

# Alzheimer Society

PETERBOROUGH, KAWARTHA LAKES, NORTHUMBERLAND & HALIBURTON

## The Heart of Volunteering is the Heart of Giving Back

By: Betty Batten, Volunteer Coordinator

Community organizations have access to four types of resources. Learn what they are, which is most critical, and why.

Organizations have access to four types of resources – money, goods, services and people. Of these, the “people” resource is the most critical because they are the link to the other three.

As Coordinator of Volunteer Resources, asking about an applicant’s ideal volunteer role will often reveal an impassioned motivation.

- Resolve to advocate on behalf of those affected by dementia
- Desire to promote awareness and dementia education
- Impetus to ensure service sustainability
- Determination to increase operating budget and access to service
- Intent to support staff workload and service capacity
- Desire to improve quality of life for the person affected by dementia
- Passion to help relieve the stresses of primary care partners

While man’s inhumanity to man makes daily headlines, it is reassuring to remember that hundreds of thousands of volunteers world-wide are working to make it a better place.

Volunteers bring new talents and perspectives to longstanding challenges. They produce results in areas that staff workload does not allow and assume functions that expand service capacity. They promote the organization within the community, lending it increased credibility and prompting donor support.

Volunteerism guru and author Susan J. Ellis reminds us that indeed, “People volunteer for a wide variety of reasons, especially wanting to help others. But it's also OK to want some benefits for yourself.” Volunteering is in fact an “exchange”, an act of philanthropy that substitutes time and expertise for dollars and cents, but then “Time IS Money”. The reasons for volunteering are endless and often very personal. Let me list just a few.

- to keep busy, feel needed or part of a team
- to make new friends
- to share or gain expertise
- to do something different from your job
- to support a cause you believe in
- to have fun and feel good
- to repay a perceived debt

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- to gain academic credit
- to explore a career or build your resume
- to gain status
- because of personal experience with the problem, illness, or cause
- to stand up and be counted

Ellis goes on to say that “As long as you are truly serving through your volunteer work, isn’t it wonderful that such an exchange occurs? In fact, it tends to strengthen your commitment to volunteering when you can see the benefits to both the recipient of your efforts and to yourself.”

Having examined the “giver” in this “exchange”, it’s time to focus on the receiving organization. How do we ensure that volunteers achieve **their** goals while helping to meet **ours**? Certainly, following Best Practices for volunteer engagement tops the list.

Successful integration as partners in service delivery team is critical. Carefully directly that expertise to where it is most effectively and efficiently applied puts both individual and organizational goals within reach. As with most non-profits, the Alzheimer Society’s ultimate sustainability rests in embracing ongoing change and engaging volunteers in new and meaningful ways to support growing demand for service. We believe that we are up for the challenge and are actively involved in this process. Stay tuned to our website for new volunteer opportunities.

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