

CILT's Volunteer Vibes

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Welcome New Volunteers

Please welcome our newest volunteers: Jeanne Gomy, Shirin Huang and Christene Rowntree. Each of them will be coming in on a regular basis to assist staff with clerical tasks. We look forward to getting to know them better and we are glad to have them with us.

A Fond Farewell to...

It is with sadness that we bid farewell to Joyce Lustgarten and Lioudmila Tilikainen. As always, there must come a time for every volunteer to move on to new and exciting phases of their lives. We wish them both much success and happiness in their future endeavours. Thank you for everything.

Volunteering, A Traditional Canadian Value: The History of Volunteerism in Canada

©Janet Lautenschlager, Voluntary Action Program

IN 1996, VOLUNTEERING IS A WAY OF LIFE FOR MANY CANADIANS. The spirit of volunteerism is rooted in the traditions and values of the pioneers who built this country, and it is inspired by the concept of mutual help and co-operation that lies at the heart of our Native societies.

Although enormous amounts of volunteer time have been devoted to humanitarian causes over the years, history has yet to chronicle these endeavours. The terms "volunteer" and "volunteerism" may never have been used by some of the people whose activities are described. Today, we apply these terms to the community involvement of countless Canadians who have acted of their own choice to meet a need without concern for monetary benefit -- people who have translated their sense of civic responsibility into action.

When added together, the day-to-day efforts of Canadian volunteers over the years have met countless human and social needs and show what can be accomplished through the active involvement of ordinary citizens.

In recognizing the contributions of volunteers from a historical point of view, we hope that modern-day volunteering will become more visible and will achieve its full potential in years to come.

Volunteer Spirit in Canada: A deeply rooted tradition

As Canadians, we have a long tradition of voluntary action in pursuit of our social goals. Over the years, volunteering has mobilized enormous energy for the common good. While the direct effects of volunteer work are felt at the individual or community level, the cumulative action of many millions of ordinary citizens from every region of the country has had a profound impact on virtually every aspect of Canadian society -- and has, in fact, fostered its growth and development.

Volunteers are ordinary citizens who have chosen to become involved in providing a needed service, solving a problem or advancing a worthy cause. Recognizing a particular need in society, they make the effort to translate ideals into reality without thought of payment.

The traditions upon which Canada was founded and built have influenced the development of our spirit of volunteerism. Beginning with the Native communities and continuing with the European settlers and immigrants from other parts of the world, there has always been a strong emphasis on hard work and self-reliance and on taking responsibility for our own life and actions.

Thinly scattered across a vast land and tested by an often inhospitable climate, Canadians have also been nurtured on an understanding of the benefits of mutual assistance. From the Desjardins credit unions that began in Quebec in 1900 through the diverse farming cooperatives that were established in Western Canada at the beginning of the 20th century to the Antigonish Movement that gave birth to a variety of cooperatives in Atlantic Canada in the 1930s, Canadians have relied on each other for survival and progress.

There has always been an equally strong tradition in Canada that fostered a sense of responsibility to our neighbours and a concern for all our fellow citizens in need. And, with growing awareness of the impact of chronic poverty, prolonged illness and disabilities, and of the crises that can result from natural disasters and economic events beyond our control, Canadians have become increasingly sympathetic to the idea that none of us is self-sufficient all of the time.

In our modern society, volunteers supply the human energy that drives many thousands of voluntary organizations and community groups across Canada. Today, some 5.6 million people express their concerns and interests through volunteer work for countless organizations in a wide range of fields. In addition, approximately 13 million Canadians do volunteer work on their own, outside of organized groups.

The Evolution of Our Voluntary Sector: A distinctly Canadian phenomenon

Most volunteer organizations have been inspired by compassion or a sense of injustice. The past 125 years have seen the birth of countless voluntary organizations in health care, social services, and many other areas, all of which involve volunteers as founders and supporters -- both as board members and as front-line volunteers.

While some forms of organized volunteer activity were adapted from European and, later, American and other models, others were “made in Canada” responses to our own particular needs. Yet, as an expression of our own social values, the evolution of volunteerism and the voluntary sector in Canada is unique.

Many of the earliest initiatives in health care and social services in Canada were taken by organizations led by public-spirited citizens. In most of our early communities, it was the voluntary effort of ordinary citizens, often working through their religious or cultural institutions that led to the establishment of orphanages, hospitals, and homes for the aged, as well as to the creation of health and welfare agencies that worked with families to provide much needed assistance.

