. The ones that were in ethics class for the first time and demonstrated neuro-diverse behaviours and struggled to focus and contribute in a productive manner.

I watched one child in particular. I watched him listen and learn, I watched him become interested and I watched him start to contribute to the discussions and become more vocal and confident in his contributions. He was so keen to be part of the discussions by the end of the year."

Marbecc

Ethics goes to Western Australia

“Can you imagine a society where children have grown up thinking ethically, reasoning their decision-making processes, with critical thinking applied to everything they encounter in terms of the life challenges that are thrown up for them? With the ability to empathise with other people and see other people’s point of view? We would see an enormous change in society if we could make this program grow to a size where it has that impact,” says David Gribble.

David is CEO of long-established West Australian child safety organisation Constable Care. In 2020 Primary Ethics partnered with Constable Care to develop an ethics program for Year 5 students in 12 primary schools in Western Australia. Interrupted by Covid, the program ran for two school terms, but was deemed a success. That successful trial led to ethics continuing in WA in 2022 and expanding to more schools later in the year.



David Gribble, CEO Constable Care

“The program is a must have. It has the potential to completely change the social landscape of WA for generations to come. The skills the children are learning are highly valuable and will stay with them for the rest of their lives.” *Principal of WA school trialling the Primary Ethics program*



What do the children think?



"In ethics, you need to think a lot."

"In ethics I have learnt to share meaningful ideas with my friends."

"Ethics classes helped me have conversations with people with differing views on complex topics such as climate change."

"If you listen to others talking about their ideas, your own idea will probably get better."

"What I like about ethics is that you have an opinion, but when someone else speaks it might change your opinion, so it gets your brain working."

"In ethics you can argue – which is fun!"

"Sometimes you get to play games, sometimes you act in scenarios and sometimes we get to answer really fun questions, so we get to really have fun in ethics, that's what I like."

'We get to say our ideas and not get interrupted!'

"I like that all opinions are valid, everyone has their own and that's okay."

"My favourite thing about ethics is that everyone gets to speak and participate."



"You can say your ideas without getting criticised."

"Ethics has made me feel more confident and happier to share my opinion."

"When I started ethics I thought it'd be boring, but now I get excited for my ethics class!"

"I enjoy hearing different points of view."

"Ethics has helped me to be more thoughtful and to give more thought to reasons and actions."

"Ethics has helped me share my feelings."

"I learned about the spaces between the words."

"Ethics has helped me feel more prepared for high school."

"I've become better at listening."

"It is good to see how we can be so different and yet so the same."

Our supporters



We are extremely thankful for the generous support of people who share our passion for getting children thinking deeply and well. To enable our amazing volunteer cohort to be recruited, trained and receive ongoing support we rely on donations from individuals, organisations and foundations.

Meet our 2022 significant supporters

Without the belief and support provided by these extraordinary individuals and organisations, Primary Ethics simply would not exist. We cannot thank them enough for their contributions and their firm belief in the benefits our classes offer to Australian school children.

Kinghorn Family Foundation

Hogan Family Foundation

James Chen

Cameron and Georgiana McCullagh

Rob Keldoulis

John Gerahty

Brennan Family Foundation





Meet our ethics champions

We have had many generous supporters since day one. Together they laid the foundations for our ethics program. We always seek to acknowledge their contribution to our growth. Significant contributors include:

Kinghorn Family Foundation

Berg Family Foundation

Hogan Family Foundation

Paradice Family Foundation

Christopher Cuffe Foundation

Ainsworth Family Foundation

James Chen

Rob Keldoulis

Vincent Fairfax Foundation

Hunt Family Foundation

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How you can help



Primary Ethics is a registered charity that receives no government funding. We are funded solely by donations from many generous supporters, large and small. You can donate via GiveNow, Australia's giving platform for not-for-profit organisations like ours.

There are many other ways to get involved with Primary Ethics. You may choose to volunteer, organise workplace giving, become a corporate partner or leave a gift in your will.

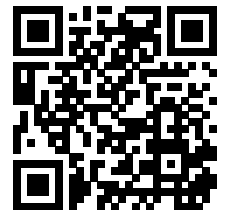
All donations over \$2 are tax-deductible.

Reach out to us today and help us to help children think, reason and discuss.

