

# CILT's Volunteer Vibes

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## Welcome New Volunteers

We would like to extend a warm welcome to Tao Zhu as our newest volunteer. Tao is a good friend of another one of our volunteers, Yan Chen, and has been looking forward to volunteering at CILT for quite some time. Tao is from China and has been living here for about eight years. She speaks Mandarin and English but is very anxious to improve her English speaking skills.

Tao has a Bachelor's degree in Finance from Amoy University in China, and worked in China as a Personal Banker. She will be volunteering Tuesdays from 11-3. Please help her feel welcome as she is very shy. I am pleased that Tao will be joining our team of volunteers.

## A Fond Farewell to...

It's always difficult to say goodbye to any of our volunteers. Yan Chen, who has been with us for over a year has decided to go back home to China for a while to visit her family. We will miss Yan immensely and we wish her every success in her future endeavours.

## New Canadians and Volunteering

*Produced by Volunteer Canada, 1998.*

New Canadians bring a wealth of experience to our country. Volunteer-involving organizations can offer new Canadians the chance to gain Canadian work experience, to practice language skills and to integrate into a new community.

Adjusting to a new life in Canada can be challenging for many recent immigrants. For new Canadians, volunteering is one way to practice new language skills, build social networks, gain Canadian experience, and develop a sense of attachment and integration to the new community. The combination of language classes, often available with settlement organizations and school districts, and volunteer experience can assist the individual in adapting to her/his new environment.

An important priority for managers of volunteers is to ensure that the volunteer opportunities available are suitable for new Canadians and provide both personal development opportunities while ensuring the needs of the organization's clients

and mission are met.

Those who choose to serve their community while adjusting to a new country or while searching for paid employment, enjoy the many secondary benefits of voluntary action. Volunteering is viewed as a powerful vehicle for personal growth and career development.

The profile of the volunteer has changed dramatically over the past decade. According to Volunteer Ottawa, in 1997 36% of volunteers interviewed were not employed, 32% were under 24 years of age, and **one third listed neither English nor French as their first language**. Non profit organizations continually face the challenge to develop the capacity to provide opportunities to volunteers with limited English language skills. While being aware of the growing needs of these diverse communities, organizations struggle to meet their needs due to limited resources.

### Canada - No Work Experience?

*By Thelma O'Connor ([info@canadawise.com](mailto:info@canadawise.com)) from Canada Wise.*

This is a dilemma that many immigrants face when they arrive in Canada. New arrivals are enthusiastic to join the Canadian workforce and make a smooth transition to their new life. They suddenly find themselves faced with what seems like a no-win situation; no Canadian work experience – no job; no job - no Canadian work experience!

It seems clear that most employers here will ask for Canadian work experience. What exactly does this mean? It usually means that employers want to see at least one to two years of work experience in Canada or in a Canadian work environment (which may include working for a Canadian employer in another country). Employers want to see that potential new employees are aware of 'Canadian workplace culture and work practices' and that candidates know about their field of work in a Canadian 'context,' so that they can quickly become effective on the job.

How do you prepare yourself adequately to overcome these obstacles? Some research prior to your arrival in Canada may well assist you to make a faster and more successful transition to your working life here. Before you arrive in Canada, try to find out the answers to the following questions:

- What do Canadian employers expect from the people they hire?
- What are some common Canadian work practices?
- What is Canadian workplace culture?
- What are the Canadian labour market trends in your area of work?

Becoming established in any new country can be challenging, and experience is key. If you cannot find paid employment immediately upon your arrival, there are still a number of ways to gain valuable work experience and build contacts. Here are a few suggestions:

- Conduct information interviews: Identify Canadian companies similar to your current/previous employer. Information interviews will give you valuable local knowledge about your industry and may lead to further contacts.
- Volunteer your time with a local employer.
- Get involved by volunteering in your local community organizations. Most newcomers are naturally focused on gaining paid employment as quickly as possible, but it is imperative to understand the pivotal role that volunteering plays in Canadian society. In Canada, one in three people volunteer their time and employers often expect to see volunteer work noted on a resume.

As a newcomer to Canada, volunteering will give you local references and an opportunity to gain valuable insights into Canadian workplace culture. Although it will not guarantee you a job, it is often a route to finding out about job openings and it is highly regarded by many employers who are looking for candidates who care about their community. A growing number of employers accept volunteering as a valid part of work history.

