

VOLUNTEERISM

The Heart of Community

A Report on Volunteerism
in Perth and Huron Counties

Commissioned by



2013



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Introduction



“Volunteerism is an act of human solidarity, of empowerment and of active citizenship.”

– 2011 STATE OF THE WORLD’S VOLUNTEERISM REPORT, UNITED NATIONS

In Ontario, Canada and around the world, volunteers are playing an increasingly important role in shaping the kinds of communities we live in.

They connect people and causes and have an enormous impact on society, culture, the economy – and their own health and well-being.

All across the country volunteers organize and work at events, raise funds, deliver meals and offer companionship to the sick and dying. They visit seniors, coach children’s sports, provide transportation and mentor their fellow Canadians.



Quantifying the impact

Volunteers have a tremendous effect on the economy. It's estimated that the economic value of volunteering in Canada is somewhere in the range of \$50 billion a year. ¹

And the not-for-profit sector, which is highly dependent on those volunteers, is a key economic driver in its own right. In 2006, (the most recent year for which figures are available) the not-for-profit sector added more to Canada's GDP than the entire accommodation and food services industries combined – or more than double that of agriculture, and six times as much as the entire automotive industry. ²

According to the 2012 Statistics Canada report, *Volunteering in Canada*, about half of Canadians 15 and older volunteered for charities and not-for-profit organizations in 2010. The roughly two billion volunteer hours they contributed equate to more than a million full-time jobs.

In Perth County, volunteers contributed an estimated five million volunteer hours – or the equivalent of 2,500 full-time jobs. And in Huron County volunteers gave more than four million hours of their time – equal to roughly 2,000 full-time jobs. ³

While more than 13 million Canadians volunteer, more than twice that many do 'informal volunteering,' which means they offer to help family members, friends and neighbours with things like chores, errands and health-related assistance. Locally, more than 70% of the Perth-Huron volunteers surveyed for this report said they also did 'informal volunteering' by helping their friends, families and neighbours.

It doesn't take much to envision the local impact of volunteers. Across the two counties thousands of volunteers are enriching our communities in countless ways, feeding the social, cultural and economic engine that is the not-for-profit sector.

So critical is the role of volunteers that of the 25 not-for-profit organizations surveyed for this report 21 said they simply could not function without them.

“In Huron County, 88% of our arts and culture organizations are completely volunteer-run. The national average is 66%.”

– RICK SICKINGER, CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, COUNTY OF HURON

Without volunteers minor sports teams would vanish. A long list of annual fundraising events would disappear. The majority of arts and culture organizations would fold. Organizations supporting the most vulnerable among us couldn't deliver services the way they do now.

Introduction

In short, life without volunteers would look very different.

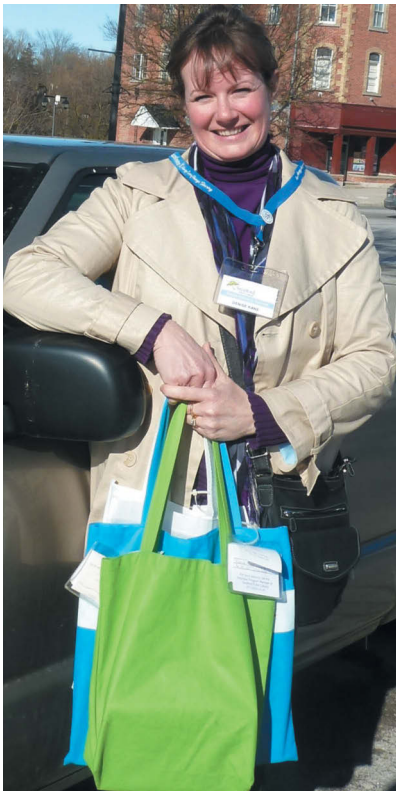
“We’d be astounded by the number of events and activities that wouldn’t take place without volunteers – and our dependence on them is becoming even more critical as budgets are cut.”

– KATE SCHILLINGS, ADMINISTRATOR, VOLUNTEERS IN PERTH

And apart from all the benefits we derive from volunteers, we also know that volunteering is good for the people who do it. Volunteering makes people happier, healthier and teaches them skills. It helps them meet new people, connect with their communities, improve job opportunities and enhance their overall quality of life.

“Those who give support through volunteering experience greater health benefits than those who receive support through these activities.”

– THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING, U.S. CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE



Reasons for this report

The Social Research and Planning Council (SRPC) commissioned this report to get a snapshot of volunteerism in Canada and in Huron and Perth counties specifically. It identified seven sectors to be included: human services, education, arts & culture, faith, sports and recreation, health, and service clubs/agricultural societies.

The Council’s goal is to identify the strengths, weaknesses and challenges in local volunteerism and make recommendations on how to improve it.

“It’s important for me to show my kids that there’s some work you don’t expect to get paid for. Volunteering was a tradition in my family growing up and I want to pass that along.”

– LESLIE WALL, LISTOWEL MEALS ON WHEELS VOLUNTEER

Introduction



Preserving dignity and independence

Being able to live independently as long as possible is important to most people, including 97-year-old Marshall and his 87-year-old wife Marion.

But without volunteers they couldn't do it.

Currently living in an apartment, the Exeter couple are the recipients of both formal volunteerism through One Care Home & Community Support Services, as well as informal volunteerism through friends, neighbours and fellow church members.

Volunteers deliver Meals on Wheels four times a week and Easy Ride volunteer drivers take them to appointments at least once a week. Other people offer to get them to coffee dates and church on Sundays.

“In my estimation volunteers are the real saviours,” says Marion. “I don't know how we would live without them.”

Marshall finds it very difficult to get around and relies on a walker, while Marion suffers from severe arthritis in her leg, which makes standing difficult. Just doing the simplest of day-to-day chores is challenging.

“We used to volunteer ourselves when we were a lot younger,” says Marshall. “We have nothing but positive things to say about it. If it weren't for volunteers in every aspect of our lives these days, we'd have to look at someplace else to live.”

The National Picture



We are a country of volunteers – and the numbers are growing.

According to Statistics Canada’s 2012 article, *Volunteering in Canada*, more than 13 million of us volunteered in 2010. That’s almost half the country. It’s also an increase of more than 6% over 2007 and more than 12% over 2004.

“Volunteers strengthen our communities and make our country vibrant. Today, volunteers are involved in more ways than ever before. They complete tasks from smartphones while waiting at the bus stop. They sign and share petitions. They govern organizations as board members. They lead rescue efforts when disasters strike. Every day, Canadians lend a hand to their neighbours and friends. And many of them don’t realize that in doing so they’re volunteering.”

– VOLUNTEER CANADA

But while the number of Canadians doing volunteer work is on the rise, the total number of hours donated remained unchanged from 2007 at just over two billion hours.

StatsCan also reported that although rates of volunteering differ from province to province, they are consistently higher in rural regions – like right here in Perth and Huron counties.

A study by Volunteer Canada, a national not-for-profit organization, looked at something beyond the rates. Their *Bridging the Gap, Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for Our Communities*, reports that the characteristics of volunteering are also changing.

For example, the study found that volunteering has become more personal, based on preferences for particular types of work. Volunteers also like volunteering in groups, as opposed to doing solitary tasks, and their interests tend to change with age and the stages of life. The time they give has also become more goal-oriented so they want to understand the impact of their volunteer time.

