



# Canadian Journal of Volunteer Resources Management

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VESTED VOLUNTEERS

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Every manager of volunteer resources wants to find that perfect volunteer. You know the one – committed to your organization for their own personal reasons, ready to give of their time and energy for almost anything you ask of them and determined to stay with your organization forever. They can be a wonderful addition anywhere: working with almost any committee, sitting on your board of directors or helping staff in an office setting. They can be an amazing knowledge asset as well, because they know so much about your group's focus and efforts, and its historical ups and downs. These dedicated volunteers can bring both joys and challenges to your job. This issue of the Journal focuses on vested volunteers – people who have a personal or professional commitment to an organization.

We begin our exploration with an article by Sabrina Viva, who follows the stages of a volunteer's journey from tourist to traveller, then guide and finally to fully vested.

When people volunteer in organizations where their children are involved, the commitment to that organization is often strong. Tim Redpath provides best practices he learned through his experience as a scouting leader. I share my experiences in the co-operative preschool movement, where people often take their first serious steps as a volunteer. Co-operatives are replete with vested volunteers. In her article on professionalizing volunteerism at the Canadian Co-operative Association, Sarah Feldberg shows how creating an enabling environment allowed professional association volunteers to effectively share their expertise.

Carol Newman reviews the joys and challenges of working with volunteers in the faith community who are also members of the church. Another article looks at some examples of difficult-to-manage personality types sometimes displayed by committed volunteers and the impact they may have on the organization. Alan Muir ends our issue with a look inside a small health charity that relies on volunteer support from people who are affected by the disease either directly or as a family member.

And so we continue to seek the perfect volunteer. Be prepared, however, to work with people who may be there for a strong personal reason, who want the best for everyone, who will do everything in their power for the organization to excel – in short, people who will not take “no” for an answer.

*Ruth Vant*  
*Editorial Team*

## A Volunteer's Journey

by Sabrina Viva

My journey as volunteer began quite early on. I remember the first day at the hospital as an impressionable, passionate and curious young woman. I was enthusiastic to learn but needed time to assess the environment. Was it right for me? Would I enjoy it and want to come back next week? I was eager, but did not want to do any hands-on work just yet with the inpatients in this Mental Health department. I needed time to explore. I was a tourist.

Tourists are the first stage in the journey of a volunteer, which is where we all start out. They need you to help them feel comfortable because they are new to the space and not ready to make a long-term commitment, but they want to feel useful and a sense of accomplishment. They need basic tasks. Be patient with them because they will have a lot of questions and make sure you celebrate their enthusiasm. Encourage and praise them, but do not expect them all to commit to a long-term commitment as yet. The ones that come back will do so because their experience mattered.

***Your travellers are becoming accustomed to the space ... They are now able to make longer commitments and take on leadership roles and larger tasks.***

My experience mattered that first day at the hospital. So much so that I went back and never left. I spent the next 15 years volunteering with several local and international nonprofits and managing hundreds of volunteers at that same hospital where it all began. And now, in my current position with Realized Worth, I get to work in that middle ground helping companies mobilize their workforce to support nonprofits as corporate volunteers all over the world.

My journey that first day began as a tourist, but my experience was so powerful that I returned again, again and again, until I became a traveller.

Your travellers are becoming accustomed to the space, like a traveller that has visited a place several times. At this second stage, they have internalized their volunteer experience and it matters to them. They are now able to make longer commitments and take on leadership roles and larger tasks.

***Tourists ... They need you to help them feel comfortable because they are new to the space and not ready to make a long-term commitment, but they want to feel useful and a sense of accomplishment.***

Travellers want more responsibility, so give it to them and check in to see how they are doing. They like the connection and need it. They are now engaged and committed. If you want to retain them, continue to listen to their ideas and motivate them to get involved. They will eventually become your guides who will help with your overall recruitment and retention of volunteers.

Your guides are your driving force, your champions! They are motivated, engaged and full-on leaders. They have probably been with your organization or company for a long time (but not always). They can run any event, training or orientation session without being asked, but they need your support to play this role because they do not have full confidence yet. When it comes to recruitment, they are your cheerleaders! Leave it in the hands of a guide to talk about your programs or event to encourage others to come.

Because your guides are so involved and enthusiastic, offer them opportunities to collaborate, listen to their ideas and provide them

with various leadership roles connected with your vision. In this role of governance, they can carry out your vision and be the voice for your cause. This is what they like. This is what they need to thrive as successful leaders.

Becoming a guide was easy for me. I imagine it had to do with the space I was provided to explore and the opportunities that were offered. I had great mentors and motivators that allowed me to take on leadership roles, provide input and oversee large responsibilities. My role as a guide carried over through my personal life, in my volunteer work and throughout my career. Once I got my hands on a project or involved with a cause, I was vested!

***When it comes to recruitment, they are your cheerleaders!***

***Leave it in the hands of a guide to talk about your programs or event to encourage others to come.***

I was vested not only because I had developed the skills to be a leader, but also because I was at my highest level of contribution. When a manager of volunteers at a nonprofit organization or a corporate social responsibility manager at a company, can identify what stage their volunteers are at, their programs will flourish. It is invaluable to have volunteers vested in your cause and organization.