### **Why Volunteer?**

**It's a good question with many answers...**

*Excerpted from "Volunteering Works," Volunteer Canada. 1999-2002.*

### **Giving and Receiving**

When you volunteer, you give part of yourself--your time, energy, skills and feelings. You give to your family and friends, to your neighbours, to your community. Sometimes, you are giving to people you don't know, to people thousands of miles away.

Giving is one of the reasons why people volunteer. Their contributions to others and to their communities bring them feelings of self-fulfillment and the knowledge that they have made a difference.

Volunteering is also a way of saying thank you. It's a way of recognizing the countless others who, in big ways and small, have made life richer and better through donations of time and effort. But there is more to volunteering than giving. As a volunteer, you also reap personal benefits and enhance your personal growth. You:

- increase social awareness

- learn through service
- enjoy better health
- gain self-confidence
- discover your strengths and talents
- build a sense of independence
- expand your social circle

And volunteering gets you ready for the workforce. By volunteering you:

- develop skills
- gain work experience
- explore career options
- develop a job-finding network

With a strong résumé and new skills, you'll find it easier to strut your stuff to prospective employers, fill out university or college application forms, talk to scholarship or bursary officers, or take on more challenging volunteer positions in the community. That's the thing about volunteering. You get as much out of it as you put into it! And often, you get a whole lot more.

### **Enhance Your Personal Growth**

Volunteering goes beyond your career search. You will find volunteering fulfilling in many other ways.

### **Enhance Social Awareness**

As a volunteer working with others, you'll learn to appreciate and work with people's differences. As a result, you'll stay in touch with your community, its needs and issues. Your social awareness will grow through real experience.

### **Learn Through Service**

Service-learning refers to "helping" activities undertaken by students as part of the regular school curriculum. Service-learning offers young people opportunities to try new tasks and to take on new roles. It is active learning in the familiar environment of the local community. (And often, it gives you a terrific chance to compete in job markets after graduation.)

### **Enjoy Better Health**

Volunteering can give your mind, soul, heart, and body a jump-start! You'll be happier and healthier and have a purpose and greater sense of self-satisfaction. Volunteering can even lower your stress level, heighten your immune system and help you sleep better at night.

Many people report feeling healthy and content as a result of their volunteer activities. Go ahead. Give it a try.

### **Gain Self Confidence**

One advantage of volunteering is that you get practice adjusting to new situations, people and experiences. The more practice you get, the greater your self-awareness and self-confidence. You develop the confidence you need when faced with new situations involved in looking for paid work!

### **Discover Your Strengths and Talents**

Volunteering can reveal hidden talents. You may be able to assume responsibilities or take on challenges you didn't know you were capable of.

### **Build a Sense of Independence**

Volunteering empowers you. Many volunteer jobs require you to act independently and take initiative. Such jobs give you a sense of control over your own life: you set your goals, make your choices and follow your routines. When you know your capabilities, you have the power to change your life and the lives of others.

### **Expand Your Social Circle**

Ask some volunteers why they work without pay. They'll probably say they work for the fun of it. Yes, volunteering is usually fun. Remember, volunteers have chosen their jobs carefully and are appreciated for their contributions. They're doing something for the love of it. Volunteer at a music festival and you'll meet people who love music. Volunteer at a hospital and enjoy the rewards of giving comfort. Volunteer with a community theatre and exercise your talents - not just in acting but in lighting, sound, construction, directing, costumes, makeup, sales and promotion.

### **Canada Quiz**

*Canada Quiz 4; [www.esl-classroom.com](http://www.esl-classroom.com)*

Choose the best answer for each question. When you have finished all the questions, check the end of this newsletter for the answers.

1. When did the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms become part of the Canadian Constitution?

- 1867
- 1905

- 1982
- 1878

2. What two fundamental freedoms are protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

- Freedom of religion and freedom of expression
- Equality rights and freedom to bear arms
- Basic freedoms and the right to own property
- The right to volunteer and pay taxes

3. Who has the right to apply for a Canadian passport?

- Canadian citizens
- Landed immigrants
- Visitors
- British subjects

4. Who has the right to enter and leave Canada at will?

- Visitors
- British subjects
- Landed immigrants
- Canadian citizens

5. What does equality under the law mean?

- Being the same
- Being like everyone else
- Being discriminated against
- Protection against discrimination

6. What does "mobility rights" mean?

- Being able to move.
- Being able to live and work anywhere in Canada.
- Being able to work.
- Being able to drive a car.