Age affects volunteer hours

More than half of Canadian volunteers in 2010 were between the ages of 15 and 24, although they gave fewer hours overall than older volunteers. On average, those young Canadians gave 130 hours – roughly half the hours seniors gave (almost 225 hours).

There’s some speculation as to why this is. Says the StatsCan report, “the youth volunteer rate may be influenced by the requirement in some school districts to perform community service in order to graduate from high school; since many teens already lead busy lives, it is easy to see why their rates may be high while their average hours are low.”

This makes sense, especially here in Ontario where high school students are all required to perform 40 hours of volunteer service before they can graduate.

The National Picture



As for other age groups, pre-retirees aged 55 to 64 had a volunteer rate of about 40%. While seniors had a participation rate of just over 35%, they gave almost double the hours of younger Canadians.

“At no point in history has the potential been greater for people to be primary actors, rather than passive bystanders, in their communities, to affect the course of events that shape their destiny.”

– STATE OF THE WORLD’S VOLUNTEERISM REPORT 2011, UNITED NATIONS

Organizations with the most volunteer hours

Topping the list of organizations clocking the highest volunteer hours is the sports and recreation sector. Next in line is the faith sector. Social services comes third. ⁴

According to the StatsCan study, volunteers gave, on average, 120 hours a year to sports and recreation, 117 hours to the religious sector and 116 hours to social services.

This is good news for those top-of-the list sectors, but a source of concern for others which may be just as dependent on volunteers but not as successful at attracting them.

Most common volunteer activities

While volunteers do a wide range of activities, from driving and mentoring to office work and coaching, a few types of activities consistently top the list. In 2010, close to half of Canadian volunteers were involved in organizing events, or helping to raise money. About a third sat on a committee or board.

Why people volunteer

There are all kinds of reasons people give their time to not-for-profit organizations. They include being personally affected by a cause, wanting to meet people, a desire to explore personal strengths, hoping to improve job opportunities and the need to fulfill religious or educational obligations.

But the single biggest reason people volunteer is simply to make a contribution to their community. Over 90% of people surveyed by StatsCan said that was “a key motivating factor in their decision.”

Why they don't

Equally important are the reasons people don't give their time to charities and not-for-profit organizations. These people represent a vast untapped resource.

The number-one reason is, not surprisingly, lack of time. Two-thirds of Canadians 15 and up said they were simply too busy to volunteer. The second most common reason was reluctance to make a long-term commitment.

But another finding of particular interest is that half the non-volunteers said they hadn't given their time because... well... no one had asked them to. Clearly, this is of great significance.



FAST FACTS:

- 10% of Canadian volunteers accounted for more than 50% of all hours given to not-for-profit and charitable organizations.
- Those 10% gave close to 400 hours of volunteer time in 2010, the equivalent of about 10 weeks of full-time work.
- Another 15% of volunteers contributed between four and almost 10 weeks of unpaid work.

(Source: Statistics Canada, *Volunteering in Canada*, 2012)

The Local Picture



“When you find good volunteers they’re worth their weight in gold. They’re gems. We couldn’t do what we do without them.”

– ERIN SCHOOLEY, FORMER COMMUNITY SERVICE CO-ORDINATOR FOR THE CANADIAN RED CROSS (WHO WAS INVOLVED IN ORGANIZING VOLUNTEERS FOLLOWING THE 2011 TORNADO IN GODERICH)

Since volunteers enrich our communities in countless ways, and by volunteering enhance their own lives in the process, it’s crucial we nurture that relationship as fully as possible. In order to do that, we need to identify the challenges that stand in the way and seize opportunities to improve and strengthen that connection.

Hundreds of local not-for-profit organizations and thousands of current and future volunteers are depending on it.

It also pays to remember that some volunteers are also powerful forces for fundraising in the not-for-profit sector, serving a key dual purpose.

“Volunteers can be influencers of dollars. By believing in the cause and by being credible and well-known people in the community they can sometimes open doors to new donors. It’s nice to have that introduction.”

– RYAN ERB, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UNITED WAY OF PERTH-HURON

While the rural culture of ‘pitching in’ and ‘looking after our own’ is alive and well in Perth and Huron counties, volunteerism in the larger, more formalized sense faces significant obstacles.

These are the top issues preventing volunteerism in Perth and Huron from being the best it can be.



1) Too few volunteers to meet the demand

More than 90% of the local organizations surveyed said they simply don't have enough volunteers. That means there's always competition for a limited pool.

Those who are in the pool, however, are happy to be contributing to their communities. Over 90% of them cite this as the main reason they volunteer – findings mirrored nationally in the StatsCan report.

Thousands of volunteers in Perth and Huron are donating their time to a wide range of activities and some of them are taking on multiple jobs, often volunteering with more than one organization. Close to a third of those surveyed volunteer for three or more organizations. The most common activity is working at events (65% do this), followed by serving on boards (45%) and more than a third report doing fundraising.

“If you volunteer somewhere like the hospital there are so many opportunities. You’ll find a job that appeals to you, plus you get to meet wonderful people. It’s a very rewarding experience. I grew up in a loving, giving home and I want to pass that along.”

– ANNETTE SKELLS, 40-YEAR VOLUNTEER, STRATFORD

Close to 85% of local volunteers put in at least 40 hours in 2012 – the equivalent of a week's worth of unpaid full-time work. More than 40% of them have been volunteering for over 20 years.

While these dedicated people are giving one of the greatest gifts of all – their time – there simply aren't enough of them to meet local demand.

The fact that 21 out of 25 local not-for-profits surveyed reported never having enough volunteers can lead to a cascading set of challenges. For example, the shortage can cultivate an attitude of resignation – a kind of ‘any warm body will do’ approach – which frequently pre-empts finding the right person for the job.

“Getting board members is getting tougher and tougher. You want continuity and succession, but these days it’s catch as catch can. It’s less than ideal, but that’s the reality.”

– RICK SICKINGER, CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, COUNTY OF HURON

While Statistics Canada says that more people are volunteering than ever before, local not-for-profit organizations report there still aren't enough of them to meet the need. It's therefore reasonable to assume that demand for volunteers is still outpacing volunteerism rates and the total hours people are able to give.

The Issues



While the requirement that high school students perform 40 hours of community service before they graduate has benefitted many local not-for-profit organizations, in some cases the resources it takes to prepare and supervise them can outweigh the perceived contribution.

Erin Schooley was a former director of youth and aquatics at the Stratford-Perth Family YMCA when she first had experience with student volunteers. She found that many of them were simply interested in fulfilling the obligatory hours, no more. “While not all of them were like that, it was quite common,” says Erin. “You train them, they do it and then they’re gone.”

While mandatory community service is intended to cultivate a culture of volunteering, one Ontario study cited by StatsCan suggests it has not changed teens’ attitudes about volunteering or their level of civic engagement. Nevertheless, over 70% of local organizations surveyed say the training they invest in students is worth the contributions they make. And some local students would likely challenge the suggestion the volunteering mandate isn’t working. Even though some of them only fulfill the 40-hour requirement, other students go far beyond the call of duty, logging hundreds of volunteer hours.

“I just graduated from a Tourism and Travel program this past year and now I’m volunteering to get some work experience and pump up my resume. When I do get a paying job I still plan to volunteer, if there’s time.”