Volunteers that are engaged and vested tend to be more loyal and happier in the workplace. The benefits of this are endless. They produce better outputs, staff morale is high, turnover rates drop and recruiting the top talent becomes easier. When your volunteers feel a sense of meaning and connection to your company, or cause, they are more likely to become highly committed and motivate other stakeholders to support you.

Knowing the stages of a volunteer's journey and why it matters to pay attention, is important. How do you actually know what stage each person is at?

***The strength of any program, event or company is the people who work towards its success.***

This is hard in any setting, especially if you are an organization with thousands of volunteers or a company running one yearly volunteer event. To best meet volunteers at their highest level, you need to know them. Build a relationship and listen to them. What is important to them? What do they want out of this experience and why does it matter to them? This is not easy and many of us have hundreds of volunteers and piles of work on our desks, but the key to the success of your program is nurturing your actual volunteers. Learn about the needs of your people and then you can begin to identify which stage they are at and what matters to them.

The strength of any program, event or company is the people who work towards its success. Investing the time and resources to make your volunteers better people, is the most important investment any company or organization can make. And, though the value of this may not be measured clearly in numbers, it can be measured in the greatness you create together. *“Not everyone can be famous, but everyone can be great because greatness is determined from service.”* Martin Luther King Jr.

*Sabrina Viva is the Project Manager, Realized Worth, which works with companies to engage employees in citizenship programs. Sabrina has dedicated more than a decade to working with non-profit-based volunteers, in hospitals and on international on-the-ground relief efforts.*

Resources -

<http://www.realizedworth.com/2010/02/journey-of-volunteer-tourist-traveler.html>

<http://www.realizedworth.com/2010/03/tourist-traveler-guide-journey-of.html>

## Building on a Valuable Volunteer Experience

by Tim Redpath

It is only an hour a week. That is what I was told when I volunteered as a Beaver leader with our four-year-old son. Twelve years later, when both our sons were in Scouting and I was deep into Scout leadership, I was spending 30 nights a year at Scout camps and attending two Scout meetings a week. And I was not even half way up the totem pole of personal commitment compared to others. It is wonderful how much time people volunteer for organizations to which they have a connection.

In my work with volunteers in many different organizations over the years, I have identified a number of best practices to build a valuable volunteer experience.

- **Look for passion**

People volunteer for many different reasons: they may be motivated by the cause; they may want to hang out with their kids; they may want to give back to the community; they may want your organization's name on their résumé. If we know what gives our new volunteer purpose (and not be so desperate that we have to say "yes, please" to everyone) we have a better chance of selecting the right person.

- **Recruit seriously**

Just because we are building a team of volunteers, we should not treat the recruitment process lightly. We need to define the skills, timeframes, types of people etc. It is little different from hiring a full-time employee, just less onerous. One of the key differences is that we typically want them part-time so the time commitment has to be understood and agreed to during the recruitment process.

- **Draw the sandbox**

Clearly define the volunteer's role, whether it is on a board or helping out at an event. They

need to know their job. In the case of board members, for example, volunteers need to respect the role of staff in managing day-to-day operations and not offer them unsought advice. Similarly, staff needs to understand the role of volunteers and not ask them to do menial tasks they just do not fancy.

- **Manage professionally**

Professional management is the least a volunteer will expect. Be clear about what is expected, give them the tools and support to do the work and let them get on with it. If you have a volunteer driver, for example, do not ask them to become a volunteer trainer, unless you have confirmed they have the skills and inclination. Manage people professionally and respectfully within the framework of the role and do not over manage, or micro manage.

- **Stick to your guns**

Your organization's values and mandate are what got you this far, so find volunteers who fit. A large part of scouting is about enjoying being outdoors, for example, so do not recruit leaders who hate camping!

- **Hold people accountable**

Just because people are volunteering does not give them the right to say they decided not to come in yesterday because it was a lovely day and they wanted to go to the beach. They need to respect the organization and recognize they made a commitment and they let the organization down. This means having an honest, open conversation, the same as we would with an employee, and then taking them through a process where they either change their behaviour or be asked to leave. If a member misses three board meetings in a row, for example, without good reason, the chair should have a conversation with the member, and the board has the right to ask them to step down.

- **Accept change**

For all sorts of good reasons, volunteers will decide they have to back down from commitments so we need to accept that this happens and allow them to reduce their volunteer hours or change their roles or opt out completely. Be graceful, professional and respectful.

- **Acknowledge contributions**

Volunteers are not there to be paid. They do it because they have a passion to help, but a simple “thank you” goes a long way. It can be a letter of thanks presented at a volunteer event, a five-year pin, a certificate, a volunteer appreciation BBQ. As long as it is presented in a meaningful, personal way to show appreciation, it will extend the life of every volunteer.

Volunteers are the enriching life blood of many organizations. I know I have been hugely rewarded by working as a volunteer and by working with other volunteers. With a little thought, we can build volunteer experiences that enrich volunteers, staff, organizations and the communities they serve.