As the value of these programs was proven and the financial burden of supporting them became too great for private philanthropy alone, government (at first the municipalities, then the provinces and, later, the federal government) responded to public demand and eventually assumed responsibility for key aspects of the health and welfare system.

Voluntary organizations mirror the times in which they exist, and their role in human services today has expanded and diversified accordingly. Although government at all levels now supports a variety of programs to ensure what is known as the social welfare safety net, private volunteer organizations remain a vital and highly visible component of the vast network of programs and services on which communities rely.

While volunteers have always played an integral role in social welfare, health care and disaster relief, voluntary activity is not restricted to the field of human services. Through advocacy groups, volunteers have shaped our vision of a more just social order. They have also been the backbone of our political system. In the modern era, they are actively involved in such areas as sports and recreation, arts and culture, education and training, and environmental protection.

Don't miss the next issue of *Volunteer Vibes* for Part II of “The History of Volunteerism in Canada.”

Volunteer News from Around the Globe

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Thailand's anti-flu weapon: Nosy neighbors by Thomas Fuller February 13, 2006. Benjapad, Thailand: Three years ago, they were doting mothers in this small farming village framed by rice and sugar cane fields. But when their sons died from bird flu, Jongrak Boonmanuch and Jiranuch Suwannasingha joined an army of volunteers marshaled by the Thai government to fight the disease, a system that is today praised by international health officials.

Thailand has mobilized about 750,000 volunteers, one for every 15 rural households. They regularly advise neighbors never to touch a sick-looking bird with bare hands. They teach friends to stay on alert for birds that spend too much time sitting still, have untidy feathers, swollen necks or feet with red spots - all possible symptoms of avian influenza, according to a government pamphlet.

And they check up on neighbors when they get sick.

"To me it seems awfully impressive," said William Aldis, the representative of the World Health Organization in Thailand. "This is something that all over the world we've been trying to promote. And this is probably the best example that I've ever seen."

Countries such as Vietnam, China, Cambodia and Laos, by contrast, have much less sophisticated ways of tracking the disease. Health experts say if bird flu ever reaches a point where human-to-human transmission is possible, early detection is crucial because there is a chance that an outbreak could be confined.

Since the first human deaths from bird flu were reported in Vietnam in 2003 the disease has spread westward and has now entered Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

At a conference in Beijing in January donor nations pledged \$1.9 billion for prevention efforts, including better training of medical and veterinarian personnel.

The advantage of the Thai system is that it is cheap. "Volunteers do not receive a salary," said Darin Areechokchai, medical officer in the outbreak and investigation section of the Thai Department of Disease Control. "They have incentives."

Perks include discounts on health care and their children's education, not to mention the chance to help protect their communities.

In Vietnam the government has urged the media to uncover cases and encouraged the general public to report sick or dead poultry, but there is no nationwide network of volunteers, according to Dida Connor of the World Health Organization in Hanoi.

In China, surveillance efforts are haphazard, said Peter Cordingley, the spokesman for WHO in Asia. "The Chinese authorities have publicly recognized that their surveillance system is shoddy," he said.

Sonja Olsen, the acting head in Thailand of the International Emerging Infections Program of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. government agency, says one of the reasons the Thai program is effective is because it was built on a decades-old practice of health checks for the general population.

Volunteers in rural areas monitor the health of children, the elderly and the handicapped in what Olsen describes as a solid public health program.

Chatchai Buasuan, a part-time driver and handyman, is the local health volunteer in the village of Nhongtabong, about a two-hour drive west of Bangkok. He does his rounds on a Honda scooter, inquiring about his neighbors' health but also asking whether they have seen birds that are not eating properly or are acting abnormally. When he identifies a sick bird he dons a disposable white plastic safety suit and face mask, puts the bird in a bag and then buries it. This happens about twice or three times a month, he said.

"Before bird flu, some people used to eat sick birds," Chatchai said. "Not anymore."

Aldis of the WHO said, ideally, that other countries could implement similar systems. But setting them up might be challenging. "It is culturally easier to do in Thailand than other countries," he said. "There's such a group ethos here."

Health experts say Thailand has a history of responding well to a variety of health-related emergencies such as the AIDS epidemic and the aftermath of the tsunami of December 2004.