– RISA BEDDARD, SAVOUR STRATFORD VOLUNTEER

Meanwhile, larger, more high-profile organizations are often at an advantage when it comes to attracting volunteers, while smaller, lesser-known organizations, or those with ‘less popular’ causes, continually struggle to get the word out and enlist the help they need.

The Issues

A case in point – and an anomaly in the local volunteer scene – is the Stratford Festival which at any given time has a waiting list of about 70 would-be volunteers. Some wait as long as four years to join the *Friends of the Festival*, the name for its volunteer pool. When their turn does come a rigorous formal training program awaits them.

Perks, like discount tickets to plays, are a big incentive and the kind most organizations can't offer, but those perks can also have drawbacks. In some cases, Festival volunteers stay as long as 25 years, which can make it harder to cultivate new energy and new ideas. As Nancy Altenburg, the Festival's Human Resources and Volunteer Manager, points out, "our needs change every year and some of our volunteers find it challenging to fulfill the tasks required of them. We've got a great base of people and we really appreciate their dedication, but we do have struggles that are particular to us."

For those who are employed, having a workplace that supports and values volunteering can also help to boost numbers. According to a BMO study released in June 2013, 90% of those surveyed felt it was important that their workplace encourage volunteering, but only 35% said their employer actually had a program in place that did.

"When you find volunteers with passion and vision, they can make the program."

– SHANNON DANIELS, COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SERVICES COORDINATOR, SALVATION ARMY
SUNCOAST CITADEL, GODERICH

FAST FACTS from local surveys:

- 40% of local organizations have between 40 and 100 volunteers and about one-quarter of them have more than 200 volunteers.
- Close to three-quarters of not-for-profits receive in excess of 10,000 hours of volunteer service a year.
- More than a third of volunteers say they've never been asked by their organizations for suggestions on how to improve the volunteer experience.

"There's no better model for students to become active members of their communities than by seeing a parent or other community member giving their time, while demonstrating respect, compassion and optimism. In this sense, we're all teachers."

– KIM BLACK, SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION, AVON MAITLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



From me time to you time

Maya Jenkins, 17, is a recent high school graduate. The Stratford teen estimates she's clocked about 300 hours of volunteer time – way above the 40 hours students are obligated to contribute before they can graduate.

And some of her friends, she says, have put in more than 500 hours.

“It's nice to take time out of your day for something that's not all about you,” she says. “A lot of teenagers are busy with school and when we're not, we're on Facebook or something. I think volunteering for the community is a great idea and most of it is a lot of fun.”

There's a tradition of volunteering in Maya's family. Her mother has been involved in volunteer activities in her community and her grandmother volunteers with the church.

The bulk of Maya's volunteer hours have been arts related, since that's where her interests and ambitions lie. They included teaching dance and piano to children, some of whom were disadvantaged or had special needs.

Her most rewarding volunteer moment came while working with a young girl who was extremely quiet, had trouble speaking and never smiled. Maya was working on a number from the play 'Annie' for a dance recital. That special moment happened when the girl joined in the song *It's a Hard Knock Life* with the other kids.

“She was so happy. It was the first time I'd ever seen her smile. It was awesome.”

The Issues

2) Lack of volunteer co-ordinators and Codes of Best Practices

Over 90% of the local organizations surveyed do not have a designated full-time or part-time volunteer co-ordinator. They rely on someone with multiple other duties to do the job.

And more than half of local not-for-profits do not follow a Volunteer Code of Best Practices, or have a retention strategy in place.

This makes it much more challenging to attract, train, keep and thank volunteers. It also makes it more difficult to compile detailed records which can be used to track volunteers and learn more about them in order to improve the overall experience. And we know this benefits both sides of the relationship.

As Rick Sickinger, Huron County's Cultural Development Officer, points out, "we need committed staff devoted exclusively to attracting, nurturing and recognizing volunteers. Even volunteer appreciation events are getting scarcer. There's no one available to organize them."

Without someone with the knowledge, experience and the tools to engage volunteers, organizations are essentially forced to fly by the seat of their pants, doing the best they can under less than ideal circumstances.

"For most organizations, having a dedicated, full-time person with some expertise in the field would mean happier volunteers, better use of volunteers and better matching of skills to jobs."

– PAUL LLOYD WILLIAMS, FUNDRAISING VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR FOR ST. MARYS MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION (WHO MANAGES ABOUT 425 VOLUNTEERS)

FAST FACTS from local surveys:

- More than three-quarters of not-for-profit organizations do not keep complete records on their volunteers (things like age, time served, how they found out about the volunteer opportunity, reason for volunteering).
- 75% said the reason they didn't keep complete records was there was either no time or no one to do it.
- Over 70% of volunteer workers say they feel 'extremely valued' but almost 25% say they only feel 'somewhat valued'.
- More than 20% of volunteers received no training whatsoever.

Hockey association needs volunteer power play

The St. Marys Minor Hockey Association is a not-for-profit organization and like many others is extremely dependent on volunteers. Even though it has more than 400 volunteers (and parental volunteerism is mandatory), there still aren't enough of them to easily meet the demand.

“St. Marys has a strong volunteer base, but the demand is always growing,” says Paul Lloyd Williams, an 11-year volunteer with the association and its current Fundraising Volunteer Co-ordinator (itself an unpaid volunteer position). “That and the fact that people are always coming and going means there's constantly a shortage of volunteers. We want new people and we badly need them but it's just not happening fast enough.”

There are roughly 425 kids who play hockey with the association. Organizing them takes a lot of time and work – almost all of it done by volunteers. Williams estimates his own volunteer role takes between 140 and 160 hours a year – the equivalent of about three-and-a-half to four weeks in a full-time job.

And while Statistics Canada points out that sports and recreation attracts more volunteers than any other sector, that's little comfort to Williams.

“While there may be more volunteers in the sports and recreation sector there still aren't enough to go around,” he says.

Without volunteers the association would fold. Without volunteers, there won't be games, tournaments, fundraisers or anything else.

“In general, people seem to have less time than they did 10 or 15 years ago and they're more particular about the volunteer work they take on,” says Williams. “They want richer experiences and shorter time commitments, plus there are more organizations competing for their time. It's a real challenge for us.”

3) Aging volunteer pool, plus a small minority doing half the work

Almost half the local organizations surveyed report relying on volunteers whose average age is 55 and older. In addition, these organizations say 10% of their volunteer pool accounts for half the volunteer hours they receive in a year – a trend StatsCan also found nationally.

This is cause for concern on two counts: we know that seniors frequently stop volunteering due to illness or health issues, plus being heavily dependent on a small number of volunteers who do most of the work makes organizations doubly vulnerable.

“I think we’re going to see fewer and fewer volunteers as our key ones age.”

– SUSAN RAE, CEO, KNOLLCREST LODGE

But we also know that healthy seniors 65 and up donate more hours of their time than any other age group so it’s important to be developing improved methods of recruiting untapped seniors – and in the process promote research findings that show that older volunteers are the most likely of all age groups to experience the physical and mental health benefits of volunteering.

Clearly, organizations also need to be strategic in trying to attract other demographic groups in order to prevent even larger shortages of volunteers in the future. This is important not only for organizations, but for our communities and all they encompass.