*Tim Redpath runs an Ottawa-based marketing consultancy firm, [Train of Thoughts](#), and is a Chair with [TEC Canada](#). He has worked with volunteers in many organizations. As chair of the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce he led a diverse board of local business leaders who worked with the management team to further the organization’s aims. As a Scout leader, soccer coach and hockey trainer he worked with members, players and other volunteers. As a volunteer member of other nonprofit organizations he has the opportunity to appreciate first-hand the dedication of many people in the community.*

**To access  
Volunteer Canada’s  
Canadian Code for  
Volunteer Involvement.  
click [2013 Code Audit](#)**

## **Peer Experts Column**

Many of our long time readers will remember that we used to have a **Peer Experts Column** and that you have not seen it for some time now.

When we introduced it in 1997 in the “New Visions” issue Volume 6.4 we said “This new feature of the Journal is meant to be a forum for you, the manager of volunteer resources, to get advice from knowledgeable and experienced colleagues about difficult situations that you face...Tell us about the difficult situations you are facing and we will ask our team of peer experts to comment”.

If you would like to be a peer expert let us know. We will try to pose a question for some of our upcoming themes and if you would like to respond, send us your answer in 150 words or less and we will put you in our Peer Expert Column. We will begin with the following situation:

*While criminal record checks are integral to many volunteer screening programs, they may also present unforeseen challenges for managers of volunteer resources.*

*Several years ago, my workplace received a police record check which indicated a prospective volunteer had been convicted of trespassing. The conviction itself was a few years old and the charge had not involved a threat to the same vulnerable populations our agency worked with.*

*This presented us with some interesting questions. Was the very existence of any conviction grounds for screening out a volunteer? Were there some offences that were of less concern to our particular workplace? If only certain convictions might be prohibitive, would it be necessary to stipulate this on the volunteer application or within our agency’s policies? How would we go about making these kinds of designations without seeming arbitrary or unjust?*

*We had many conversations where we discussed the importance of balancing the safety of our clients, volunteers and staff while being mindful of the rights of individuals who had paid a debt to society and were hoping to give back to the community.*

We would be interested to hear how other professionals weigh in on this issue. Do you have in-depth policies relating to the nature of convictions on criminal record checks? We hope to reproduce the best responses on this subject in the Peer Experts column of our fall issue of the Journal, which will be looking at “Risks and Demands”.

**Deadline for answers is September 2013.  
Send your comments to [contact@cjvrm.org](mailto:contact@cjvrm.org)**

## Co-operative Preschools – A Breeding Ground for Vested Volunteers

by Ruth Vant

“Vested interest” refers to how someone demonstrates the personal impact of something that is happening. The greater the impact seen by them, the more likely they are to react to it. The vested interest of parent volunteers in co-operative preschools is high – there is not only a sense of parental obligation to their children’s well-being, but the feelings of ownership, responsibility and camaraderie are also strong. The result is that the parent volunteers give more of themselves not only during their time with the preschool, but also after they leave. Following is a snapshot of my years in the co-operative preschool field:

My son was enrolled in a co-op preschool, to begin the following September. I asked what my job would be, in addition to helping out in the classroom once or twice a month. I was told my name was on the list to run the annual bake sale. I soon learned that this was the role of the vice-president in charge of fundraising, which meant that I would also be a board member. I enjoyed my new challenge, and liked working with the other parent volunteers on the board. But I didn’t have a clue what I was doing. So I was quick to sign up for leadership and board training with the local umbrella group that supported all the co-op preschools in the area. The next year, I agreed to take on the role of president. I returned for another two years, after I enrolled my daughter in the preschool, and remained totally involved, taking on roles at the regional and then provincial levels of volunteer-run umbrella groups. When I finally graduated from preschool, long after my children had, I went on to volunteer in several different organizations for another 25 years. I continued to work in the non-profit field as a manager of volunteer resources and as an executive director of a small charity. And it all started in the co-op preschool.

Co-operatives in the nonprofit community are owned and managed by the people who use their services. A volunteer co-operative within the nonprofit community is run by and for a network of volunteers for the benefit of their defined membership. A strong example of this kind of co-operative in Canada is the child care co-operative, which has been around for over 70 years. Child care co-ops are also referred to as co-operative preschools or parent participating preschools.

***Co-op preschool parents are often first-time volunteers and learn new skills in their roles within the co-op community. They then take these skills and their enthusiasm into the broader community.***

The volunteers in the co-operative preschool network are, for the most part, parents of the children who attend the preschool. Parent volunteers are required to fill many roles, including direct participation in the classroom on a fairly regular basis and contributing to the community by sitting on committees that provide social, fundraising or other required services. In each co-operative preschool, a volunteer board of directors is elected by the members. In this way, the parent volunteers take ownership of and are responsible for decisions affecting the whole preschool community. This includes hiring qualified staff, determining the type of program or instruction to be offered, setting fees and signing legal documents such as leases. Parents benefit because they have some control over and involvement in their children’s care and education.

