

CILT's Volunteer Vibes

Volume 8, Issue 1
June 2006

Welcome New Volunteers

Please join me in welcoming Catherine Elizabeth Girard to CILT. Catherine is a first year Social Service Worker student at George Brown College and is doing her field placement with us until the end of August. Catherine is a wonderful addition to CILT.

The Volunteer's Rights and Responsibilities

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As a volunteer, you have many responsibilities:

- To take on only what you can handle as a volunteer
- To respect the organization's policies
- To act as a responsible individual and notify the organization of any absences so that a fill-in can be found for you
- To volunteer as long as you are able to
- To use time wisely
- To notify the organization of any limitations that may affect your performance
- To provide suggestions so that the organization can continue to grow in their volunteer opportunities

Your rights as a volunteer:

- To have a position that allows you to incorporate your talents and skills
- To be trusted and valued as a member of the organization
- To receive training and orientation
- To expect an organized time plan so that your time will not be put to waste
- To know how you are performing as a volunteer
- To have encouragement
- To be given recommendation as a volunteer

Volunteerism: An Overview

Volunteering has become a meaningful activity for all ages – adolescents, adults within the work force, and retirees. Research has proven the positive rewards of doing for others and finding meaning in activities. Meaningful activity through volunteerism greatly contributes to an older person's ability to age successfully.

The delay of retirement, and the return and staying power of women in the work force have contributed to the decline in volunteer numbers. The need for volunteers of all ages continues. Older volunteers, with their longer experience, may rise to the leadership within non profit organizations whose programs and activities depend on the help of volunteers.

The notion of volunteerism has been exemplified since the early days of barn raisings and quilting bees. Women notably led volunteer efforts. Social problems such as nursing the sick, antislavery, prison reform, illiteracy, and suffrage are examples of traditional women-dominated volunteer roles.

Benefits of Volunteering

The benefits of volunteering are numerous:

- Self satisfaction
- Altruism
- Potential learning or acquisition of new skills
- Specific benefits for the receivers of volunteer efforts
- Relaxation
- Socialization
- Status or reward
- Career opportunities
- Community improvement

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Ethnic Differences in Volunteering

Volunteerism is deeply rooted in Canada's ethnic and racial components. The public and researchers have not fully acknowledged the value of volunteer activities – especially within ethnic groups. There is wide diversity within and across cultural groups. The following characteristics only begin to demonstrate a few specific differences:

- African Americans or Canadians, through families, friendships, neighbourhoods, fraternal and social groups and churches, have long served their communities;
- Chinese family associations or benevolent societies have provided information, guidance, support and sustenance to the needy;
- Natives demonstrate their shared communal experiences in an agrarian lifestyle;
- The Latino communities' high regard for family and expectation of service and support has been recognized;

- Jewish agencies and organizations are recognized for having provided significant relief efforts, especially in the acculturation of immigrants to Canada.

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Volunteers sometimes receive only modest recognition – since their activities involve free will, beneficence, and lack of reimbursement.

What we know about Volunteerism

- Women, in their 30s and 40s represent the majority of volunteers in actual numbers
- Despite actual numbers, men are more likely to volunteer
- There are fewer numbers of volunteers, as more women who formerly volunteered are returning to or staying longer in the work force
- 41% of those 60 years and over have volunteered in the last year
- Older volunteers average more than one day a week, 3.5 hours per day
- Older volunteers would give more time if asked.

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Those Most Likely to Volunteer

- Persons with higher education (college students are more likely than high school graduates)
- Younger persons
- Persons with higher incomes
- People with more available time
- Persons in better health
- Persons with recreational interest
- People who believe in helping others
- Persons interested in senior activities

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Organizations Likely to Attract Volunteers

In order, these include:

- Churches
- Social services
- Civic groups
- Cultural groups
- Educational institutions

- Health care organizations and institutions
- Political organizations
- Community Intergenerational Programs

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More General Volunteer Activities

You may find some of the following general volunteer activities in your communities:

- Peer counselling
- Teaching, tutoring, or mentoring
- Working with persons with disabilities
- Informal “fix-it” programs
- Sewing projects such as blankets or dolls for children in hospitals
- Clerical work for non profit organizations.

Research has verified that staying active contributes to a healthier and longer life and that social supports are critical to healthy aging. While most of the activities listed are formal or organized activities, the informal connections with family, friends, and even strangers may be equally critical to successful aging. Helping, teaching, mentoring and sharing experiences are sources of untold satisfaction at any age. These activities may be a continuation of youthful and middle age activity or part of one’s lifestyle.