“Minor sports is the biggest social service in St. Marys. Volunteers with St. Marys Minor Hockey, for example, support 425 kids. Where else do you get those kind of man hours for free? But my experience is there’s a lack of support from city and town councils for minor sports, which hurts your volunteers. In 15 years I have never had a phone call from anyone on town council to say, ‘Hey, how can we help?’”

– KEN WILLIAMS, ST. MARYS MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION, PAST PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE VOLUNTEER

FAST FACTS from local surveys:

- Almost a quarter of volunteers say if they’ve considered stopping volunteer work it’s because of burn out – and because they’ve put in enough time already.
- More than a third of organizations report their volunteer pool is mostly retirees.
- A third of organizations say they rely on a combination of retirees and working people.

“Volunteers are essential to One Care services that support seniors living in their own homes. And close to 70% of our volunteers are between 61 and 80 years old. Another 16% are over 81.”

– DELIA HUITEMA, ONE CARE'S VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR FOR PERTH COUNTY (ONE CARE HAS OVER 1,000 VOLUNTEERS IN PERTH AND HURON COUNTIES)

The simplicity of giving

It's a warm, sunny afternoon and Lucy Martin is getting ready to take one of her homemade lemon pies to “a shut-in” who could use some company. “We'll have a piece together then I'll leave the rest behind,” she says. “She'll like that.”

Lucy is 81, a self-described country girl, and an active volunteer for close to 40 years. She's spent 36 years with the Salvation Army, 25 of them volunteering in the Goderich Thrift Store. These days, she helps out at their food bank, tidying up shelves, sorting food, “doing a little bit of everything.” She also put in more than 48 hours collecting Christmas Kettle donations over the holidays.

A member of the hospital auxiliary for 13 years, Lucy has volunteered at nursing homes and contributed to countless fundraising projects, often with her knitting and baking.

For the past 10 years, she's been volunteering in palliative care, talking with patients who don't get many visitors. “I was raised on a small farm and I can always think of something to say. With one woman we talk about how we each make chili sauce – whether it was stove top or in the oven – and how long to cook black current jam,” she recalls. “Palliative Care is sure important. I don't feel smart enough for some things, but I sure can make conversation,” she says with genuine modesty.

While Lucy intends to continue volunteering as long as she can, she knows the day will eventually come when she can't manage it. “I'll know when it's too much, but I'm not looking forward to that. I love the people and I'll really miss them. Being a volunteer has been good for me. It's taken me here, there and everywhere.”

“How dependent are we on our volunteers? We’re critically dependent. If it wasn’t for them we wouldn’t be able to maintain the quality of services we currently provide.”

– JAY BODROG, CO-ORDINATOR OF VOLUNTEERS, VON PERTH-HURON

4) No one-stop shop to promote or find volunteer opportunities – either online or on the street

There are a number of websites devoted to volunteerism that list not-for-profit organizations in Perth and Huron counties. To say that none of them are comprehensive would be an understatement.⁵

Both would-be volunteers looking for opportunities and not-for-profits wanting to advertise their needs have no defined single destination.

Yet Statistics Canada reports that the relationship between volunteerism and the internet is on the rise. It found that in 2010 14% of volunteers had sought out volunteering opportunities online, up from 10% in 2007 and 8% in 2004. And one-quarter of volunteers had used the internet to conduct activities on behalf of not-for-profit organizations.

In fact, Canadians spend more time online than any other country – an average of 43 hours every month – according to ComScore, a firm that measures internet use and online trends.

Volunteers in Perth (VIP) was established in 1992 to encourage and support volunteerism. The website, www.volunteersinperth.com, identifies their 27 not-for-profit member organizations and a number of volunteer opportunities. It is by no means a one-stop shop, plus it exclusively covers Perth County. There is no similar organization in Huron County. Constrained by a lack of both human and financial resources, VIP does an admirable job with what it has to work with.

“We’re doing some really good things, like raising the profile of volunteerism and trying to support volunteer managers, but we need to do a lot more. We’re trying to be all things to all people, but time and money limit what we can accomplish.”

– KATE SCHILLINGS, CHAIR/ADMINISTRATOR, VOLUNTEERS IN PERTH

And then there’s communityconnection.ca, a Collingwood-based online information resource that’s part of 211, the three-digit phone number used to access free information about community, social, health and related government services. Among other things, Community Connection posts volunteer opportunities on its portal volunteerconnection.ca. It lists not-for-profit organizations in seven Ontario regions, including Perth-Huron. But the site is poorly designed, not user-friendly, uses a confusing colour code and is incomplete. A recent search of the site found a disappointingly low number of listings in Perth and Huron counties.



“We need to better communicate what the volunteer opportunities are. We can tell our friends and family all we want but we’re not reaching the population at large.”

– RICK SICKINGER, CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, COUNTY OF HURON

In addition to the online challenges and inconsistencies, Perth-Huron has no local, one-stop bricks and mortar resource like there are in a number of surrounding areas. The Volunteer Centres of Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph-Wellington and Cambridge-North Dumfries, for example, have partnered to present a regional training service that includes recruitment and referral of volunteers, as well as professional development opportunities for volunteer leaders. They are part of the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network which consists of 24 centres across the province serving 313 communities.

The KW Volunteer Action Centre, for example, has 150 charitable and not-for-profit member organizations that each pay a \$175 annual fee to access services covering Kitchener, Waterloo and the Townships of Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich. The centre runs a variety of programs designed to support and encourage volunteerism, and it oversees an online listing of volunteer opportunities.

“At the top of my wish list is a centre to oversee the volunteer-driven sector. I’ve always thought the United Way was ideally suited to that job. They’re a strong, established player and a well-recognized symbol.”

– ERIN SCHOOLEY, FORMER COMMUNITY SERVICE CO-ORDINATOR WITH THE CANADIAN RED CROSS

FAST FACTS from local surveys:

- More than 40% of volunteers say they found out about their volunteer opportunity through family or friends.
- Less than 10% of volunteers found volunteer opportunities online, yet 20% of organizations say they rely on their websites as a secondary volunteer recruitment method, next only to word of mouth through family and friends.
- Close to 70% of organizations say they do not clearly highlight volunteer opportunities on their website homepage and only one organization out of 25 surveyed uses Facebook.

5) Vast geographic region

Approximately 130,000 people live in Perth and Huron counties, a largely rural region encompassing roughly 6,000 square kilometres.

This is an enormous obstacle to providing not-for-profit resources and support, as well as an obvious challenge in trying to recruit volunteers – or become one.

Bruce Shaw, President of the Rotary Club of Grand Bend, also helped to create a Huron County board of directors for a not-for-profit group a number of years ago. (Its organizational structure has since changed). The challenge geography presented was very apparent at the time. “Just try and get members when the region covers Exeter to Wingham but the meetings are in Clinton,” he says. “People had to drive anywhere between 30 and 40 minutes – each way. Distance is a barrier for a great many people. That’s a reality.”

Public transportation is also extremely sparse in the two counties, limiting volunteer opportunities to those who either have a vehicle or live ‘in town’ close to an assignment. And those who do have vehicles often still have to drive long distances, adding both time and expense to commitments.

6) Changing society, competing responsibilities

Modern life is busy and demanding. Lack of time is the biggest barrier to volunteering.

And if there is any time, more than ever the commitment has to be the right fit.

