

## **National Volunteer Week Kit**

**April 23-29, 2006**

**Theme: Volunteers Grow Community**

# National Volunteer Week in Canada - Some History

**The first National Volunteer Week** in Canada recognized the contribution of women to the Second World War effort in 1943. It was proclaimed by the War Services Department of the Canadian government. Events were organized by Women's Voluntary Services in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver.

In the late 1960s people began to talk about reviving the idea of designating a week, but this time to honour all community volunteers. Local volunteer centres took the lead in organizing events for the next few decades. In 1990, the third week of April became National Volunteer Week.

National Volunteer Week is a time to honour and thank the people who donate their time and energy to their fellow citizens. It is also a time to bring attention to the huge role that volunteers play in our lives, our communities and our country.

Volunteer Week dates:

- 2006 – April 23-29
- 2007 – April 15-21
- 2008 – April 27-May 3
- 2009 – April 19-25
- 2010 – April 18-24

## Why do we need to promote volunteers and volunteering?

We need to promote volunteers and volunteering to:

- ✎ Help make sure people get the help they need.
- ✎ Help make sure communities get the help they need.
- ✎ Help make sure we have enough volunteers now and in the future.
- ✎ Encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to get involved with their community.
- ✎ Support community groups who need volunteers.
- ✎ Encourage government and business to recognize, support, and work with volunteers and volunteer groups.
- ✎ Help make sure volunteers and volunteer groups get the funding and other resources they need.

Volunteering is good for everyone – the individual volunteer, the person or group the volunteer helps, and the community. Volunteering helps to increase our social, economic, spiritual, physical, and cultural health. It helps people and communities keep their health and well-being. It helps our environment.

Idea...

"...people are working like dogs out there doing things for the community. If they charged for that, it would never get done. We would never be able to afford it."  
**Lorne Gushue,  
Yellowknife, NWT**




### Promote volunteering

Different groups can work together to hold an open house or display. Let people know what you do and what you need volunteers for. Work with local volunteer firefighters and maybe use the fire hall for your event.




## Who recognizes volunteers?

Everyone and anyone can recognize volunteers at any time of the year! Many people can lead the way. Here are some ideas to recognize volunteers in your organization or community.







### Volunteer groups and committees

-  Recognize volunteers who work on events and programs. The group's president, chairperson, or executive director is the best person to do this.
-  Call one or two volunteers every few days to say 'thanks'. Ask if they need anything or if they have any concerns. Talk to the volunteer coordinator and encourage them to follow-up right away.
-  Nominate volunteers for awards. Encourage community leaders to recognize volunteers and tell them why.


### Volunteer coordinators

-  Recognize volunteers every day.
-  Give positive feedback and support.
-  Make sure to meet volunteers' needs and expectations.

### Community leaders

-  Adopt a community declaration on volunteering
-  Recognize volunteers at every special event.
-  Take a few minutes every day to call or email two or three volunteers and say 'thanks'.
-  Talk to volunteers we meet on the street.
-  Promote and celebrate community volunteer awards.
-  Recognize volunteers as part of daily business.

### Individuals and families who benefit

-  Say 'thanks'. Offer a smile. Even small things have a big impact.

## Some ways to thank informal volunteers

Many people help out every day. Informal volunteers help out on their own rather than through an organized group. One of the best ways to recognize volunteers is a regular, heartfelt 'thank you'.

We thank informal volunteers with kindness, a smile, or a hug. Say lots of good things to informal volunteers and about them.

- ✎ Bake them a cake, a loaf of bread, or bannock.
- ✎ Leave a jar of jam on their doorstep.
- ✎ Tell their family and friends how great they are.
- ✎ Tell them what life would be like without them.
- ✎ Make a gift to a community cause in their name.
- ✎ Send a small gift or flowers.
- ✎ Nominate them for a volunteer award.
- ✎ Put a message on local radio or TV.

### Thank volunteers' families

**Many volunteers have time to help out because their families encourage and support them. Thank the family and tell them how important their support is.**

## Ways to celebrate National Volunteer Week

**Awards:** Give volunteers a trophy, medal, plaque, book, photo, or certificate. Ask a local artist to make a special award. Ask an important person to give the award at a public event. Asking for nominations allows other people to participate when they nominate someone for an award. An outline for a nomination form is included in these materials.

**Special attention:** Write a story for a newspaper or newsletter. Put public notices on bulletin boards, radio, TV, or a website. Involve the school in a volunteer poster contest and display the posters in a public place. Ask your church to recognize community volunteers during its service.

**Volunteer Hand of Fame Wall:** Volunteer hands are traced and names printed on them. Agencies and individuals submit names. The hands are put on a Volunteer Hand of Fame Wall in a public place, such as the community hall.

**“Hands On” Banner:** Volunteers are asked to dab their hand in a variety of coloured paints, then put their handprint on a sheet of canvas. This could be done at a recognition event and then the banner displayed at the recreation or community centre.

**Cheer Your Volunteer 1:** People are asked to submit the name of their choice of volunteer to receive a prize. A draw is made from all the entries and the winner receives a prize. Ask a local business to donate the prize.

**Cheer Your Volunteer 2:** Have a phone-in show on the radio so people can phone in and cheer on volunteers they know. Or, advertise on the local television channel that people can submit the names of volunteers they would like to recognize. The names are broadcast throughout National Volunteer Week.