Summary

Knowledge of such benefits as altruism, learning and socialization validate the meaning of volunteerism to successful agers. The long history of charitable work to and from families and communities makes it an institution of Canadian life. While we understand that in numbers women and persons under the age of 65 are more likely to be volunteers, more than 41% of persons over 60 years volunteered last year and would give more if asked. The diversity of volunteer activities, organizations, cultures, ages and individuals offer countless opportunities – something for everyone.

Disability Awareness Corner – Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

One of a series of pamphlets published by the Canadian Mental Health Association

Obsession is a popular term these days. It expresses fascination for a person or object; it is the name of a well-known fragrance for men and women. All of which seem to suggest that obsession is an acceptable, even a desirable sensation.

But for people with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), obsession creates a maze of persistent, unwanted thoughts. Those thoughts lead them to act out rituals (compulsions), sometimes for hours a day.

OCD is an anxiety disorder – one of a group of medical disorders which affects the thoughts, behavior, emotions and sensations. Collectively, these disorders are among the most common of mental health problems. It is estimated that 1 in 10 people suffers from an anxiety disorder sometime in their life.

While a complete cure for OCD is rare, specialized treatment can bring many people long-term relief from their symptoms. Education is the first important step in removing the social stigma and lack of knowledge which keep people from looking for medical and other professional help.

When Worry Becomes Obsession

Worries and doubts, superstitions and rituals are common to most everyone. OCD occurs when worries become obsessions, and the compulsive rituals so excessive, that they dominate a person's life. It is as if the brain is a scratched vinyl record, forever skipping at the same groove and repeating one fragment of song.

Obsessions are persistent ideas, thoughts, impulses or images; they are intrusive and illogical. Common OCD obsessions revolve around contamination, doubts (such as not being sure whether the lights are off or the door is locked) and disturbing religious or sexual thoughts. People with OCD may have extreme concerns about germs; they may have a terrible fear that they have harmed somebody. These thoughts cannot be stopped or ignored, even though the person usually knows they are unrealistic. Often, a person's obsessions are accompanied by feelings of fear, disgust and doubt, or the belief that certain activities have to be done "just so".

People with OCD try to relieve their obsessions by performing compulsive rituals, over and over again, and often according to certain "rules". Typical compulsions are washing, checking and arranging things, and counting. These actions give them only temporary relief from their anxiety.

Cause and Effect

OCD used to be considered the result of family troubles or attitudes learned in childhood. But it is now believed that the disorder has a neurological and genetic basis. Current research into its causes focuses on the workings of the brain and the influences of personal circumstances.

OCD can occur in people of all ages, but it generally begins before 40. Studies show that the disorder usually begins during adolescence or early childhood. It affects men and women equally.

People with OCD are under great stress. The intensity of their symptoms varies: sometimes they are like background noise; at other times they are a deafening roar. Because individuals with OCD may spend an hour or more everyday carrying out rituals, their ability to conduct a balanced life is impaired and their relationships at work and home can suffer.

Coping with OCD

With early diagnosis and the right treatment, people can avoid the suffering that comes with OCD. They also have a greater chance of avoiding depression and relationship problems that often come with OCD.

Unfortunately, OCD tends to be under diagnosed and under treated. This is partly because many people with OCD are ashamed and secretive about their symptoms, and some do not believe they have a problem. Another factor is that many healthcare practitioners are not well-informed about the condition.

Two effective treatments for OCD have been developed: medication and cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT). Used together, these treatments can be effective. The drugs used to combat OCD symptoms are those which affect levels of serotonin, a chemical messenger in the brain.

Psychotherapy techniques used to combat are exposure and response prevention. These involve encouraging a person to stay in contact with the object or situation that forms the obsession, and to not perform the ritual to ease the pressure of that obsession. Depending on the intensity of the therapy, improvement may be seen within two or more months.

Support and Understanding are Vital

People with OCD feel severe stress; so do their loved ones. Knowing how to support a family member or friend with OCD begins with educating yourself about the disorder. This will give you the confidence to help them understand that there are treatments which can help. If you have OCD, it is important to be aware that doubts and discomfort during treatment are normal. Work with your doctor to adjust medication; don't hesitate to ask for second opinions about cognitive-behavioural therapy. It can help to know that, once you get your OCD under control, keeping it there is easier.

Children with OCD Have Special Needs

Many adults diagnosed with OCD report that their symptoms begin in childhood. Coping with embarrassing compulsions and trying to hide them from friends and family can place great stress on a child.

Children with OCD appear to be more likely to have additional psychiatric problems. They may suffer from conditions such as panic disorder or social phobia, depression, learning disorders, tic disorders, disruptive behaviour disorders and body dysmorphic disorder (imagined ugliness).

Cognitive-behaviour therapy can help a child gain relief from OCD symptoms. Medication is generally given to children only when CBT has not achieved the desired results.