“People are coming for the one-off situations and staying for four hours. They’re shying away from long-term commitments. If you ask for help two weeks before an event it’s easier to get people than if you ask them six months beforehand.”

– RICK SICKINGER, CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, COUNTY OF HURON

People also like to have fun when they volunteer. They don’t want it all to be about work other paid people don’t have the time to do. They also don’t want it to be just about raising money all the time. And those daytime meetings and events can prove to be a real barrier for people who have a day job without flexibility. They may want to volunteer but can’t.

“Fortunately, I have a very supportive husband whose way of contributing to the community is by looking after our kids so I can get out and volunteer. I couldn’t do it without his support.”

– MEGHAN DOIG, PAST PRESIDENT, KINETTE CLUB OF LISTOWEL



The Issues

“Many organizations focus on what they need but many volunteers come with their own goals to be met,” says Volunteer Canada’s report, *Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for Our Communities*.

“We need to be more responsive to our volunteers’ needs, not just our own,” agrees Rick Sickinger. “We also tend to give our volunteers the dull stuff, to be honest, when we really need to be making volunteering more fun, more social.”

The long-term risk of not being responsive? It could take a toll on future rates of volunteerism.

“The middle class is being squeezed more and more for time and money,” says Bruce Shaw, President of the Rotary Club of Grand Bend. “Generally speaking, younger volunteers are trying to look after their kids and their careers and they simply don’t have a lot of time left over. And the trouble is, when they don’t get much experience volunteering in their younger years they often don’t have the same interest when they’re middle-aged or older.”

This is a concerning trend, especially given the impact service clubs have on their local communities. In 2012, the Huron County Cultural Mapping report noted, “when reviewing the full list of cultural resources across the county it became apparent that a large number of resources (parks, building, events etc.) were sponsored by local service clubs... Almost every community in the county benefits from at least one local dedicated service club.”

And while service clubs and not-for-profit organizations may need to become more flexible, there are still jobs that have to be done at a certain time and a certain place and this presents another perspective on the challenge.

“Sometimes it’s hard to meet volunteer expectations. At Christmas everyone wants to be the person handing out the toys, but we also need people for day-to-day things.”

– SHANNON DANIELS, COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SERVICES COORDINATOR, SALVATION ARMY SUNCOAST CITADEL, GODERICH

FAST FACTS from local surveys:

- Close to 40% of volunteers say they’ve considered stopping volunteering because other commitments leave no time.
- Over 60% of volunteers say their main reason for not doing more volunteer work is they don’t have the time.
- More than half of volunteers said it was important to work in a group activity, as opposed to alone.

The need to be flexible, say thanks and up the fun factor

Service Clubs are well known for community service and they're 100% volunteer driven with significant time commitments. Just ask Bruce Shaw. He's been a volunteer for 51 years, recently adding his job as new president of the Rotary Club of Grand Bend to a long and distinguished list of volunteer positions with a wide range of organizations.

Since its inception in 1991, the club has raised over \$1 million for local and international projects. Members are busy volunteers by virtue of their weekly meetings alone, even before counting the various projects and fundraising initiatives. Despite the commitments, the club has 45 members and is strong and growing – in part because most of its members are retired and have time to give back to the community.

However, Mr. Shaw is well-acquainted with the challenges faced by a lot of service clubs and other not-for-profit organizations. And what he sees worries him.

“It's the same people doing most of the volunteering because people just aren't stepping up to the plate. Some volunteers are into three or four volunteer activities, but a great number don't do anything. I think that's sad.”

He thinks changes to the way things are done could help the situation. “Some club memberships may be going down because club expectations are going up. And younger people don't have the time with families and jobs and other demands on their time. I think organizations need to introduce some flexibility into their expectations.”

He also thinks it's important to make the jobs more enjoyable.

“Volunteering and sitting on boards has to be fun. It can't be drudgery and it can't always be about raising money. A lot of boards aren't fun at all – and I've served on some of them.”

To give credence to the fun factor, Rotary's annual meetings are always kept short and capped with a barbecue that includes spouses.

And then there's the need to recognize volunteers by saying thank you.

“I think it's really important to say thanks and say it often. Not with expensive plaques or dinners or any other kind of reward, but with small, personal expressions like a card. People aren't in it for the gifts; they're in it because they want to help and they like to do the things they do.”



7) Mounting paperwork and screening requirements

An issue for both organizations and volunteers alike is the growing screening process, especially in the human services sector.

While few people dispute the importance of screening, especially where children, the elderly and the most vulnerable among us are concerned, the time, cost and energy it takes can be a deterrent to volunteering.

For example, the cost for a Certified Criminal Record Check, which sometimes includes finger printing, is \$25 or more.

Becoming a member of the Grant Review Team with The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) for the Grey, Bruce Huron and Perth region, is one example of a lengthy and complex screening process.

Anyone interested in volunteering to become a member of the Grant Review Team must submit an application through the Government of Ontario's Public Appointments Secretariat (PAS). The Secretariat screens potential volunteers interested in working with any one of the hundreds of provincial classified and non-classified entities, such as boards, commissions and agencies.

If short-listed for a position, a potential volunteer is contacted and asked to submit a personal and conflict of interest disclosure statement and may be required to have a face-to-face or telephone interview, enhanced reference check or stakeholder consultation. The government appointment process averages six months, but can sometimes take up to two years.

The Issues

The OTF Grant Review Team for Grey, Bruce, Huron and Perth can have as many as 24 members. Currently, there are only three seats filled for Huron and Perth counties combined. While funding decisions are made by the team as a whole, members are required by the PAS to be “broadly knowledgeable of their community and its needs.” Although Trillium says every effort is made to ensure that community voices from across every region are represented, having sitting members heavily weighted in one county or another, and very few in other counties, is less than ideal. It’s unrealistic to expect someone from, say, Wiarton in Bruce County, to be “broadly knowledgeable” of community needs in Stratford 180 kilometers away.

“While location is an important consideration, finding individuals who have the specific skills, knowledge and attitudes to fulfill the mandate of a Grant Review Team member or chair remains the priority,” says Marisa Gelfusa, who is the first OTF Volunteer Relations Officer, a position recently created to help OTF strengthen and support the volunteer process and experience. “This process can be lengthy and complex but it is also true that OTF volunteers have the opportunity to participate actively in the community and they report great satisfaction from their work, often staying in their position for several years.”

“We are aware of the challenges and we are concerned with people waiting a long time,” adds Ms. Gelfusa. “We can’t expedite applications, but we work closely with the PAS and provide them with information they might want to focus on when making appointments, such as gaps in skills, interests and representation.”

“We’re regulated by the Long-Term Care Homes Act and it involves a big-time screening process, including a substantial amount of volunteer training. We know and understand that it’s necessary, but some people don’t want to bother going through it.”

– SUSAN RAE, CEO, KNOLLCREST LODGE

Public Safety Canada’s *Best Practice Guidelines for Screening Volunteers* is another example of the increasing complexity of volunteer screening. It’s a 22-page manual – a lot to digest and implement for just one aspect of volunteerism.

Not surprisingly, two-thirds of the volunteers surveyed for Volunteer Canada’s report, *Bridging the Gap*, said they’d had at least one bad volunteer experience and they cited organizational politics and excessive bureaucracy as two of the top four complaints.