W www.primaryethics.com.au

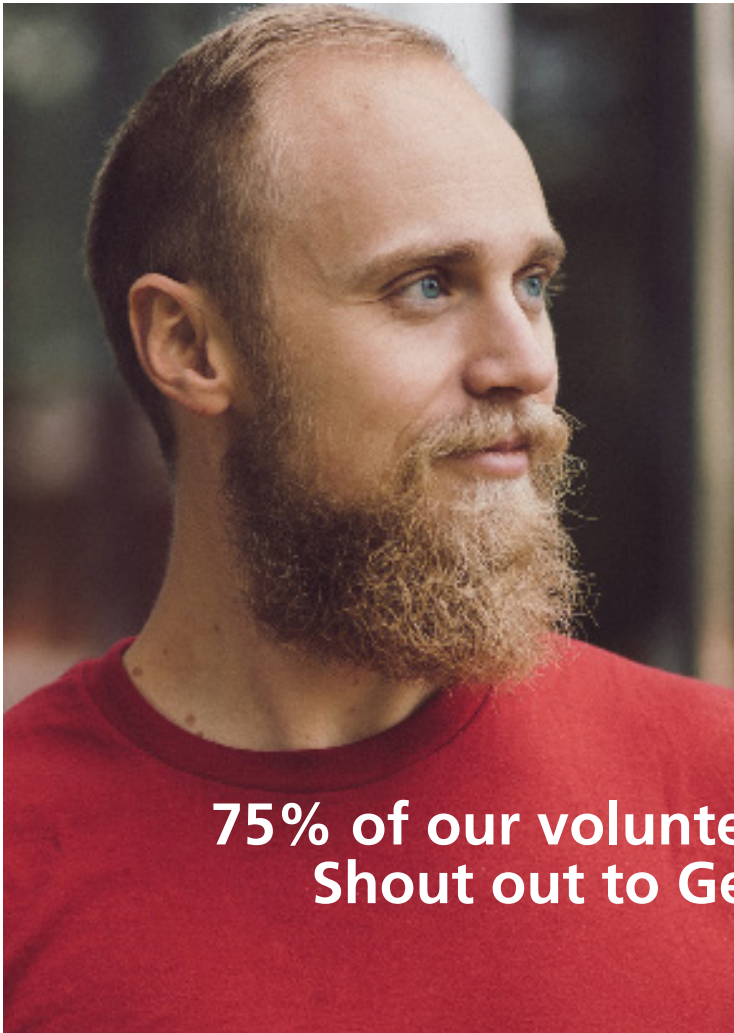
P (02) 8068 7752

Email helpdesk@primaryethics.com.au



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**75% of our volunteers are aged 30-60.
Shout out to Gen X and Gen Y!**

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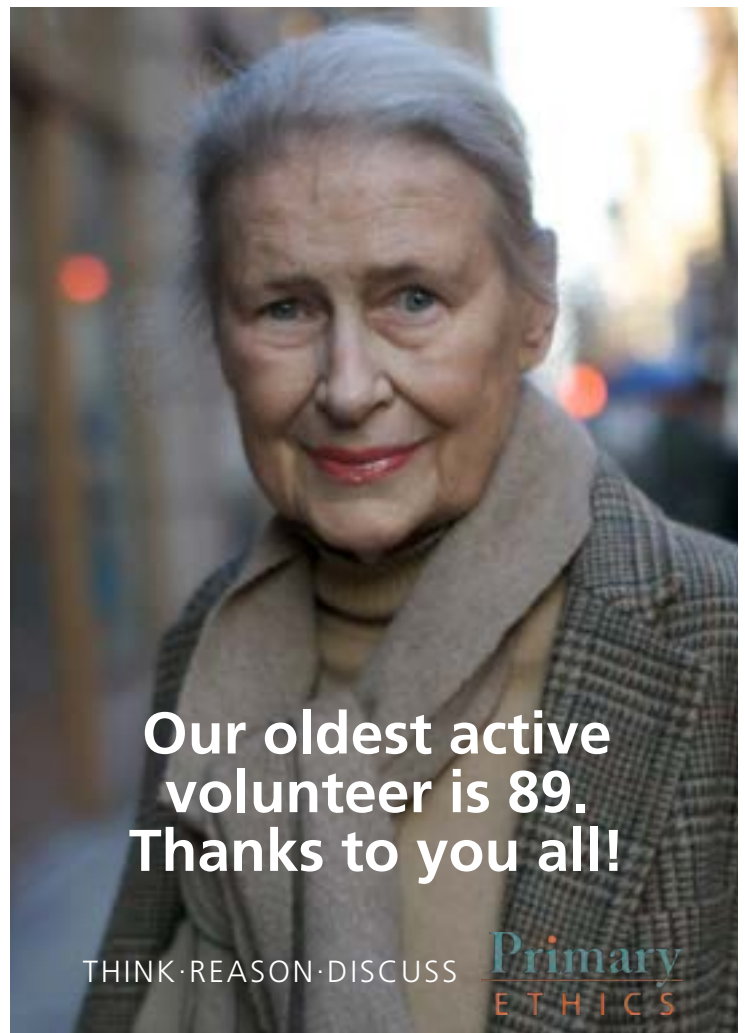


**Do something
life changing
in 2022!**

**Volunteer
as an ethics
teacher**

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**Our oldest active
volunteer is 89.
Thanks to you all!**

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