The co-operative preschool provides a dynamic environment for the children, the parents and the early childhood educators (the staff). The sense of community is very strong as everyone must work together to support the preschool financially, socially, operationally and educationally. Co-op preschool volunteers definitely have a vested interest.

There are also other benefits derived from co-operative child care centres. Members usually enjoy financial advantages including lower fees than other child care centres, as well as having all surplus funds reinvested in the centre. Parents often develop close relationships with the teachers, empowering and engaging them, which ultimately results in lower staff turnover. Parent participation in the classroom can also lead to more positive outcomes for the children.

A long-term benefit to the wider community also exists. Many parents who are involved as volunteers in co-operative preschools enjoy the experience so much that they go on to be involved in their children's elementary schools after "graduating" from preschool. Co-op preschool parents are often first-time volunteers and learn new skills in their roles within the co-op community. They then take these skills and their enthusiasm into the broader community.

***Perhaps people working within the voluntary sector, with access to or working in local volunteer centres, can step forward and offer support to the co-operative preschools within their community.***

In some areas of the country, there is organized support for child care co-ops, usually in the form of a regional or provincial umbrella group. These groups provide services to member schools such as board training, group discounts on supplies and insurance, technical support for the operation of the centres and networking opportunities. This kind of support is essential, since the members are often first-time volunteers. In addition, there is a high turnover because most families stay with the preschool for only one or two years. This results in a continuous process of orienting and training new members as they join committees or become first-time board members.

By their nature, co-operatives act independently. Often, parents view themselves as members of a co-operative and not necessarily as volunteers. By the

same token, local volunteer centres do not usually consider co-operative preschools as groups that might need their support and so do not approach them as potential members. So, in areas without umbrella organizations to provide services, parents are forced to learn the ropes on their own, without outside support.

People who choose the co-op preschool are committed to their roles as volunteers. This loyalty begins with a responsibility for their children who are enrolled in the program. But as they settle into their roles, their commitment extends to the other families in the school and to the teachers. They soon see the personal benefits as well – new skills, new relationships and a broader knowledge and understanding of their community. And when they "graduate" they continue to give to their community – wherever that may be.

The benefits of the co-operative child care model in Canada are obvious to anyone who has participated, and also to organizations that benefit after the volunteers move on and share their expertise. So how can the voluntary sector help to sustain this model? Perhaps people working within the voluntary sector, with access to or working in local volunteer centres, can step forward and offer support to the co-operative preschools within their community. Present them with the benefits of membership in your local volunteer centre. Board and leadership training should top the list and will be highly valued. By reaching out in this way, you will likely be facilitating the development of people who will be dedicated, passionate volunteers for years to come. What a powerful opportunity waiting to be explored.

For more information about child care co-operatives in Canada, refer to "Child Care Co-operatives in Canada 2007: A Research Report", available at [http://www.coopscanada.coop/assets/firefly/files/files/pdfs/Research/Child\\_Care\\_Cooperatives\\_A\\_Research\\_Report.pdf](http://www.coopscanada.coop/assets/firefly/files/files/pdfs/Research/Child_Care_Cooperatives_A_Research_Report.pdf).

*Ruth Vant is a member of the CJVRM Editorial Team. Her formal career in the volunteer field began on the board of a cooperative preschool over 30 years ago.*

## Professionalizing Volunteerism at the Canadian Co-operative Association – A Case Study

by Sarah Feldberg

The primary method of volunteer engagement for the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) is through technical assistance in its international development unit. Volunteers from CCA's membership base of co-operatives and credit unions travel overseas to support developing co-operatives in building strong foundations for success. While the work itself is strong and successful, CCA wanted to create a more professional culture of volunteerism. This meant a shift in internal culture, moving from a number of staff members working with volunteers as an adjunct to their other duties to having one person responsible for the entire volunteer program.

For over 100 years, CCA has been providing leadership to promote, develop and unite co-operatives and credit unions for the benefit of people in Canada and around the world. A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise. All co-operatives are guided by seven principles: voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information, co-operation amongst co-operatives and concern for community. Co-ops are a business model based on human empowerment for community good.

Volunteers have always been a part of the association model, with a specific focus on recruiting co-op and credit union experts from across Canada to work with co-op and credit union partners in developing countries. As early as 1947, the Canadian co-operative movement formally chose to use its association as the primary vehicle for volunteers interested in sharing their technical expertise to help co-operatives grow. With the expertise and experience of one of the strongest

movements in the world, Canadian volunteers provide guidance and support to communities who have chosen a co-operative model to take ownership over their own future.

In an association where volunteers are drawn directly from its member base, this caused a gap between member engagement and project success. In 2008, CCA hired a consultant to look at how the association was administering its volunteer resources. It was noted that the volunteer process was good and the volunteers were producing excellent work on their projects. However, elements of the volunteer process were assigned to different staff members, none of whom were able to give it the priority it deserved. The result of this review was the creation of a position for directly managing volunteer resources across the association's international development department. Though the initial impetus of the position was to streamline administration process and policy, the hiring of a volunteer resource professional resulted in a much more systemic change to how CCA works with its volunteers, and in turn, its members.