**Proclaim National Volunteer Week:** Ask your community council to proclaim National Volunteer Week. Use the signing of the proclamation as an opportunity for photos or interviews. Sample proclamations are included in this package.

**Captain Volunteer:** People or agencies request a visit from Captain Volunteer for a small fee. Provide a form which includes the name of the volunteer and the person requesting the visit, preferred date, time and location of visit. A costumed Captain Volunteer makes visits throughout National Volunteer Week and presents volunteers with purple people pleasers (candy).

**Events:** Celebrate volunteers at a feast, lunch, barbeque, dance, special event, wrap-up party, or appreciation night. Here are some ideas.

- **Hats Off to You** lunch with homemade hats for volunteers.
- **You Take the Cake** dessert event. Serve cake and tea to volunteers.
- **Volunteers are Stars** evening. Treat volunteers like celebrities where they can be stalked by paparazzi (celebrity photographers with Polaroid cameras) and their pictures put on a Wall of Fame. Serve ginger ale in champagne glasses and hand out sunglasses.
- **Walk a Mile in a Volunteer's Shoes.** Have a walk with all the volunteers in your community with door prizes for three lucky volunteers. Connect volunteering and active living. They both contribute to good health. People who contribute to their community feel a sense of purpose and value that leads to a longer life.

Sources: Volunteer Canada and Volunteer Alberta websites





## Outline: Volunteer Award Nomination Form

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### What is the award?

Say what the award is about. For example, the award might be for an informal volunteer such as a good neighbour, or for a board member or other volunteer who works with a group.

Give information about:





-  When nominations start and end.
-  Where people can pick up and drop off a nomination form.
-  When and where the volunteer will receive the award.
-  What the volunteer will receive. For example, a gift certificate, trophy, or other item.

### Who is eligible for the award?

Say who can win the award. For example, a group might want to give an award to a young person or an elder.

### How will the group decide who wins the awards?

Say what information people look at to decide who wins the award. For example, they might look at things such as:

-  What kind of work the volunteer does.
-  How a volunteer inspires others.
-  What difference their work has made.
-  How much time they volunteer.

## Sample Volunteer Week Declarations

A proclamation is a formal public statement or announcement. It is usually signed by a government official such as a mayor. The signing ceremony can also be made a public opportunity for photographs and media interviews.

### Sample #1 (Short version)

**WHEREAS** volunteers are the lifeblood of our community, and

**WHEREAS** (your community name) would be deprived of numerous programs, services and activities without the support and involvement of volunteers, and

**WHEREAS** the work of volunteers is greatly appreciated and valued, and

**WHEREAS** every person in our community benefits from the contributions that volunteers make,

**THEREFORE**, on behalf of the (city, town, hamlet, charter community) Council and the citizens of (name of community), I (insert name) do hereby proclaim April 23-29, 2006 "Volunteer Week" in our community.

## Sample #2 (Long version)

**WHEREAS** the talents, generosity and energy of volunteers continue to be one of the Northwest Territories' greatest natural resources, and

**WHEREAS** to build a society that is fair and just for all, we must each work together in the spirit of respect and cooperation, and

**WHEREAS** volunteers and voluntary groups are increasingly seen as an important partner with government and business in building strong communities, and

**WHEREAS** volunteers show every day through their actions that they truly care about their communities and the people who live in them, and

**WHEREAS** it is fitting for all residents to celebrate our rich heritage of volunteering and to give special recognition to all the dedicated volunteers who contribute to the health of (your community name),

**NOW THEREFORE** I, (Name and position) of (name of community) hereby proclaim April 23-29 "National Volunteer Week" in 2006.

**AND FURTHER**, I urge all citizens to help renew and maintain the volunteer spirit of our community by committing to address the needs of our community through volunteer action.

*Sources: Volunteer Canada and Volunteer Alberta websites*

## Resources for National Volunteer Week

Volunteer Canada has resources to help you celebrate National Volunteer Week. Their campaign kit can be found at:

<http://www.volunteer.ca/nvw>

From this website you can:

- Thank volunteers using Volunteer Canada e-cards.
- Download National Volunteer Week recognition certificates
- Decorate your computer desktop with National Volunteer Week wallpaper
- Add a National Volunteer Week banner to your website
- Place an order for National Volunteer Week materials or recognition items
- Register your volunteer week event
- Look at events from across the country to get celebration ideas

## One community celebrates volunteers

Some of our leaders and volunteer groups got together to think about ways to celebrate volunteers in our community.

They talked about how volunteers build relationships and make connections in our community. Volunteers share happiness, ease peoples' pain, and help them heal. They take responsibility for the well-being of others. They make things happen. They include people who might be left out.

The leaders and volunteer groups talked about what our community would be like without volunteers. Programs would probably be more expensive. It would be a 'me' instead of a 'we' society.

We wouldn't have as many clubs, sports, or special events. We might feel more lonely. We might not know each other as well or feel so connected. We might not know who needs help. We might not know about and share our traditions as much, and we might lose them.

At the end of the meeting the leaders and volunteer groups decided to have a community feast. They want to put on a play to show what volunteers do to make our community the great place it is today.

They plan to go door to door to invite volunteers. They plan to put messages on the radio to invite the public. They want to work together to make this the best volunteer celebration our community has ever had.