

CILT's Volunteer Vibes

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Welcome New Volunteers

Please join me in welcoming Nestor Enrique Torres as the newest addition to our team of volunteers at CILT. Nestor is from Colombia, where he practiced medicine as a Family Physician at a private healthcare institution. He comes in three days a week and helps out with our resource library and is helping to build a database of peer support resources. We are very happy to have Nestor with us.

What the Public Knows About Volunteering

Article written by Jennifer Saltman, published in The Volunteer Beat, May 2003. Here is what we already know: fewer Canadians are volunteering. A well traveled fact from the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating. This decline, however, isn't because volunteerism and the voluntary sector have a bad public image. Not at all. The problem appears to be a lack of public image. According to opinion polls conducted by market research firm Ipsos-Reid (September 2001 and February 2002), Canadians are nearly unanimous that volunteering is a good thing. However, only half of Canadians know what the term 'voluntary sector' means or even that 2001 was International Year of Volunteers (IYV).

The survey, which was commissioned by the Voluntary Task Force of the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI), was designed to gauge Canadian public opinion on the voluntary sector and the efforts of the government to support volunteerism and civic participation in Canada. In the most recent poll, 1000 adult Canadians were interviewed by telephone in February 2002, only a few months after the close of IYV 2001.

The surveys had five specific goals: to establish the level of familiarity Canadians have with the term 'voluntary sector', awareness of the United Nations (UN) declaration of the IYV 2001, the level of importance Canadians place on the voluntary sector, the level of support for ongoing government involvement, and the level of awareness and support for the VSI.

The results were quite telling:

- Canadians strongly believe in the importance of volunteers and voluntary sector organizations (96%);

- Only about half (47%) of Canadians are even familiar with the term 'voluntary sector'. One fifth are even unable to think of any organizations they would associate with the term;
- Eight in ten Canadians believe that the Government of Canada should be encouraging people to do volunteer work and also should be doing more to help voluntary sector organizations recruit and retain volunteers; and
- 95% of respondents, however, have not yet heard of the VSI, which is a joint project of the sector and the Federal government.

The support for volunteerism appears to be strong, but the knowledge of the details and the activities of the sector don't enjoy the same level of awareness. It would seem the media isn't publicizing volunteerism enough if the response to initiatives such as IYV 2001 is so limited. But, this is not necessarily the case. A quick search of Infomart (the CanWest News database) through Canada's major metropolitan daily newspapers for 2000-2001 shows the phrase 'International Year of Volunteers' appearing 126 times. Over the last six months, the words 'volunteer' and 'volunteerism' turned up in the same article 50 times. While the media may be somewhat responsible for the death of information about the activities of the voluntary sector, it may not be entirely to blame. Because volunteerism is such a widespread phenomenon, wrote Statistics Canada's Erwin Dreessen in his 2000 report called *What Do We Know About the Voluntary Sector? An Overview*. Because voluntary organizations play a role in a diversity of life circumstances, states the report, general knowledge about the sector is broad and diffuse.

"We know a lot about volunteers: who they are, what and how much they do, for what types of organizations they volunteer and why," writes Dreessen. "We also know a fair bit about donations, particularly donations to charitable organizations... On the other hand, we know extremely little about organizations in the sector... There are huge uncertainties and gaps in our current knowledge of the sector: its size, its composition, its sources of revenue, other resources at its disposal, its expenditures, its activities and outputs, and the needs it addresses. All of these elements could be much better understood than they are today."

The report was of course compiled prior to the extensive research done during 2001 for IYV. But if the sector is only now starting to fill these knowledge gaps with the information gathered, expectations for the public shouldn't be so high yet.

Hearts and Flowers Image: Not All Bad

Article written by Vanessa Ho, published in VolunteerBeat, May 2003. Vanessa Ho is a freelance journalist, a volunteer, and a regular contributor to VolunteerBeat.

Through the years, volunteering and volunteers have been portrayed in a variety of ways in the movies, on television, and in the news. Whether the portrayal is good or bad, accurate or erroneous, isn't really the question. The question is: Does the depiction of volunteers in the media help promote volunteerism? I think it does.

Volunteerism is portrayed unrealistically in entertainment and, in many cases, the act of volunteering on television or in the movies is used as a device to move the plot along or as a set-up for a punch-line. As well, if a punch-line is coming, the reasons for volunteering are usually suspect. In fact, many times volunteering isn't even called volunteering, which isn't unlike real life where people volunteer without thinking they are volunteering. How is any of this useful? It builds awareness.