***Co-ops are a business model based on human empowerment for community good.***

At the core, the change was successful because the association aligned volunteer values with its own. CCA made sure to align these values with the individual values of volunteerism, therefore any volunteer who chooses to become involved with CCA believes in the same mission.

The still ongoing process of change began at the highest level with an adoption of a statement of practice that entrenched CCA's belief in the value of volunteerism. Based on the twelve standards of practice set out by Volunteer Canada in their Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement, the CCA team created a roadmap to take a holistic look at administrative practices and how volunteers link to the strategic goals of the organization. This resulted in a streamlining of practices, and a new



suite of policies and procedures. By placing emphasis on the standardization and

professionalization of administrative practices, program staff were able to think more creatively about how to engage volunteers in the work that they do. As volunteers were exposed to CCA's new system, the association's already good volunteer engagement reputation grew stronger. Members began to work with their human resource or corporate social responsibility teams to create policies that specifically enabled their staff to volunteer overseas in the association's work.

CCA staff began to better understand the commitment and responsibility of engaging members in the association's work. They began to ask for help in all aspects of managing volunteers, and as staff confidence grew, so did the creative use of volunteers. Over the past year, 134 volunteers gave more than five and a half years' worth of combined time to support the association through unique and meaningful opportunities. CCA's investment in volunteerism and its alignment of volunteerism to its own values has produced impressive results: the 2011-2012 evaluations of CCA's volunteer management, from job posting to orientation to assignment completion, received a 96 per cent excellent rating.

The association's choice to focus on a professionalized practice of volunteer resources also led to two other major benefits: increased affinity to the association and improved program outputs. An association is only as good as its members, and the more engaged its members are, the better the association. Creating an enabling environment has allowed volunteers to share their expertise in dynamic and meaningful ways. CCA's members tend to align with the association during their career, which means they will have the opportunity to become active and involved in different ways over the course of decades. Many volunteers will speak about their volunteer experience from 10 years ago, and how a new phase in their life has allowed them to get involved again. By investing in volunteerism as a professional practice, CCA is able to take a long-term view that the health of the association can be fostered by creating programs for

different demographics and a longer-term commitment from members.

CCA's international development department's mission is to establish and grow co-operatives, credit unions and community-based organizations to reduce poverty, build sustainable livelihoods and improve civil society in less developed countries. A strong investment in professionally supported volunteerism leads to better results for the association and its members.

*Sarah Feldberg has ten years of experience leading, empowering and retaining volunteers for nonprofit organizations. Her portfolio includes arts, environment, youth and international organizations. When not being a fantastic mother to her four-year-old son, Dylan, Sarah proudly resources the Canadian Co-operative Associations' volunteers.*

Reference: <http://volunteer.ca/content/canadian-code-volunteer-involvement>



**The 2013 Code Audit now available!**  
**Exclusive to Volunteer Canada members**



Complete the **Code Audit** to assess how effectively your organization engages volunteers and learn what strategies might benefit you.

**Click to access**  
[Volunteer Canada](#) or the [2013 Code Audit](#).

## The Joys and Challenges of Working with Volunteers Who Are Also Members

by Carol Newman

Five years ago when I started working at Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto (MCC Toronto) as Coordinator of Volunteers & Engagement, the approach to managing volunteers was recruitment from within an existing culture of volunteering. Today more than 40 teams operate with the expertise of team leaders, and my role is to recruit and oversee the team leaders.

MCC Toronto is a volunteer-driven church. There are 250 volunteers required every Sunday to operate the three worship services. The majority of roles in the church are scheduled once a month with from a pool of more than 300 volunteers.

Membership at MCC Toronto is based on giving one's time by volunteering and treasure by pledging financial contributions. This deepens our congregant's spiritual engagement with the church. When interviewed, our volunteers' responses reveal that giving back to their spiritual community is the number one motivator.

I manage membership as a portion of the engagement portfolio of my job, which is a rich source of matching new members with volunteer openings. As the church has recently grown there are more and more congregants being received as members. For example I became a member in March 2009 with 10 other people and in April 2013, 27 new members joined the church.

This increase in new members has really expanded my workload and required the creation of a team of volunteers to assist me. On a weekly basis my team of three administrative volunteers manages the database, collates new congregant information and membership packages and interviews new volunteers.

More than 800 congregants attend the church but not everyone steps forward to offer to volunteer.

Weekly, I advertise in the church bulletin, post the same content in the weekly electronic newsletter and target specific congregants for other positions.

The most challenging part of recruitment is not being able to fill certain positions on an ongoing basis. I cannot force people to fill the positions just because they are needed. It is harder to fill requests, such as technical roles, as volunteers need to attend the services to be familiar with the worship service. Some congregants want to be active in worship and not concentrate on volunteer duties while worshipping.