“The more reporting requirements and the more regulations there are, the less realistic it is for volunteers to want to do the work.”

– RYAN ERB, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UNITED WAY OF PERTH-HURON

Care for the caregivers

Looking after a loved one with dementia is a demanding, around the clock job. Just ask anyone who's doing it. But who looks after the caregiver?

Research shows that people caring for a loved one with dementia are at far greater risk of developing serious health problems than someone looking after a loved one with another type of illness.

Thanks to the Adult Day Program, offered by the VON Perth-Huron through its staff and front line volunteers, local caregivers can get some much-needed support too. Volunteers do everything from leading exercise classes and discussion groups to playing piano, doing manicures and serving meals.

"I can't say enough about the leader of this program and her team of volunteers," says Arthur, whose wife Donna goes to the Stratford program six hours a day four days a week. "It's been an enormous benefit to me as a caregiver. It's easy to become overwhelmed and this is an opportunity for me to have some time to myself."

Arthur, who's 63, and his wife Donna, 71, never expected they'd be dealing with dementia. There's no history of it in Donna's family. In fact her father was healthy and lived to age 93, and her grandfather lived alone until six months before his death at age 103.

"We are very dependent on the Day Program and we're grateful to all the volunteers who work there. It makes such a difference in our lives. My wife is very social and she loves the contact with other people," says Arthur.

"Sometimes I think coming home is a little bit of a disappointment for her," he chuckles.



“The motivations, interests and kinds of experiences individuals are looking for when considering volunteering change and evolve as Canadians move through the different stages of their lives.

Now, more than ever, organizations need to understand and facilitate these shifts in order to optimize their volunteer recruitment and retention programs. This is essential for sustaining and growing an effective and vibrant voluntary sector in Canada.”

– VOLUNTEER CANADA

While understanding volunteers is vital to attracting and keeping them, we know that half of local not-for-profit organizations surveyed for this report do not follow a Volunteer Code of Best Practices. This is like setting out on a journey without a map, instead relying on your best guesses as to which direction to take.

We also know that more than three-quarters of local organizations do not keep comprehensive records on their volunteers (things like age, time served, how they found out about the volunteer opportunity, reason for volunteering etc.). And that more than a third of local volunteers have never been asked for suggestions on how to improve the volunteer experience.

It's extremely difficult to optimize the volunteer experience when you don't keep track of who is doing what and when, and what they expect to get out of it. Keeping records and asking for feedback need to be incorporated into an organization's Best Practices – or a Best Practices in development.

Another missing component is even more obvious. We have to ask a person to volunteer. This seems simple enough, yet Statistics Canada reports that half of non-volunteers across the country say they didn't give their time because no one asked them to. Clearly, organizations need to reach those non-volunteers and pose the questions: Will you help us? Will you be a volunteer?

One Care Home & Community Support Services of Perth and Huron is one of the organizations that does adhere to the *Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement*. It adapts and uses the code to help address specific volunteer issues and identify areas for improvement.

In 2012, 1,000 of their volunteers were surveyed. The survey results told them what their volunteers liked and what they wanted more of – useful tools in engaging volunteers, not to mention program planning.

The overall satisfaction rate among One Care's volunteers was very high (99%). One of the findings of the survey was that training was very important to volunteers.



Local not-for-profit organizations that aren't already using a Code of Best Practices would be well advised to devise their own version based on Volunteer Canada's *Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement*. The 23-page guide includes sections on screening, orientation and training, support and supervision, records management, technology, recognition and evaluation. It also includes a section on 'How to Adopt the Code in Your Organization.'

The “optimal formula” for such a code, according to Volunteer Canada, will strike a balance between:

- Adopting specific, set roles but being open to volunteers defining the scope of what they can offer
- Being well organized but not overly bureaucratic
- Matching skills to the needs of the organization but not assuming everyone wants to use the skills related to their profession or education

And their “advice to organizations” includes:

- Understand where volunteers are in their lifecycle and the demands on their time
- Be flexible and accommodating to volunteers' schedules
- Increase the information available online

While adopting a Code of Best Practices is critical for improving the organization-volunteer relationship, equally important is the need to realistically match it with the organization's ability to carry it out.

In Conclusion



Volunteers in Perth and Huron counties have a tremendous impact on our economy, our culture and our future. They sit on boards and raise money. They organize and work at events – many of which would fold without their help. They coach sports and supervise children’s activities. They share talents, provide transportation, deliver meals and offer companionship to the sick and dying.

Thousands of local volunteers are enriching our lives in countless ways, shaping the kinds of communities we live and work in. They truly are the heart of community.

Still, there are issues that are preventing volunteerism in Perth and Huron counties from being the best it can be.

This report identified seven key obstacles:

- 1) Not enough volunteers to meet the demand
- 2) Lack of volunteer co-ordinators and Codes of Best Practices
- 3) An aging volunteer pool, plus a small minority doing half the work
- 4) No one-stop shop to find volunteer opportunities (either online or on the street)
- 5) Geographic challenges of a region as large as Perth-Huron
- 6) Changing society and competing responsibilities
- 7) Mounting paperwork and screening requirements

Recognizing the impact of volunteers and the scope of their contributions, the Social Research & Planning Council hopes that this report and subsequent recommendations will serve to strengthen and support volunteerism in Perth and Huron counties.

Report Recommendations



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- 1) That a working group be established to consider the report and its recommendations. That the group minimally include individuals representing the United Way Perth-Huron, Community Connections, Volunteers In Perth (VIP), Huron Cultural Services, and libraries of Perth County, St. Marys and Stratford. The working group will:
 - a. Review existing websites where volunteer opportunities are posted for the Huron-Perth region, including Volunteer Connection.ca. Upon review of the existing websites, the working group will make recommendations for improvements and the possible development of a more comprehensive Huron-Perth solution for posting volunteer opportunities.
 - b. Develop a volunteer recruitment strategy that suggests a variety of ways volunteers can be attracted to volunteer opportunities. Consideration could be given, for example, to the development of a Facebook page for Huron County, information sharing mechanisms in libraries and building on VIP's 'Who Knew?' campaign to promote volunteerism in Huron-Perth.
 - c. Assess the need for a Volunteer Centre, bearing in mind that such a centre need not be a physical building. This centre could act as the hub for all things related to volunteerism in Perth and Huron counties, including (but not limited to) overseeing the one-stop virtual portal, annual conference(s), publicity campaign(s), etc. The Ontario Volunteer Centre Network may be able to offer support for developing a long-term vision.
 - d. Look at the feasibility of developing and maintaining a network in Huron County similar to Volunteers In Perth, with the intent of sharing best practices and promoting volunteerism in the region.

 - 2) That the Stratford Public Library and the United Way Perth-Huron continue to support and encourage bi-annual workshops on Volunteerism hosted by VIP. That organization's in Huron County which rely on volunteers also be invited to share their best practices on volunteer recruitment, recognition and development. Consideration should be given to the location of the workshops in order to include more Huron County residents.

 - 3) That the United Way Perth-Huron continue to work with community partners to deliver the annual spring Volunteer Leadership Development Workshop series. Topics related to this report's findings, as well as, alternative presentation formats (e.g. podcasts) should be considered for the series.

