

Take volunteering outside this summer

Kids learn from their parents

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 wonderful way to get them out of the house and involved in a unique activity that provides them with the opportunity to make a difference in the community.

While the benefits of volunteering may not be apparent immediately, it has been long known that volunteer work does have a positive impact on people, especially during the formative years.

The 2002 National Survey on Family Volunteering reveals that volunteering helps children and youth develop important moral values, and contributes to the health of families by offering family members opportunities to connect through a common interest.

Setting a good example through

volunteering has also been shown to influence a child's future level of community involvement.

In 2000, Statistics Canada discovered that people who had a parent who volunteered had a higher level of community involvement than those who did not have parents who volunteered, demonstrating that early experiences with volunteering does play a role in a person's level of community involvement.

Luckily, age isn't much an issue for some organizations.

Today, there are plenty of options available to suit every age, skill level and interest, a bonus for those hoping to take a break from the ordinary and get involved

in a unique volunteer activity that brings the whole family outside.

"Look for volunteer opportunities that can easily fit into your day-to-day schedule," suggests

Janice Bell, director of Volunteer Edmonton.

"It could be as simple as finding volunteer opportu-

nities that are close to home such as helping out at a local community league event or working at one of the many festivals for a few days."

Other ideas for unique outdoor volunteer opportunities include neighbourhood clean ups, monitoring bird species in your backyard, gardening at a local greenhouse or park, or caring for abandoned animals at an animal shelter.

"Provided the opportunity, children are capable of doing amazing things, including volunteering. There's no such thing as being too young to get involved," says Bell.

Whether they're interested in the environment, want to learn how to grow plants or enjoy playing with animals, finding an opportunity that will allow your child to spend time outdoors and gain a meaningful volunteer experience is a great way to make the most out of your family time this summer.

To find out how you can become involved in volunteering, visit www.volunteeredmonton.com.

Look to this space to see the work that the city's volunteers and non-profit organizations are carrying out and what it is that Volunteer Edmonton is involved in. For more information or suggestions for story ideas, contact Evelyn Pham at epham@volunteeredmonton.com, call 780-732-6655 or check out our website at www.volunteeredmonton.com.

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