"People take charge and become responsible for the protection of their own communities," Aldis said.

But some villagers are stubborn, volunteers say. Chicken is an integral part of the local diet and cock fighting is very popular among men. During culls, prize-winning cocks were sent to neighboring provinces to avoid slaughter.

"People who are not afraid of death still keep chickens," said Pattama Wongeak, one of Jongrak's colleagues in the volunteer corps. Months after an outbreak, villagers often begin raising chickens again, she said.

The volunteer system is not foolproof. Last November, Pattama's neighbor died after slaughtering and eating as many as eight chickens during an outbreak. The victim's son also contracted the disease but has since recovered, perhaps because he was diagnosed early, according to Somjate Laoluekeat, the doctor in charge of bird flu efforts in Kanchanaburi Province, where Benjapad is located.

Somjate says the volunteer system generally works well but he worries some volunteers are not diligent about checking on their neighbors daily. Yet the

overall signs are good in Thailand: bird flu cases are declining, which some attribute to the monitoring system, which was established in November 2004.

Twelve people died from bird flu in Thailand in 2004 but only two died last year. In Vietnam, by contrast, fatalities have continued apace, with 20 deaths in 2004 and 19 last year.

"One of the reasons the situation seems to have stabilized in Thailand is that if a chicken sneezes these volunteers hear about it," said Cordingley of the WHO.

The system works this way: When a volunteer notices sick birds or people with flu-like symptoms he or she contacts the local health station, which then calls "Mr. Bird Flu," an official in each of the 75 provinces that uses the program.

Mr. Bird Flu coordinates the response and looks for patterns. Somjate, the doctor who holds the post in Kanchanaburi, says he receives about 10 to 20 calls a day on his cellphone, sometimes in the middle of the night. He then judges whether the case is serious enough to report it to the higher authorities.

The system is a far cry from the initial confusion when the disease first struck Thailand in late 2003. When her son became very sick, Jongrak said doctors were stumped by his illness. She remembered showing them a newspaper article about people in Vietnam who had contracted the disease and the symptoms they suffered.

"I said, 'I know that I'm not as smart as you but I think my son has bird flu,'" Jongrak recalled.

A few days later, just before his death, doctors acknowledged that her son, 6-year-old Captain Boonmanud, was Thailand's first confirmed human case of avian influenza.

40 Hour Community Involvement

If you haven't already heard, high school students must now complete 40 hours of community involvement as a graduation requirement. This applies to students who started high school during or after the 1999-2000 school years.

The purpose is to encourage students to develop awareness and understanding of civic responsibility, and the contributions they can make in supporting and strengthening our communities. It is also an opportunity to celebrate the many contributions that young people make in our communities!

Volunteering is a great way to make contacts, gain job experience, contribute to the community, and also – have fun! When you volunteer, you discover your strengths, gain self-confidence, increase your social awareness, and expand your social circle.

Many people's lives have been greatly affected by their volunteer experiences. These students from across Canada have all benefited from their volunteer experiences:

"Volunteering has given me valuable qualities that I can use for the rest of my life – not only on the professional side, but also in the personal and social aspects of my life."

Craig Campbell, Westbank, BC

"My rich experiences have been helpful in teaching me different things – how to conduct a meeting, how to act with different clients, and how to organize activities. But I have learned above all to know myself. To become involved in volunteer work, whatever the field, has many benefits."

Catherine Aubert, Compton, QC

"My best friends, my role models and my employers are all people I have met through volunteering."

Irfhan Rawji, Coquitlam, BC

"I never really knew what social workers did. But through my volunteer experiences and contact with social workers, I am now interested in a whole new field that I never knew existed."

Jennie Onyett-Jeffries, Toronto, ON

"My volunteering experience will help my goal because of the communications skills I've developed. My goal is to become a speech pathologist and, in that field, communication is key. I study communication in school, but volunteering helps to make it real."

Maisha Williams, Toronto, ON

Taken from *Volunteering Works! Be Part of Shaping Your Future* – Volunteer Canada, 2000

Getting Started

Students under 18 must plan the activity in consultation with parents/guardians. The activity should involve service to others. The activity should fall within the guiding principles and should be identified on the Board or School list of examples.

Students should confirm the details of the activity with the sponsor/organizer who will be responsible for the activity.