In TV shows like *Frasier*, *Gilmore Girls*, or *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, main characters are seen volunteering for organizations such as Habitat for Humanity or their local soup kitchen. The latter two shows, which target young teen girls, might get their audience thinking about volunteering because they see the main characters (girls their age) giving of their time. We all know the influence celebrities have on us. We copy their fashion, their hair styles. We may even emulate their good deeds!

Even if volunteering is purely a plot device, television can definitely draw attention to uncommon volunteer possibilities. In an episode of *Friends*, Joey volunteers at a PBS pledge drive. Of course, he's answering the phones and not hosting as he had thought. During the last pledge drive in my area I found myself wondering, "how do I get to volunteer to do that?" Since then, I've always thought it was a cool thing to do. Something I may not have considered if I had not seen it on TV.

Entertainment aside, the real heart of volunteering is portrayed accurately through the news media. News images of volunteers during the Red River Flood, the Ice Storm, and the September 11th terrorist attacks portrayed the volunteer spirit as alive and well. Seeing ordinary Canadians come to the aid of others for selfless reasons has helped to inspire others to do the same. These images make a long-lasting impression on the public.

One extraordinary example happened last year, when CBC News aired an episode of Big Picture (an entire day of news coverage devoted on one topic) entitled Volunteers in Canada. Their in-depth coverage painted a realistic portrait of the state of volunteering in this country.

In his documentary, reporter Brian Stewart focused one of the main excuses why people don't volunteer -- lack of time -- by introducing the concepts of family volunteerism and employee-supported volunteerism; concepts that most Canadians or Canadian business people are unaware of.

Stewart presented a busy family making the time to volunteer because they want to make a difference together. Later, he featured a company in Calgary whose employees spend one day a week volunteering for their local Meals on Wheels program. The entire day of programming shone a glowing, positive light on volunteerism. I found myself relating to some of the people featured, and the content inspired me to want to do more for my community. As I am sure it inspired others who saw the program. You can still view segments of the CBC News Big Picture on volunteerism at www.cbc.ca/news/bigpicture/volunteer/video.html.

Of course, an entire day of news features on volunteering doesn't happen very often. Nor does an accurate and substantial portrayal of a volunteer experience pop up on your favourite TV shows regularly. What we do get are occasional stories on the six o'clock news about an inspirational volunteer or community leader. What we do get is the rare TV show episode where a character volunteers for selfish reasons, but eventually sees the errors of his or her ways. Volunteerism's "hearts and flowers... image is unavoidable. But that's okay. It's what the public wants to see and ultimately, it encourages us all to get involved.

CILT'S Volunteer Appreciation

It was with great regret that CILT had to postpone this year's annual Volunteer Appreciation event due to SARS. However, we felt that it was in everyone's best interest that we postpone the event until the SARS scare is over. This doesn't mean that we won't be holding the event at all. CILT's volunteers have always been a very dedicated group of individuals whose efforts deserve to be greatly rewarded. We are hoping to go ahead with our plans towards late September or early October. Stay tuned for further updates.

Disability Awareness Corner

Information on Lupus

Information found on www.arthritis.ca/types. Published by The Arthritis Society.

Lupus is the name of a group of diseases. It affects 15,000 (1 in 2,000) Canadians. Women develop lupus up to 10 times more often than men. It usually occurs in women between the ages of 15 and 45. Lupus can affect men, women, and children of any age, but it occurs most often in women of childbearing age (ages 15 to 45).

The most common and serious type of lupus is called "systemic lupus erythematosus." Many people just call this type by the name lupus. It can also be shortened to SLE. With SLE, the body's immune system stops working properly.

The immune system's job is to fight off germs and disease. However, with SLE, the immune system attacks healthy tissues. This attack on healthy tissues causes them to become swollen and painful. This is called "inflammation." Inflammation can happen in the skin, muscles or joints. The heart, lungs, kidneys, blood vessels or the nervous system can also be attacked by the immune system. With SLE, there may be periods of inflammation, called flare-ups, and then periods where there is little or no inflammation, called remissions. There are other types of lupus such as discoid lupus (DLE) and subacute cutaneous lupus (SCLE). With these types of lupus, skin rashes and sun sensitivity are the main symptoms, and the internal organs are not attacked. However, approximately 10% of people diagnosed with these more limited forms of lupus will go on to develop symptoms of SLE.

What are the warning signs of lupus?

- Pain in muscles and joints of hands, arms, shoulders, feet, knees, hips or jaw.
- Fever and loss of appetite.
- Low energy and fatigue.
- Skin rashes, often on the face.
- Sensitivity to sunlight.
- Swelling of feet and legs.
- Ongoing high blood pressure.
- Sudden and unexplained weight loss or gain.
- Increase in the number and severity of headaches.

What causes lupus?

