

Older and Wiser: Volunteering is a great way to stay connected to your community

National Volunteer Week is the perfect time to reflect on the benefits of volunteering for the community and for volunteers themselves

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Apr 23, 2026



John Peirson was a volunteer bus driver for the Capilano Community Services for three decades and has been named a recipient of a Community Spirit Volunteer Award. | Paul McGrath / North Shore News

During National Volunteer Week, April 19-25, Volunteer Canada is using the tagline *Ignite Volunteerism* to help promote a campaign to “elevate the role of civic participation, rebuild volunteer infrastructure, and celebrate volunteer stories.”

Volunteering is a powerful force for community connection and equity, expanding what organizations can offer and ensuring people of all ages have access to the supports they need. The Volunteer Canada website cites numbers from Statistics Canada indicating that “approximately 11 million Canadians – nearly 32 per cent of the population aged 15 and older – volunteered in 2023, contributing more than 1.2 billion hours of their time. If compensated at the average Canadian hourly wage, this effort would represent more than \$40 billion in economic value annually.”

The Volunteer Canada campaign is compelling for many organizations on the North Shore who are finding it a challenge to recruit, train and maintain a solid volunteer base. At a recent North Shore Seniors’ Coalition meeting, organizations reported that many long-standing senior volunteers are aging out, reducing their involvement, or seeking paid or

honorarium-based opportunities due to rising financial pressures. They also noted that volunteer turnover is rising, with many individuals participating only for short periods.

North Shore organizations with volunteer programs consistently report that without volunteer support, many essential programs and services could not be delivered at the level required. It is often reported that for every nonprofit staff member, there are ten volunteers contributing alongside them. Most organizations simply could not afford the staffing levels needed to meet community demand for services without this volunteer capacity. For example, one North Shore seniors centre offers 70-plus programs with only eight staff but more than 250 volunteers.

With the growing need for volunteers in our community, volunteering may be something worth considering. Many volunteers report a strong sense of personal satisfaction and pride in contributing to their community, increased social connection, broader perspectives, and the ability to stay active and engaged.

Many people find that retirement opens space they didn't expect. Volunteering offers a meaningful way to use your talents, stay connected, and support community wellbeing.

“What I enjoy most about volunteering is the opportunity to give back,” one of the volunteers with Lionsview Seniors Planning Society recently told me. “It's meaningful to be part of something that strengthens the community and helps others feel seen and supported.”

Volunteers contribute in many ways, from administrative tasks, board service, kitchen work, crafting, and exercise programs to coaching, teaching computer or arts classes, helping with park tours and cleanups, supporting disability groups, or even facilitating workshops. There is generally something for everyone.

To find a volunteer program near you, try checking out the 2026 Seniors Directory published by the North Shore Community Resources Society and the North Shore News. The directory is available at many organizations and is also available at the NSCR office located at Capilano Mall. You can also [visit their website](#) where you'll find a long list of volunteer positions, including many of the opportunities listed above.

Margaret Coates is the co-ordinator of Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society. She has lived on the North Shore for 56 years and has worked for and with seniors for 30 of those years. Ideas for future columns are welcome. Email lions_view@telus.net.