

Reaping the rewards of volunteering

Everyday people across Canada are pitching in to help build homeless shelters, mentor school-aged children, pack food and clothing for low-income families, shovel sidewalks for seniors, fundraise for cancer awareness and much more.

Whether it's a few days a week or a few hours a month, these people are committed, care and expect nothing in return. Instead, volunteers receive rewards that go far beyond money and recognition—it's a sense of accomplishment and well-being that truly benefits the volunteer and the community.

"Most volunteers are motivated by the need to help or do good in the community," says Janice Bell, director of Volunteer Edmonton. "What they don't realize is that volunteering actually enhances their life physically and mentally."

Be an ambassador for elders without transportation

"Want to leave a footprint in your community? Anyone who drives can help! Our society is made up of those families who "have" two cars and of those isolated individuals without safe transportation- a "have not"! If you are a "have", what can you do to help out? Please think of becoming an ambassador for the elders in our community!

Really, volunteer driving can be very fun and rewarding. You will really learn a lot from these elders during every visit - more about the values in giving as in friendship and more about living through the tough times more happily. These people survived the depression - they can teach us all a lot about choosing to be happy!

Volunteer Drivers should have no insurance concerns as it is covered automatically under absolutely everyone's personal vehicle insurance policy as everyone volunteer drives already and has always done so ever since cars and insurance were introduced. No extra insurance is needed at all and we have verification of this from the Insurance Bureau of Canada on our website - seniorsdriving.org and on Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council website, too. Seniors Volunteer Driving Centre of Edmonton also carries non-owned automobile insurance to top up the volunteer drivers' insurance, in case of difficulties.

We call this volunteering "Door through Door" volun-

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, volunteer work helps individuals form interpersonal relationships, coping abilities and healthy social networks which act as a buffer against stress and illness.

Meeting new people can help you expand your social network and keep you connected to your community. If you're going through difficult times, focusing on someone other than yourself can help you put things in perspective. Generally, those who are socially active tend to have better health and lower mortality rates.

Volunteering is also related to improved self-esteem, confidence and boosts your chances for employment. Think students-volunteering provides students work experience and skills that will put them ahead of their peers.

for help when walking outside to the doctor, for groceries and/or to visit their immediate family in the nursing home or hospital. A ticket for gas and vehicle maintenance of \$7.00 is offered to the volunteer for each trip and an extra ticket is given to the volunteer driver for longer trips of two hours or more. This is an increase put in 6 months ago. The main result for the volunteer driver is the wonderful satisfaction that comes from helping someone out who cannot go out to fill their most basic needs otherwise. Why not make it part of your life?

The volunteer rides generally are needed daytime Monday to Friday, but rides are needed at different times too, so please think of offering! If you can volunteer to drive one person a week or one a month, one a day or up to three a day; they are all needed, it is all dependent on your time and your personal interest! The time needed is always there! Reference letters for driving work experience are always available!

Of course, if you would like to, donate funds to cover the gas monies for poorer elders on a fixed income pension, or to Seniors Driving to help defray the costs of offering volunteer driving to elders. Gas costs have increased steadily this year and this would be most appreciated.

Just call 732-1221 anytime for Anna or Bev with any questions about volunteering or donating.

"I can't think of any other activity that provides so many benefits at virtually no cost." Bell has experienced firsthand the good things volunteerism brings to both her own life as a volunteer and to others who benefit from voluntary services. "Volunteering is about meeting new friends, exercising your talents, and feeling good about who you are and what you're doing."

Most importantly, volunteering enables organizations to continue delivering much-needed services to those who need it most. Make a positive impact on your life and others by volunteering—it's a rewarding experience you won't regret.

Visit www.volunteeredmonton.com to find out how you can get involved. Volunteer Edmonton is a program of The Support Network. For more information, please contact Janice Bell at (780) 732-6649.

Make Someone's Day!

It is very easy to *make someone's day* ...

- a little brighter
- a little happier
- a little busier

Give us a call - we can help you *make someone's day*

Volunteers are a valued part of the Edmonton General Continuing Care team. As a volunteer, you can offer support to residents by assisting on units, with recreational activities, in the beauty salon, with chapel services - and simply by visiting. Choose your own schedule and we'll match you with what you enjoy doing.

A screening process is involved and we provide orientation and training to ensure you have a fulfilling experience. Edmonton General Volunteers are recognized for their efforts through social events, attendance at conferences and in many other ways that say *thank you for your time*.

Give us a call at 482-8270 or you can visit our website: www.caritas.ab.ca

...*Volunteers Grow Community*...