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**Examiner**  
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# Making family time meaningful

*VOLUNTEER WITH YOUR CHILDREN*

There's no other season that highlights the natural wonder of the outdoors better than summertime.



While many of us embark on trips to the lake or campgrounds, consider spending part of your summer volunteering with your children.

It's a meaningful, memorable and affordable way to spend time with your family while giving back to the community.

#### EXTRA PERKS

Aside from having fun, volunteering offers a few extra perks. It adds another dimension to your child's life by providing them with the opportunity to make a difference, learn about community needs and issues, take on responsibility and gain self-confidence.

Teenagers benefit by building their resume with relevant work experience that could count toward scholarships and awards, and parents have the satisfaction of knowing that they're setting a positive example.

"Involving children as volunteers is a great way to show them the importance of helping others," explains Janice Bell, director of Volunteer Edmonton. "If you'd like to teach your child about poverty or the importance of taking care of the environment, encourage your child to help pack school supplies for low-income families or help pick up litter around the neighbourhood. It will leave them with a lasting impression of how they can make a difference in their community."

Parents looking to encourage their children to become involved might wish to consider family volunteering as an option. Many organizations welcome families who wish to volunteer in groups.

There are many areas to explore - from healthcare to environment to social services, sports and the arts. Finding

the right volunteer opportunity starts with finding out what interests each member of your family.

Keep in mind that there are some organizations may not be able to accept volunteers under a certain age, but a little bit of research into the organizations that offer child-friendly volunteer positions should yield valuable results.

You can visit Volunteer Edmonton's own website, [volunteeredmonton.com](http://volunteeredmonton.com), to gain access to a number of different websites that list opportunities.

One example is [govolunteer.ca](http://govolunteer.ca), which is a comprehensive online database where visitors can search for volunteer opportunities by location, type and organization.

If you don't have access to the Internet, another quick and easy option is dialing 211. This is a free 24-hour phone number that can be called within Edmonton (482-INFO if calling from outside of Edmonton). The 211 operators provide information related to a wide range of community-related programs and events, including volunteering.

Local newspapers are another resource for volunteer opportunities, as are community league newsletters.

#### RECONNECT

A few hours a week or a month is all it takes.

"It doesn't have to be a lifetime commitment," Bell says. "Volunteering with your family can be a great way to reconnect, do something interesting and have fun, all while giving back to the community."

Look to this space to see the work that the city's volunteers and non-profit organizations are carrying out. To suggest a story idea, please contact Evelyn Pham at [epham@volunteeredmonton.com](mailto:epham@volunteeredmonton.com).