Students must complete the Notification of Planned Community Involvement and submit to the school through their teacher adviser.

After students have completed their planned activity, they must have the Completion of Community Activity Involvement signed by the community sponsor.

Specific Areas of Involvement may include:

Fundraising – includes canvassing, walk-a-thons, celebrity games, gift wrapping, gala events, bingo, and sales for charitable purposes.

Sports / Recreation – includes coaching, helping to organize winter carnivals, parades and summer fairs.

Community Events – includes helping to organize special meets and games, and volunteering as a leisure buddy or pool assistant.

Community Projects – includes participating in organized food drives, or support services for community groups.

Environmental Projects – includes participating in community clean-ups, flower/tree planting, recycling and general beautification projects and activities.

Volunteer Work with Seniors – includes assisting at senior's residences (e.g.. Serving snacks, helping with activities or portering, or participating in visiting and reading programs).

Committee Work – includes participation on advisory boards, neighbourhood associations and regional associations.

Religious Activities – includes participation as a volunteer in programs for children, child minding, Sunday School assistance, special events and clerical tasks.

Youth Programs – includes volunteer assistance with the operation of youth programs such as 4H, Scouts, Guides, drop-in centres, breakfast programs, March Break programs, Leaders in Training, summer playground activities and camps.

Office/Clerical Work – includes volunteer activity in reception, computer work and mailings for individuals or groups providing charitable or general community benefit.

Work with Animals – includes volunteer involvement with animal care, horseback riding programs, or volunteer assistance at a local zoo or petting farm.

Arts and Culture – includes volunteer assistance at a gallery, performing arts production or program, or in a community library program.

Activities for Individuals – includes any volunteer activity that assists someone who requires assistance for shopping, tutoring, light snow removal (no use of snow blower), housekeeping, writing letters or transcribing, or involves hospital visitation, voluntary involvement with chronic care, or service as a volunteer reading buddy.

School Community Service – may include service within the school community that provides benefit to others that takes place outside the regular school day. The school Principal must approve these activities in advance of the commencement of the activity.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. To whom does the 40 Hours Community Involvement graduation requirement apply?

Every student who begins high school during or after the 1999-2000 school year must complete 40 Hours of Community Involvement in order to graduate.

2. What choices do the students have?

There are three specific types of Community Involvement. They are:

1. Help Your Community
2. Help Your Neighbours
3. Help Your School

3. Who decides what constitutes "Community Involvement"?

The Information Manual clearly delineates both eligible and ineligible activities. Refer to pages 4 to 6. All Grade 9 students will receive a copy of the manual. Questionable activities will receive the school Principal's consideration.

4. Can Grade 7 and 8 students start their Community Involvement?

No. The 40 Hours of Community Involvement must be completed while the student is enrolled in Grades 9 through 12.

5. What is the procedure if a school is contacted by a community agency requesting students' Community Involvement with their organization?

A partnership has been established between the local school boards and the Windsor-Essex County United Way and they will provide the necessary information to interested community agencies.

6. What is the role of United Way?

United Way will act as a resource to assist non-profit community organizations to prepare for the 40 Hour Community Involvement for students.

7. Can a student/parent /guardian arrange a placement with a community organization that has not been reviewed by the Windsor-Essex County United Way?

Yes, as long as the activity is included on the List of Eligible Activities on pages 4 to 5 in the Information Manual.

8. What if a student/parent/guardian feels uncomfortable with a proposed Community Involvement activity?

In fulfilling the 40 Hours of Community Involvement the student/parent/guardian is responsible for making appropriate choices. Choose wisely.

9. What if a student get hurts while completing the 40 Hours of Community Involvement?

Students/parents/guardians are encouraged to purchase Student Accident Insurance which is available through the schools. Page 11 in the Community Involvement Information Manual addresses additional insurance issues.

10. What if the student loses the "Completion of Community Involvement Activities" form?

Students are responsible for submitting their "Completion of Community Involvement Activities" form to their home school for data entry.

11. What happens when the 40 Hours of Community Involvement are completed?

The completed 40 hour requirement will be recorded on the Report Card and on the Ontario Student Transcript.

Disability Awareness Corner – Top 10 Tips for the Newly Disabled

www.disabled-world.com

by a consumer who wishes to remain anonymous.