Would you like more information?

For further information about OCD, contact a community health organization like the Canadian Mental Health Association to find out about support and resources available in your community.

The Canadian Mental Health Association is a national voluntary association that exists to promote the mental health of all people. CMHA believes that everyone should have choices so that, when they need to, they can reach out to family, friends, formal services, self-help groups or community-based organizations.

Youth Justice Renewal Initiative

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Volunteer Canada is pleased to announce a new partnership with the Department of Justice Canada. Together we are working to build awareness and increase understanding of the vital role that volunteers play in a new model for youth justice.

All of us are familiar with the kind of volunteer work that makes the headlines—the exceptional responses to the 9/11 crisis by the people of Gander, Newfoundland, the work of the volunteer firefighters who fought tirelessly during the B.C. forest fires or the outpouring of help for the tragedy of the recent tsunami in Thailand. But there are other kinds of volunteers who contribute to our society in equally important ways. They may not always be in the limelight but their contribution and significance is not to be overlooked. It is this kind of volunteer that is central to the Youth Justice Renewal Initiative, a Department of Justice initiative that explores how society as a whole can address high risk

behaviour in youth and its associated factors.

The Youth Justice Renewal Initiative is about finding approaches that provide for greater public involvement in the justice system without undermining the fundamental requirement for a uniform legal system. It is also about a range of measures that include early intervention for youth at risk, prevention programs, appropriately tailored sentencing and broad, integrated strategies that involve families, communities, teachers, the police, social workers and many others who combine to reinforce social values and respect for society. Not surprisingly, volunteers provide the backbone of this kind of working model.

To educate others on the importance of community involvement in all stages of prevention and support for youth involved in high risk behaviour, Volunteer Canada and the Department of Justice Canada have jointly produced two television Public Service Announcements (PSAs). Available in English and French, the PSAs will be distributed widely to Canadian television broadcasters. Volunteer Canada will be promoting the PSAs to national stakeholders and encouraging others to join with us in soliciting airtime at the provincial and regional level.

Volunteers touch every aspect of Canadian life. They coach, read, entertain, walk, drive, visit, cook, telephone, canvass, protest and feed. They write, plant, befriend, organize, coordinate, paint, speak, clean, direct, chair and give. They are parents, friends, seniors, children, teenagers and people who work for a living and people who don't. They are from everywhere across this nation.

Volunteer Canada is proud to be a partner in the Youth Justice Renewal Initiative and strongly urges others to join with us to promote and support the PSAs and their message. In addition, we thank all broadcasters in advance for providing important airtime and for this demonstration of commitment to building better Canadian communities.

Heritage Skills Development Centre (HSDC)

HSDC has Job Placements, Internship and Volunteer Opportunities in the following areas:

- Project Co-ordinator for Seniors
- Accounting /Bookkeeping Assistant
- Administrative Assistant & Clerical Assistant
- Computer Technical Assistant / I.T. Trouble Shooter
- **Computer Tutor (urgently)**
- Creative Writing Assistant /Newsletter Editor
- Database Assistant

- Document Editing Assistant
- Event Coordinator / Volunteer Coordinator
- **Fashion Designer / Dress-Making**
- **Tutor (urgently)**
- Fundraising Assistant
- Legal Assistant
- Marketing / Communication Assistant
- Program Development Assistant
- Proposal Writing Assistant
- Research Assistant
- Website Development Assistant

Note: We are very flexible on days and time, this could be arrange to suite your need.

Who we are:

HSDC is a not-for-profit charitable organization established in 1993, with a mission to promote the health, social, cultural and economic self-sufficiency and well-being of refugees, new immigrant women, at-risk youth and other marginalized individuals, so that they and their families can enjoy and contribute to the opportunities that Canada offers. Our programs and services include: Basic Sewing and Fashion Design, Computer & Internet Training, Employment Preparation, and a host of social programs.

The benefits of volunteer participation with HSDC:

- Will receive reference letter, enabling you to get employment
- Knowledge of potential employers, jobs and other valuable information
- Opportunities to network, make new friends, share ideas of common interest and concerns
- Opportunities to participants in our numerous training programs
- Opportunities to acquire Canadian work experience.

Intake Days: Tuesday s & Thursdays, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

For more information, please call (416) 345-1613 or visit them at 400 McCowan Road, Ground Floor (McCowan Rd. & Eglinton Ave. E. / Danforth E.)

CILT News

Blair Humphreys, Auditing Clerk, Direct Funding Program, has moved on to a new position with the Ministry of Finance in Oshawa. Congratulations Blair and thank you from all of us. We wish you all the best in the future.

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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Volunteer Vibes is also available on audiotape.

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