Research Methodology



There are hundreds of not-for-profit organizations in Perth and Huron counties. Timelines and budget realistically prevented them all from being contacted. With the help of a Stakeholder Advisory Committee and the SRPC's Volunteerism Study Subcommittee, a cross-section of organizations within each sector was identified and approached to become part of the research process.

One volunteer manager (or whoever was responsible for volunteers) was subsequently interviewed from each sector. Another 35 not-for-profit organizations were then contacted and asked to complete a survey designed to identify local challenges and successes related to volunteerism. The end result was 25 completed not-for-profit surveys – a response rate far surpassing the common industry standard of 10% to 20%. This response rate demonstrates the high degree of interest and the level of importance placed on volunteerism locally.

One 'volunteer worker' from each sector was also interviewed and 46 additional volunteers were surveyed on a variety of questions related to their experiences and expectations.

Finally, a number of recipients of volunteerism were also contacted and asked to describe how volunteerism had impacted their lives.

While the local surveys do not provide scientifically-conclusive statistical data, they do give us a valuable 'snapshot' of local issues and offer some insight into the state of volunteerism in Perth and Huron counties.

This localized research was combined with extensive research from a variety of provincial, national and worldwide sources, all of which were used to inform this report.

Report Researchers/Writers



Diane Sewell Nancy McDonald

List of Studies/Articles Reviewed



An Economist's Case for Volunteering, TD Economics, April 2012

Are we truly engaging our volunteers?, Charity Village, 2012

BMO Volunteer Day Study, BMO Financial Group, June 2013

Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for Our Communities (summary report), Volunteer Canada, 2011

Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement: Values, Guiding Principles and Standards of Practice, Volunteer Canada, 2012

Healthcare Human Resources Study for Huron and Perth, The Healthcare Human Resources Study Steering Committee, 2011

How talent (not money) will transform your organization, Charity Village, 2013

Huron County Cultural Mapping, County of Huron, 2012

Huron County Demographic Report 2010, Huron County Health Unit, 2010

Satellite Account of Non-Profit Institutions and Volunteering, Statistics Canada, 2007

State of the World's Volunteerism Report, United Nations Volunteers, 2011

The Health Benefits of Volunteering, U.S. Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007

The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in Ontario: Regional Highlights of the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations, Imagine Canada, 2006

The Partnership Project, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration with the Ontario Trillium Foundation, 2011

Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Guide, Ontario Hockey Association

Volunteers and Donors in Arts and Culture Organizations in Canada in 2010, Hill Strategies Research Inc., Statistical Insights, March 20, 2013

Volunteering in Canada, Statistics Canada, 2012

Participating Not-for-Profit Organizations



The Social Research & Planning Council gratefully acknowledges the following organizations which provided valuable information for this report.

Alzheimer Society of Perth County	One Care Home & Community Support Services
Avon Maitland District School Board	Ontario Trillium Foundation
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Listowel & District	Rotary Club of Grand Bend
Blue Water Rest Home, Zurich	Salvation Army Suncoast Citadel, Goderich
Choices For Change	Savour Stratford
Community Living Stratford and Area	St. James Anglican Church, Stratford
County of Huron	St. Marys Catholic School Advisory Council, Wingham
Goderich Little Theatre/Celtic Roots Festival	St. Marys Minor Hockey Association
Greenwood Court, Stratford	Spotlight Church, Stratford
Habitat for Humanity Huron County	Stratford and District Agricultural Society
Heartland Community Church, Clinton	Stratford Festival
Huron County Museum & Historic Gaol	Stratford/Perth Shelterlink
Huron County Health Unit	Stratford Summer Music
Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society	United Way Perth-Huron
Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite Church	Western Ontario Athletic Association
Kinette Club of Listowel	Volunteers in Perth
Knollcrest Lodge, Milverton	VON Perth-Huron
Lions Club of Bayfield	YMCA of Goderich-Huron
Little Falls Public School, School Council	YMCA of Stratford-Perth
Maitland River Elementary School, School Council, Huron County	

Participating Volunteers



Forty-six volunteers in Perth and Huron counties generously gave their time to complete a survey for this report. While answers were provided anonymously, their contributions were also invaluable. The Social Research & Planning Council is grateful for their support.

SRPC's Volunteerism Advisory Committee



Jamie Hildebrand, Chair

Dr. Ken Clarke, Member

Sam Coghlan, Member

Ryan Erb, Member

Rebecca Rathwell, Member

Paul Lloyd Williams, Member

Volunteerism Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Nancy Altenburg, Human Resources and Volunteer Manager, Stratford Festival

Shannon Daniels, Community and Family Services Coordinator, Salvation Army Suncoast Citadel, Goderich

Laura Overholt, Project Manager, Healthkick/Huron Business Development Corporation

Kate Schillings, Administrator, Volunteers in Perth

Rick Sickinger, Cultural Development Officer, Huron County

Jeff Reaburn, Principal of Information Services, Avon Maitland District School Board



Survey Questions for Not-for-Profit Organizations

Volunteerism survey - volunteer leaders

- 1) **What organization are you with and what is your position?**
- 2) **Does your organization have a volunteer coordinator or volunteer manager?**
 - a. Yes, a designated full-time person
 - b. Yes, a designated part-time person
 - c. Someone with multiple other duties looks after volunteers as part of his/her job
- 3) **Have many volunteers (all kinds) do you currently have on your roster?**
 - a. Less than 10
 - b. More than 10
 - c. More than 20
 - d. More than 40
- 4) **Do you have enough volunteers or do you need more?**
 - a. We have enough
 - b. We have a waiting list of volunteers
 - c. We need more
 - d. We never have enough
- 5) **What are the total volunteer hours your organization receives in a year?**
 - a. Less than 200
 - b. More than 200
 - c. More than 400
 - d. More than 500
 - e. More than 1000
 - f. More than 2,000
 - g. More than 5,000
 - h. More than 10,000
 - i. Don't know
- 6) **What would be the ideal number of total volunteer hours a year for your organization?**
- 7) **How long do people stay a volunteer with your organization, on average?**
 - a. Less than a year
 - b. More than a year
 - c. More than three years
 - d. More than five years
 - e. More than 10 years
 - f. More than 20 years
 - g. Don't know
- 8) **Do you keep records on your volunteers, such as their age, time served, how they found out about the volunteer opportunity, reason for volunteering etc?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Keep some records, but not all you listed above
- 9) **If you don't keep records, why don't you?**
 - a. No time
 - b. No one to organize it
 - c. No budget
 - d. Other
- 10) **What do your volunteers do? Choose more than one if applicable.**
 - a. Fundraise
 - b. Sit on boards
 - c. Organize events
 - d. Work at events
 - e. Canvass
 - f. Coach
 - g. Office support
 - h. Other
- 11) **What is the most common activity for your volunteers - what do you use them for the most?**
 - a. Fundraise
 - b. Sit on boards
 - c. Organize events
 - d. Work at events
 - e. Canvass
 - f. Coach
 - g. Office support

