

Older and Wiser: We need to ramp up volunteering efforts.

Now the pandemic is mostly behind us, we should be focusing our efforts into getting out and volunteering once more, says Coates

Margaret Coates

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Organizations badly need bus drivers and individual drivers, office and food service workers, crafters, wood workers, gardeners, docents, committee and board members, computer techs, and greeters, says Coates. | North Shore News files

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Lately I have been hearing about the need for volunteers from several organizations on the North Shore.

During COVID-19, the rate of volunteering plummeted because of the various protocols in place to keep us safe, such as social distancing and isolating. However, now that the pandemic is no longer so threatening, volunteers are needed more than ever as programs and services have reopened in organizations that work with seniors.

Though Volunteer Awareness week is April 16th to the 22nd, I thought I would put in an early pitch, since there is an immediate need to recruit volunteers.

As we know, volunteering is good for the community and good for us.

On the Volunteer Canada website, they say “Volunteering is a fundamental act of good citizenship. It’s also essential in our society”.

According to their theme for volunteer week “volunteering weaves us together, strengthening the fabric of our community by sharing our time, talent, and energy to support one another”.

The Conference Board of Canada, in a presentation in 2018, said “Though volunteers are unpaid, their contribution adds to economic activity through the value of services provided”.

They estimated “Volunteers added over two billion hours to Canada’s work effort in 2017 and that this volunteer contribution is valued at \$55.9 billion in 2017—equivalent to 2.6 per cent of GDP”.

For an individual, the benefits of volunteering include physical and mental rewards.

Interaction with others increases (always important to keep from us from becoming isolated). We are afforded opportunities to learn and gain knowledge and to share talents and wisdom gained through a lifetime of experience. We will feel an increase in our self esteem and a sense of satisfaction. We will feel more empowered and valued.

Volunteering provides wonderful opportunities to give back to the community.

When you retire, you might find yourself at loose ends with little to keep you busy.

Volunteering can make the transition from paid employment easier by offering opportunities to stay connected to community in a meaningful way. Volunteering can be an important part of a healthy, active retired life.

Volunteers must be treated well and be incentivized to keep working through recognition programs and the provision of opportunities to grow.

If a volunteer gets bored or does not feel appreciated, they probably will not stay in the position.

Organizations that have a volunteer program often say without volunteers assisting in providing programs and services, the valuable work of the organization is unlikely to get done at the level that is needed.

It is said that for every staff person in a non profit there are 10 volunteers helping them. It is true that most organizations could not afford the staffing levels required to do the work.

Because people are not taking up the available volunteer opportunities in the community in the way they did pre COVID-19, various positions are going unfilled.

I have heard that organizations badly need bus drivers and individual drivers, office and food service workers, crafters, wood workers, gardeners, docents, committee and board members, computer techs, and greeters.

There are many more positions and, in our community, there is probably a position to fit anyone’s fancy.

Some people may still be reluctant about getting back out into the community in face-to-face situations. In that case check with organizations to see if they have a friendly phoning (from your home) program, or any other program which does not require close in person contact.

To find a volunteer program near you, try checking out the 2022 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 at nscr.bc.ca/volunteer/jobs.html. There you can find more than 500 volunteer positions listed for the North Shore, and these include many of the opportunities listed above.

Volunteering is fun – did I mention that? I volunteer and as well as feeling rewarded for my efforts, I have a great time.

Try it you might like it.

Margaret Coates is the co-ordinator of Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society. She has lived on the North Shore for 52 years and has worked for and with seniors for twenty-seven of those years. Ideas for future columns are welcome – email lions_view@telus.net.

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