The greatest challenge – a work in progress – is the desire for short-term volunteering. In a congregation that formed in 1973, the worship roles have many long-time volunteers who expect a one-year commitment from team members. My plan is to re-design the volunteer position descriptions, where possible, with the assistance of the Director of Congregational Life.

***The most challenging part of recruitment is not being able to fill certain positions on an ongoing basis.***

***I cannot force people to fill the positions just because they are needed.***

Succession planning is very important for team leaders as replacement is done from within teams. Some teams have incoming leaders who shadow the current one. One team leader could burn out if expected to be present every Sunday to oversee large teams such as usher and greeters. The leadership is comprised of one team leader and 4 weekly team leaders to coordinate 8 to 10 of their own volunteers. Typically, one of the weekly team leaders who has been given leadership experience will agree to succeed the team leader. Alternatively, teams may distribute responsibilities among members such as scheduling, training and communications. When a team leader does not find a successor I approach two team members and ask if they will co-lead, which is less daunting.

From time to time, congregants have their own ideas as to their volunteer position, existing procedures and policies, and may disagree with changes being implemented. My management style is to deal with any issue quickly. If left too long any dissent can alter the team environment and alienate current team members. Everyone concerned is treated with dignity with the goal of retaining them in the congregation. This may involve redirecting an individual to another volunteer position or suggesting they take a break. In extreme cases they may have to leave the team or church.

Relationship building is my greatest tool for managing volunteers within a church. I have invested time getting to know volunteers from the first interview and maintaining contact. I am fortunate to work in a very positive environment where I receive many hugs and words of appreciation from congregants on Sundays – congregants, whether volunteers or members, are invested in their spiritual community.

Working with a congregation with long-time attendees is a blessing with access to a rich history to tap into when needed. Many of them can recall what has worked with positive or negative results, which is helpful especially when planning or evaluating. I enjoy witnessing the positive energy of relationships between congregants. Some people have formed secondary families of choice within the church, especially within the choir.

Recruitment fills the positions. The real focus of my job is taking time to support the volunteer team leaders and leading from behind.

*Carol Newman has worked with Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto as Coordinator of Volunteers & Engagement for five years. Volunteering is a lifestyle for Carol. She has been a member of Cardiff Housing Cooperative Inc.'s Member Selection team since 1985 and delegate for the Toronto and national Cooperative Housing Federations. Other memberships include NYAVA, TAVA, and PAVR-O Carol also participates as a Mentor with PAVR-O's program and coordinates TAVA's Bursary program.*

## Volunteering is good for your health! And now there is a study to prove it!

Every good manager of volunteers has a list of the advantages of volunteering, and now they can add health benefits to that list.

A recently published study, led by Hannah Schreier at the University of British Columbia, looked at several cardiovascular risk factors in two groups of teenagers – one group volunteered their time for about one and a half hours a week for ten weeks, and the other group was wait-listed to volunteer at a later date.

There were no significant health differences at the beginning of the study, but after the volunteering period was completed, researchers found that the volunteer group had lower body mass indexes and levels of inflammation and improved cholesterol profiles.

These are the results of the first of several trials that are being conducted to determine the health benefits of volunteering. So far, the results look very promising – at least for teenagers. Watch for results of further studies. Perhaps our family physicians will soon be encouraging more people to become volunteers in their community, helping both themselves and others.

Reference: Vancouver Sun Editorial, March 8, 2013

Thanks to Volunteer Ottawa for bringing this to our attention.

## The Challenge of Working with Invested Volunteers

by Anonymous

I have always enjoyed working with volunteers. I have met enthusiastic individuals who are willing to take on jobs for little or no compensation. They work tirelessly and have a strong belief in and are passionate about the organizations they support. I have learned as much from volunteers as I hope they have learned from me.

Nonprofit and charitable organizations need a volunteer base to ensure that they can reach out to as many people as possible and keep the costs of running the organization as low as possible. Like most businesses, nonprofit organizations need human resources to manage the administration and take on operating tasks of the organization but, unlike most businesses, they do not have the luxury of increasing their price or service fees to fund paid positions.

*Every organization wants to fill its volunteer positions with individuals who are committed, skilled and passionate. Knowing how to work with them is the real challenge.*

Working with volunteers can be both challenging and frustrating. Just like any human resource function, managing volunteers involves screening (are they qualified for the role?); finding positions or tasks that they can do or learn to do; ensuring they are paired with another volunteer who can assist if need be and ultimately evaluating their performance.

However, what is different about managing volunteers is that you cannot easily “fire” a volunteer for poor performance or inability to produce results. They volunteer to further their

causes and passions. Many volunteers are parents, members or previous recipients of the service. Volunteers will stay with the organization for a long period of time if there is appropriate management.

Volunteers who become strongly invested in an organization may reach a point where the position becomes much more than just a “position” and they lose their objectivity in doing the job. They can get to a point when they feel a sense of entitlement because, for many years, they have volunteered or their family has paid for services.

Often, potential difficulties can be traced to different types of personalities common to “the Invested Volunteer”.