7. What are the two official languages of Canada?

- Inuit and French
- English and French

- English and Metis
- Metis and French

8. Where do most French speaking Canadians live?

- Ontario
- Nova Scotia
- Quebec
- Prince Edward Island

9. Which province has the most bilingual Canadians?

- British Columbia
- Prince Edward Island
- Nova Scotia
- Quebec

10. Which province is the only official bilingual province?

- New Brunswick
- Quebec
- Ontario
- Prince Edward Island

See the end of this newsletter for the correct answers.

Score = \_\_\_\_\_

### Disability Awareness Corner

*Information provided by the Health Information Centre at Toronto Western Hospital. Published by McKesson Clinical Reference Systems; 1991-2001, McKesson Health Solutions LLC.*

What is **osteoarthritis**? Osteoarthritis, also called "degenerative arthritis," is a disease that causes the breakdown of the cartilage in joints. Normally, cartilage acts as a smooth, cushioning material inside joints. In osteoarthritis, the cartilage becomes rough and flaky, and small pieces break off. The bone surface of the joint also becomes rough and irregular. As a result, movement of the joint becomes painful and difficult.

Osteoarthritis occurs most often in weight-bearing joints such as the neck, lower

back, knees, and hips. It also often affects the fingers.

Osteoarthritis is three times more common in women than in men. It begins to appear in middle age. By age 60, most people have some osteoarthritis, although it may be too mild to cause symptoms.

### **How does it occur?**

Osteoarthritis is caused by excessive wear on joints. Obesity, bad posture, old injuries, and overuse can all cause extra wear on joints. Heredity also appears to play a role.

### **What are the symptoms?**

The symptoms include:

- mild to severe pain in a joint, especially after overuse or long periods of inactivity, such as sitting for a long time;
- creaking or grating sound in the joint;
- swelling, stiffness, limited movement of the joint, especially in the mornings;
- weakness in muscles around the sore joint from lack of use; and
- deformity of the joint.

### **How is it diagnosed?**

Your doctor will review your medical history and examine you. Your doctor may also order blood tests and x-rays. A sample of fluid in the joint may be taken with a needle to confirm the diagnosis.

### **How is it tested?**

The aim of treatment is to keep the joint working by reducing strain on the joint and by relieving pain, stiffness, and swelling.

Generally acetaminophen is the best medication for pain relief in osteoarthritis. If it is not effective, low doses of aspirin or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, Nuprin), can be used by those who can take these types of medicines. If acetaminophen does not work, see your doctor for more guidance and evaluation.

Rubbing anti-inflammatory or deep-heat creams over the arthritic joint can sometimes be helpful. Putting an ice pack on the joint once or twice a day can also help relieve pain. Doctors also sometimes inject steroids into the painful joint.

If you are overweight, your doctor may recommend that you lose weight by

eating fewer calories, by increasing your physical activity, or both.

Physical and occupational therapy can help you have normal movement again. Regular gentle aerobic exercise is also very important for controlling osteoarthritis. Sometimes severely damaged hips and knees are surgically replaced.

### **How long will the effects last?**

Unfortunately, osteoarthritis is a lifetime disease that can worsen over time. Avoiding repeated injury to your joints can help, but damaged cartilage cannot repair itself.

### **How can I take care of myself?**

Although no one yet knows how to prevent osteoarthritis, you can help prevent symptoms by following these guidelines:

ü Keep your joints in good working order. Stay fit. Do any exercise recommended by your doctor or physical therapist for posture, muscle strength, and joint mobility. Daily moderate exercise is much better for your joints than occasional strenuous exercise. Walk a little each day, if you are able. Be sure to wear comfortable, well-cushioned walking shoes. Otherwise, you can exercise while sitting down or by going swimming. The water in a warm swimming pool can help support your weight while you exercise, and the warmth helps improve joint movement.

- Protect your joints by doing warm-up exercises before strenuous activity.
- Use a knee pad to protect your knees when you are kneeling.
- Take the medication that your doctor recommends for controlling your osteoarthritis.
- Keep your body healthy by eating a healthy, varied, low-fat diet.
- Follow your doctor's recommendations for weight control.