I was paralyzed from the waist down for several years in my thirties. The ten tips below came from my own hard, slow work to regain my mobility, and the common experiences of many disabled clients in similar situations. They will help you understand what might be happening in your mind, body and social life, moving you along the road to living normally with your disability as soon as possible.

When a person is newly disabled by accident, illness or genetics, a host of physical, emotional and social changes present themselves. Most of these changes are things no one can truly prepare for. There are suddenly no usual routines, no guidelines in how to proceed with success. Newly disabled people can feel frightened, abandoned and without direction as pain and loss often dominate their recovery. These feelings can derail further growth and progress into a new, functional and successful life. It is my hope that the following tips will help you see your justifiable feelings, new experiences and the situations that can arise from sudden disability don't have to be the end of the world.

1. Expect an emotional reaction at your change in status from an "able" person to a disabled person.

Anger, frustration and resentment are common feelings when abilities are taken away. Use the energy of these emotions to transform the negative to positive and get active in powering forward your recovery effort. If you find you can't get past the worst of the negative emotions, don't hesitate to avail yourself of counseling, stress reduction methods or other help. Most hospitals and social service agencies provide groups to help the newly disabled.

2. Expect others to react differently to you than they did before the onset of your disability.

Most of the time people want to say and do the right thing, but our society does not prepare us adequately to handle the trauma of another's disability. Reach out to your family, friends and acquaintances and encourage them to treat you as normally as they did before the onset of your disability.

3. Expect changes in your energy level and the way your body and mind work together.

Things that have been easy suddenly become difficult to impossible to accomplish. Give yourself lots of time to readjust to the new status quo and don't do anything before you are ready. Despite how you might feel, this is no time to hermit up. Avail yourself of all the support you can get. What creative ways can you think of to accomplish the same goals differently and if possible, independently?

4. Expect governmental and organizational indifference and delays, sometimes from the very medical personnel, agencies and individuals meant to help you.

Aid your success in dealing with bureaucracy by keeping meticulous records of each contact with the agency or individual and reminding them of your needs and their agency's commitment to you. Remember: the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Make a firm but polite pest of yourself and you will be served correctly, most of the time.

5. Expect co-workers to potentially feel uncomfortable with you.

Some newly disabled people lose their jobs. If you are still able to do the work for which you were hired, it is illegal for your employer to fire you. You have rights under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) - get to know what they are and use them. Take this opportunity to educate your workplace on the subject of disabilities, and yours in particular.

6. ODSP (Ontario Disability Supports Program) is not a free ride.

Most disabled people find ODSP and pension checks little enough to pay their bills and rent. You will have to generate secondary sources of income and be creative about doing it. What skills or talents do you have that can be used in new ways? Coaching or career counseling can often help broaden the range of options available to you.

7. As a newly disabled person, you may find yourself inundated with offers for work-at-home schemes which may or may not deal with you honestly.

Some of these schemes can be lucrative for the dedicated worker, while others are directly dishonest and usurious. Protect yourself by checking out any potential employer for longevity in the workplace and worker satisfaction. Talk to others who have worked there six months or more about their experience with that particular employer.

8. Depending on the severity of your disability, you may need a care team.

This team should ideally consist of people who are favorably disposed towards you to begin with, such as family members and willing friends. If you must hire someone to care for you, check into their background as thoroughly as possible. Often the disabled are taken advantage of by unscrupulous care staff.

9. When you are given the gift of a disability, it does not diminish you as much as you might initially think.

When one door closes, many others are opened. A blind man's sense of hearing sharpens to hear a pin drop 100 meters away; a quadriplegic develops extraordinary sensitivity in her facial skin that enables her to "feel" colors. See the opportunities that are available to you now that you could never see as a more able person. The world is waiting and the possibilities are limitless. What future will you choose?

10. Nothing is impossible.

Well, almost nothing. While you may never have a new pair of kidneys or be able to re-grow a limb you have lost, almost everything you dreamed of doing before your disability can still be possible. You just may have to modify quite a bit to achieve it. Don't let anything stand in your way and don't fall prey to blaming and

self-pity. You are the only person who can get you from the depths of despair to all the success you want in life. Go for it!

CILT's Volunteer Vibes is a quarterly publication of the **Peer Support Program**. If you are interested in volunteering at C.I.L.T. please call Nancy to request a Volunteer Application Package.

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