### Examples of volunteer personalities and their impact on the organization:

**The “super” volunteer** – is highly educated and super motivated; they have many business and management skills and can learn any role and get results quickly. This volunteer is sought after by every nonprofit organization. Because of their work commitments, they do not have the time to train their successors and sometimes will do things on their own rather than delegate. The problem is that no one in the organization can take on their role in the future because no one has been trained and a gap exists when this person begins to step away. There is also the potential of burnout – this volunteer may eventually get to a point where they start to feel resentful of the time that the organization demands of them.

**The “well-meaning” volunteer who needs training and support** – has the time, energy and desire to volunteer, feels strongly about the organization and wants to help, but needs support and training to do tasks and does not have the confidence to make decisions. This volunteer will require time from others for training and direction, but if it is provided, they will become very effective. This volunteer will be a work in progress.

**The “low-confidence” volunteer** – can do the task but does not know the organization and how it functions very well; they are enthusiastic and have many ideas but may not know how to push them forward. This volunteer needs help from others who are not always available. This volunteer could be valuable but working with them can be time-consuming.

***Knowing the volunteer and being aware of these personality types will help to ensure that you offer the volunteer a position that is the right fit for them and provide orientation and training appropriate to their position.***

**The “been-there-done-that” volunteer** – is usually a long-time volunteer who has served in various capacities over a long period of time with the organization. They will provide strong historical information and perspective and know the strengths and weaknesses of past volunteers. This volunteer’s goal may be to stop the organization from making the same mistakes as in the past, but they may actually be stifling creativity and engagement from others. They do not realize that an organization sometimes needs to allow volunteers to fail in order to allow learning to occur.

**The “I-will-do-anything-for-the-organization-but-lead-or-be-in-a-senior-position” volunteer** – generally has a significant investment in the organization and will do anything with little or no training. This volunteer, however, may criticize senior decision-makers but may not be willing to help with policy or leadership. Though this volunteer is very valuable, it can be frustrating to those who have taken on leadership roles. The volunteer’s comments and suggestions can be counter-productive.

Though valuable, some volunteer personality types maybe difficult to manage. Invested volunteers bring passion, commitment and valuable skills but

may need appropriate management. Knowing the volunteer and being aware of these personality types will help to ensure that you offer the volunteer a position that is the right fit for them and provide orientation and training appropriate to their position. It is best to seek solutions before resorting to disengaging volunteers from the organization. Every organization wants to fill its volunteer positions with individuals who are committed, skilled and passionate. Knowing how to work with them is the real challenge.

*The author is a professional who provided services to nonprofit organizations in the early part of her career. Since then, she has volunteered on numerous boards of directors and continues to enjoy working with these organizations.*

**Interested in what we are offering for 2014?**

**Our themes for upcoming issues are posted on the last page of the Journal.**

**If there is something of particular interest to you, or if you have pertinent experience that you would like to share with your colleagues, consider writing an article. Contact us at [contact@cjvrm.org](mailto:contact@cjvrm.org) for more information.**

## Volunteers are the Very Heart of Parkinson Society Eastern Ontario

by Alan Muir

Volunteers – the backbone of more than 85,000 registered charities and thousands of other organizations in Canada. Each April, as it has for 71 years now, Volunteer Canada celebrates the contribution and vital work of 13.3 million volunteers across Canada.

Over the 35-year history of Parkinson Society Eastern Ontario, the soul of the organization has been its volunteers – the core of which are made up of family members whose lives have been turned upside down by Parkinson's. Caregivers – wives and husbands, sons and daughters, grandchildren – are now involved in a family struggle and looking for a meaningful way to support the cause.

***Often the very person who has Parkinson's will be our most committed volunteer.***

Many volunteers with this type of vested interest in the organization become a kind of “super” volunteer and contribute in multiple ways. Parkinson Society Eastern Ottawa (PSEO) and other regional partners of Parkinson Society Canada (PSC) celebrate Parkinson's Awareness month in April each year. This year's awareness campaign focused on the family and Parkinson's disease, with the theme “Managing Parkinson's Disease Is a Family Affair”. It is, therefore, no surprise to learn that a disease as devastating as Parkinson's, which affects about 100,000 individuals in Canada alone, inspires family members to become involved in the cause.

Often the very person who has Parkinson's will be our most committed volunteer. Herb worked for Ottawa Police Service for many years and was diagnosed over a dozen years ago. For most of this time Herb has been a volunteer extraordinaire. Like many of the folks who have Parkinson's, Herb has

devoted much of his energy to fundraising. Over the course of a dozen annual walkathon fundraisers (the annual Parkinson SuperWalk) Herb has raised

***... the soul of the organization has been its volunteers – the core of which are made up of family members whose lives have been turned upside down by Parkinson's. Caregivers – wives and husbands, sons and daughters, grandchildren – are now involved in a family struggle and looking for a meaningful way to support the cause.***

over \$25,000. His family has embraced his cause and has supported him every step of his journey. It is quite common to see Herb and his wife Anne at the walk along with 20 or 30 other family members. But SuperWalk shows just one side of Herb. Parkinson Society Canada and its partners are recipients of significant funding through

Healthpartners (made up of 16 health related charities) and the Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC). About five years ago Herb was asked to speak about Parkinson's to GCWCC campaign leaders. The impact was immediate. Herb spoke from the heart and told the campaign leaders about his Parkinson's journey and the positive role the Society has been in his life. He has relished this volunteer work and we are indebted to him immensely. For fun, Herb asks 40 to 50 of his friends to buy tickets and join him for the annual January Comedy Night for Parkinson's.

