

SEARCHING FOR VOLUNTEERS

STARTS WITH A FEW STEPS

By: Volunteer Edmonton

With the school season in full swing, it might be time for your teenager to start thinking about volunteering. By incorporating community service into the school curriculum, students are provided with the opportunity to give back in ways that will help them grow into well-rounded and active community members. While volunteering can be a memorable and eye-opening experience for your teen, others may have a volunteer experience that's fraught with obstacles and frustration.

To avoid the latter, a few simple steps can help make the process of finding a volunteer opportunity easier for your teen.

Questions to consider—What do they want to do? How much time do they want to give? What don't they want to do? Answering these questions early on will help narrow down the search and provide your teen with a clear picture of the kinds of opportunities that would appeal to them.

Ask around—With 46 per cent of Edmontonians volunteering, chances are a friend, neighbour or teacher volunteers. Find out how they started, what organization they currently volunteer for and what kind of work they do. Their insight and suggestions can help point your teen in the right direction if they're still unsure.

Search online—This is a fast, easy and convenient way to search for volunteer opportunities, but sometimes a Google search can yield an overwhelming number of results. Sifting through several links can be messy and time consuming, so have your child spend their time searching on a few specific websites that list up-to-date volunteer opportunities in your area. Visit Volunteer Edmonton's website at www.volunteeredmonton.com to view a list of places where they can start their online search.

Close to home—Your teenagers don't need to look very far to find volunteer opportunities. If transportation is an issue and your teen wants to volunteer close to home, asking your community league members or browsing the community newspaper is a great way to find opportunities that are available right in your own backyard.

Be prepared—Many organizations will ask volunteers to fill out an application form, provide a resume, cover letter and take part in an interview. They may also be asked to provide references and you may have to sign a parental consent form if your teen is under 18 years of age. These steps are used by organizations as ways to ensure that volunteers are matched with an appropriate volunteer opportunity.

Evelyn Pham is Communications Coordinator at Volunteer Edmonton. She can be contacted for more information or story suggestions at epham@volunteeredmonton.com. For more information on how to find a volunteer opportunity, visit www.volunteeredmonton.com. Volunteer Edmonton is a program of The Support Network.

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