The exact cause of lupus is unknown. Sometimes it can be hereditary. Since it often affects women during their childbearing years, there may be a link between lupus and hormones.

What can you do about lupus?

- If your doctor thinks you have SLE, he/she will usually refer you to a rheumatologist (a doctor who has received special training in the diagnosis and treatment of problems involving inflammation of the joints, muscles and other parts of the body).
- You may have to undergo a physical examination, including lab tests such as blood tests.
- There is no cure for SLE but there are things you can do to manage the disease/disability.
- Learn as much as you can about lupus. Speaking with specialists in arthritis care can provide you with the information you need.

What can be done to manage the disease/disability?

- Various medications can be prescribed by physicians.
- Maintain a well-balanced diet. If you have SLE, a poor diet can contribute to flare-ups.
- Regular exercise can help prevent flare-ups. It can help you manage stress, reduce pain and keep your body strong.
- Protect your joints in order to reduce pain and fatigue by pacing yourself, using assistive devices such as canes/walkers, and avoid keeping the same position for a long period of time.
- Employing relaxation techniques.

Community Events

Wheel-Trans Update

Wheel-Trans has begun their initial implementation stage of their new **30 minute trip pick-up window** as of July 1, 2003 on weekends and statutory holidays. Full implementation of the 30 minute window begins **September 8, 2003**. You will be given your 30 minute pick-up window at the time of booking and will not be given a specific pick-up time. As such, it will no longer be necessary for you to call back after 7p.m. Vehicle type can be obtained by calling the RideLine or Reservations on the day of service.

Why is Wheel-Trans implementing the 30 minute window?

- High service demand continues
- Increased traffic congestion in the City of Toronto
- Funding constraints

30 Minute Window provides:

- Flexibility to provide more rides and more realistic pickup times
- Computer scheduling flexibility while still honouring requested arrival or departure times
- Allow Operators the flexibility required to re-arrange their schedules based on real time service information on the day of service

Will I have to be ready 5 minutes before the half hour window?

No, just be at the pickup location at the start of your 30 minute pickup window. For example, for an 8-8:30 pickup window, be ready at 8:00.

Do I still have to wait 20 minutes past the pickup window to check on late vehicles?

If the vehicle has not arrived by the end of the 30 minute window, you may call Reservations to inquire about the ride immediately.

Should I call after 7:00 p.m. to find out the type of vehicle that will be picking me up?

Call RideLine on the day of service for the most up to date vehicle type information.

If a vehicle does not arrive within the 30 minute window and I cancel the ride, will this cancellation be counted in the Late Cancellation/No-Show Policy?

Any late trips cancelled outside the 30 minute window will not be included as a violation in the policy.

What if I have to wait in an unsafe location for my pick-up?

You should call Customer Service to coordinate and resolve problems at any pick-up/drop-off location.

When will the vehicle actually arrive within the half hour window?

The majority of trips are picked up within the first fifteen minutes of the window.

How will the 30 minute window improve the chances of obtaining a return ride when only a one way ride is available or when you miss a ride and/or need a same day trip?

The 30 minute window will allow the scheduling system and the Operators additional flexibility within the half hour window to accommodate more trips overall.

Wheel-Trans will be contacting customers during the summer period to discuss their experiences with the 30 Minute Pick-up Window. Should you have any questions, contact Wheel-Trans Customer Service weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at (416) 393-4111.

CILT News

CILT is pleased to welcome **Brenda Bottos Low** as the new Accounting Clerk for the Direct Funding Program.

Brenda has significant experience with financial matters including running her own businesses, working in the Business Department of the Toronto Rehab Institute and other similar positions.

SARS Update

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our volunteers for their patience and cooperation during the SARS crisis. Things seem to be slowly dying down now. As a precaution, we are asking volunteers to screen themselves before coming in to the office. For instance, you should not come into the office if:

- you are feeling under the weather;
- you have a slightly abnormal temperature;
- you have been exposed to anyone displaying SARS symptoms within the past 10 days; or
- if you have been to any of the medical facilities which have been on the SARS advisory list:

Healthcare Facility SARS Categories

Category 0: Healthcare facility has no known cases of SARS (suspect or probable).

Category 1: No unprotected SARS exposure—staff and/or patients
Healthcare facility has one or more cases of SARS (suspect or probable).

Category 2: Any unprotected SARS exposure within the last 10 days but without transmission to staff or patients.
The healthcare facility may or may not currently have one or more cases of SARS (suspect or probable).

Category 3 Unprotected SARS exposure with transmission to HCWs and/or patients. The healthcare facility may or may not currently have one or more cases of SARS (suspect or probable).

Let's all do our part in taking care of one another!

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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