## **Community Events**

### **Connections 2005**

**Connections 2005 – The 6th Annual Resource Fair for Persons with Disabilities** is being hosted by Erinoak in partnership with the Peel/Halton Dufferin Coalition for Persons with Disabilities on *Saturday May 7, 2005* at Saint Famille Secondary School at 1780 Meadowvale Blvd. in Mississauga (corner of Derry and Meadowvale Blvd., second light East of Mississauga Road). Meet representatives from Peel and Halton service agencies. Mark your calendars now. For more information contact Jon Greenaway at (905) 491-4361.

## **W.D.A.A.G Movie Night**

**W.D.A.A.G. for Women with Disabilities and their Women Allies** presents "Iron Jawed Angels" movie and munchie night on Friday, April 22, from 6-9 PM, at the Anne Johnston Health Station - 2398 Yonge Street (at Montgomery). Attendant services will be provided. RSVP by April 18 to Lucy at (416) 486-8666 x226.

## **ICE (Independence Community and Empowerment) Canada 2005: "Living Well: Beyond Existing"**

*By: Tracy Shepherd, Thames Valley Children's Centre, London, Ontario*

### **What is it?**

ICE Canada is a conference inspired by the Pittsburgh Employment Conference held annually in the United States. The Inaugural ICE Canada conference occurred in April of 2002 at Geneva Park in Ontario and was an overwhelming success. This is a conference that is given by and for individuals who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). The aim is to come together to learn information, share ideas and create new friendships, which was certainly the case during ICE 2002.

One participant of ICE 2002 commented that the conference "seemed to be a good forum for people to air feelings, mix socially and enjoy themselves in a lovely and natural setting that was easily accessible." Nora Rothschild the conference committee Chair described it as a magical and almost spiritual experience. Many participants described the weekend as a life changing experience. It left all who attended on a natural high!

### **Where and when is it?**

The Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy is sponsoring this event, which will be held this year in Toronto, Ontario at the Travelodge Hotel, Keele and 401, and will occur April 8th, 9th and 10th, 2005.

### **What happens there?**

A group of dedicated and hard working individuals compose the ICE conference committee with membership from Ontario March of Dimes, Speaking Differently, clinicians from AAC centres around Ontario and of course AAC users. The program committee is busily developing a list of speakers on the following topics:

- Recreation / Leisure / Travel
- Sexuality / Marriage / Dating / Relationships
- Aging with a Disability
- Spirituality / Death / Grieving
- Advocacy / Rights / Independence

Once the speakers are finalized you will find a complete listing on the ICE website [www.iceconference.ca](http://www.iceconference.ca) .

The pinnacle of the conference will be the **Town Hall Meeting**. There will be a discussion chaired by an individual who uses AAC. During this meeting only individuals who use AAC are allowed to talk. Each consumer at the 2002 conference made at least one comment during that afternoon. Penny Kitchen, ICE 2002 participant from Halifax, Nova Scotia claimed that, "it was more about getting to know people and how each person was different in their own way."

In addition, the main social event will be the observational play **Broken Speech** performed by Speaking Differently, which is about how one tries to survive in a world that is primarily based the spoken word. Broken Speech is a vivid, hilarious and insightful commentary on how one person is able to regain his once lost voice.

The entire event will be amazing for all who are able to attend. I know I wouldn't miss it for the world!

For more information about ICE 2005 or to register please go to [www.iceconference.ca](http://www.iceconference.ca).

## CILT News

Some major changes will be taking place at CILT over the next few months. Don Barrie, CILT's Resource Coordinator, will be leaving at the end of April. Don has been at CILT for over 3.5 years. We wish Don every success in his future endeavours.

Staff are on the move. Kimberly McKennitt, PDN coordinator, will be moving to extension 34. Rolita Siu, PIC coordinator will be moving to extension 23.

## Answers to Canada Quiz:

1. 1982
2. Freedom of religion and freedom of expression.
3. Canadian citizens
4. Canadian citizens

5. Protection against discrimination
6. Being able to live and work anywhere in Canada
7. English and French
8. Quebec
9. Quebec
10. New Brunswick

*CILT's Volunteer Vibes* is a quarterly publication of the **Peer Support Program**. If you are interested in volunteering at CILT, please call Nancy to request a Volunteer Application Package.

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**Volunteer Vibes** is also available on audiotape.

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