We have several kinds of vested volunteers. Alice comes into the office every Thursday without fail, mainly to update and catalogue our library of materials. She was diagnosed with Parkinson's 13 years ago. She, too, has had successful fundraising endeavours, including her El Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in 2010 through which she and her close

friend Claire raised over \$13,000 for PSEO. Not wanting to rest on past laurels, Alice then went on to join the planning committee to for this fall's World Parkinson Congress in Montreal.

***The volunteers of Parkinson Society Eastern Ontario are its heart and soul.***

Over its 35-year history, volunteers for PSEO have come and gone. Sadly, many were unable to continue in their volunteer capacity due to the progressive nature of Parkinson's. From selling tulip bulbs in shopping malls, or helping at the annual Comedy Night for Parkinson's, the work of the volunteer continues all year round. However, it is at one particular event that the true family connection to Parkinson's is most keenly felt: Parkinson SuperWalk.

Each September for 17 years, PSEO has held the annual Parkinson SuperWalk, along with more than 90 other communities across Canada. And over the course of the event's history (which has raised over \$1,000,000 in Ottawa) there have been 30 to 65 volunteers who attend each year without fail. There are always volunteers with Parkinson's who help out in any way they can – and many volunteer and then walk as the event begins. Without the hundreds of volunteers behind the event it simply would not take place. The Society is now expanding its walks into new locations – and so the call goes out to volunteers personally touched by Parkinson's in Brockville, Cornwall, Embrun and Renfrew. The volunteers of Parkinson Society Eastern Ontario are its heart and soul. Their passion and unwavering commitment to the cause give it life and provide the foundation for the future. Nobody works harder at ensuring that services, support, education and resources are available and will remain so in the coming years. We are as grateful to them today as we have been for 35 years.

*Alan Muir is the Special Events and Community Engagement Manager at Parkinson Society Eastern Ontario. He lives just outside of Chesterville, Ontario with his wife and three teenaged children, where he volunteers as a broomball coach and convener.*

## Volunteer With the Journal

There are several ways you can contribute to the Journal:

- **Be an Author** – Do you have something you would like to share with your colleagues across the country? Check out the last page of the Journal for upcoming themes and deadlines, and see if any of your burning issues fit.
- **Be a Regional Representative** – If you live anywhere in Canada and are connected to the voluntary sector in your community, you can help out by suggesting ideas for themes for upcoming issues, and by seeking potential authors in your area of the country. Through you, we can help achieve a national perspective.
- **Be an Editor** – If you live in the Ottawa area, you may consider joining the Editorial Team directly, especially if you have a connection to the voluntary sector. New members and new viewpoints are always welcome.

For more information about volunteer opportunities, email us at [contact@cjvrm.org](mailto:contact@cjvrm.org).

# CANADIAN JOURNAL OF VOLUNTEER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

## Editorial Process and Guidelines for Authors

### Objective

The Canadian Journal of Volunteer Resources Management intends to:

- serve as a credible source of information on the management of volunteers in Canada;
- provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and to encourage networking among managers of volunteers;
- provide a professional development tool for managers of volunteers;
- recognize and encourage Canadian talent in the volunteer management field; and
- include in each issue at least two articles that present different views on a specific theme.

### Target Audience

The Journal's intended audience includes managers of volunteers, educators, media and funders of not-for-profit organizations across the country.

### Upcoming Themes and Deadlines for Submissions

To submit an article for any of the above themes, please inquire with [contact@cjvrm.org](mailto:contact@cjvrm.org). The Editorial Process and Guidelines for Authors are available upon request.

Issues	Deadlines	Themes
Volume 21.3	September 30, 2013	<b><i>Risks and Demands</i></b> Explores volunteer roles that are difficult to fill due to high risks or low demands, best practices for position design and risk management.
Volume 22.1	January 31, 2014	<b><i>Fundraising Volunteers</i></b> Looks at all aspects from recruitment to retention, staff relationships, juggling schedules and deadlines, and moving on in an organization.
Volume 22.2	April 30, 2014	<b><i>Engaging Youth</i></b> Examines how to attract youth to volunteer and make volunteering a way of life from a young age, the impact of social media and assessing community service requirements for high school graduation.
Volume 22.3	August 31, 2014	<b><i>When Volunteers Leave</i></b> Covers all aspects of departures, by choice or not, including how to fire a volunteer, legal issues and succession planning for hard-to-replace roles.

### Advertising Guidelines

Limited advertising space will be allowed in the Journal, for materials of direct relevance to managers of volunteer resources. Email [contact@cjvrm.org](mailto:contact@cjvrm.org) for more information.