Survey Questions for Not-for-Profit Organizations

- 12) **Could you function without your volunteers?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Other
- 13) **What is your primary method of recruiting volunteers?**
- a. Family or friends
 - b. Newspaper or other media
 - c. Our organization's website
 - d. Facebook
 - e. Twitter
 - f. At one of our organization's events
 - g. Don't know
 - h. Other
- 14) **What is your secondary method of recruiting volunteers?**
- a. Family or friends
 - b. Newspaper or other media
 - c. Organization's website
 - d. Facebook
 - e. Twitter
 - f. At one of our organization's events
 - g. Don't know
 - h. Other
- 15) **Are volunteer opportunities clearly highlighted on your website's homepage?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 16) **Do you follow a written Code of Best Practices with respect to your volunteers?**
- a. No
 - b. Yes
- 17) **If you follow a written Code of Best Practices with respect to your volunteers, who developed it?**
- 18) **What motivates people to volunteer for your organization? Choose more than one if applicable.**
- a. Want to make a contribution to the community
 - b. Personally affected by what the organization does
 - c. Make use of their skills and experience
 - d. Support family members involved with the organization
 - e. Have friends who are volunteers with the organization
 - f. Good way to network/meet other people
 - g. Good way to improve job opportunities
 - h. Improve communication skills
 - i. It's a requirement (if so, please explain)
 - j. 'Perks' that come with the volunteer job (please explain)
 - k. Other
- 19) **Do high school students volunteer with your organization to fulfill their curriculum requirements?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 20) **Does the training you have to give students equate to their volunteer contributions to your organization?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Somewhat
 - d. Other
- 21) **Does the training you have to give students equate to their volunteer contributions to your organization?**
- a. The training is worth it since their contributions are significant
 - b. The training is time-consuming and the 'return on investment' does not equate
 - c. Other
- 22) **How much training do your volunteers require?**
- a. Less than 5 hours
 - b. 5-10 hours
 - c. More than 10 hours
 - d. More than 20 hours

Survey Questions for Not-for-Profit Organizations

- 23) Do you have a retention strategy to try and keep your volunteers?
a. No
b. Yes
- 24) If you have a retention strategy what is it?
What do you do?
- 25) How do you recognize your volunteers' contributions?
- 26) What is the average age of your volunteers?
- 27) Do your volunteers tend to be employed or are they retired?
- 28) Please estimate the breakdown of your volunteers in terms of % of females and % of males.
- 29) Nationally, 10% of volunteers account for more than half of the total volunteer hours put in each year. Is that the experience at your organization? Do 10% of YOUR volunteers put in half the total volunteer hours each year?
- 30) Why do you think some organizations have more than enough volunteers while others are crying for them?
- 31) Have you found anything to be particularly effective when it comes to attracting, retaining and recognizing your volunteers?
- 32) What measures do you think would help increase or improve volunteerism in Perth and Huron counties? In other words, what's tops on your wish list?

Survey Questions for Volunteers



- 1) How many organizations do you volunteer for?
a. One
b. Two
c. Three
d. More than 3
- 2) Please name them:
- 3) What do you do as a volunteer?
(Select more than one if applicable)
a. Board member
b. Events
c. Fundraising
d. Driving
e. Healthcare support/visiting
f. Office work
g. Coaching
h. Other
- 4) How long have you been volunteering?
a. Less than 12 months
b. 1-5 years
c. 6-10 years
d. More than 10 years
e. More than 15 years
- 5) How many hours in total did you contribute as a volunteer in 2012?
a. 10 or less
b. 10-20
c. 20-30
d. 30-40
e. More than 40 hours
- 6) How many years have you been volunteering in total?
a. Less than one year
b. One to three years
c. Three to five years
d. Five to seven years
e. More than seven years
f. More than 10 years
g. More than 20 years

Survey Questions for Volunteers

- 7) **How many organizations have you volunteered with in your lifetime?**
- Less than five
 - More than five
 - More than 10
 - More than 20
- 8) **Why do you volunteer? (Select more than one if applicable.)**
- Want to make a contribution to the community
 - Personally affected by what the organization does
 - Make use of skills and experience
 - Support family members involved with the organization
 - Have friends who are volunteers with the organization
 - Good way to network/meet other people
 - Good way to improve job opportunities
 - Learn new skills
 - Improve communication skills
 - It's a requirement
 - 'Perks' that come with the volunteer job
 - Other
- 9) **If you volunteer because it's a requirement, please explain. Similarly, if you volunteer because of the perks, please explain.**
- 10) **How did you find out that the organization(s) needed volunteers?**
- Family or friends
 - Newspaper or other media
 - Organization's website
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - At one of the organization's events
 - Don't remember
- 11) **Was it easy to find out about volunteer opportunities in your community?**
- Yes
 - No
 - Other
- 12) **Did you receive training?**
- Yes
 - No
- 13) **Were you comfortable with the amount of training you received? Was it...**
- Adequate
 - Too much
 - Too little
 - Other
- 14) **Is it important to you to volunteer in a group activity? (ie. not work alone)**
- Yes
 - No
- 15) **Do you prefer short-term commitments or longer-term commitments?**
- Short term
 - Long term
 - No preference
 - Other
- 16) **Is it important that you do volunteer work that's different from your paying job or the job you used to have?**
- Yes
 - No
- 17) **How valued do you feel as a volunteer with this organization?**
- Extremely valued
 - Somewhat valued
 - Not really valued
 - Other

Survey Questions for Volunteers

- 18) Does your organization recognize your contribution as a volunteer and, if so, how?
- 19) How important is it to you to be recognized for your contribution?
- Extremely important
 - Moderately important
 - Not important
- 20) Does the volunteer work you're doing meet your expectations?
- Yes, I'm satisfied.
 - No, I'm not always satisfied.
- 21) If you're not always satisfied, please explain why.
- 22) Have you thought of no longer volunteering for this organization? If yes, why?
- Burnout/I've put in enough time
 - Would like to volunteer for another organization
 - Other commitments leave no time for volunteering
 - Health issues
 - Other
- 23) What would prevent you from doing more volunteer work?
- Not enough time
 - Burnt-out from current obligations
 - Health issues
 - Uninteresting volunteer opportunities
 - Don't know what other opportunities are out there
- 24) What suggestions, if any, would you have for your organization to improve the volunteer experience?
- 25) Have any of the organizations you volunteer for ever been asked for your suggestions on how to improve the volunteer experience?
- Yes
 - No
- 26) How old are you?
- 15-24
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55-64
 - 65-75
 - Over 75
- 27) Do you currently work at a paying job?
- Yes, full time
 - Yes, part-time
 - No
- 28) Do you do 'informal volunteering,' like helping a friend or neighbour with driving, property care, cooking or other things?
- Yes
 - No
- 29) If you do 'informal volunteering' how many hours a month roughly?
- Less than 5
 - More than 5
 - More than 10
 - More than 20
- 30) What gender are you?
- Male
 - Female

Footnotes



- 1) *An Economist's Case for Volunteering*, TD Economics, April 2012, pg. 2
- 2) *Satellite Account of Non-Profit Institutions and Volunteering*, 2007, pg. 10, Statistics Canada
- 3) Local volunteer statistics based on a proportional population calculation tied to the national rate, as reported in the Statistics Canada's report, *Volunteering in Canada*, 2012.
- 4) Social Services includes organizations and institutions providing human and social services to a community or target population. Three sub-groups are contained in this category: (1) social services (including organizations providing services for children, youth, families, the handicapped and the elderly, and self-help and other personal social services); (2) emergency and relief; and (3) income support and maintenance. *Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*, 2010, pg. 13, Statistics Canada
- 5) Websites include informationperth.ca, volunteerconnection.ca





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