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Volunteering “A Way Of Life”

It's a cold winter afternoon in Petawawa, Ontario, here volunteer instructors are anxiously awaiting the young children enrolled in the “Jack Rabbit Cross Country Ski Program”. With a great deal of enthusiasm, the children prepare their equipment for another fun day on the trails. The positive atmosphere created by the children and volunteers lends to another successful afternoon of learning, competing and having fun.

Envision for a minute, Canada without Kin Canada, Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary, Optimists, Knights of Columbus and the numerous other volunteer and service clubs across our nation. Volunteers are the most important resource communities have. In my mind, without these dedicated individuals, our communities would be challenged.

Volunteering can be beneficial to the provider and the recipient. Volunteers provide a strong economic and social benefit to communities across our nation. Last year, Kin Canada reported that Kin across our nation provided 516,292 community service hours. District 7, volunteered the third highest in our nation with 56,268 community service hours. In 2010, volunteers donated their time, energy and skills across Canada, resulting in 2 billion volunteer hours for their communities.

So, what is a volunteer? What is the value of volunteering? Is volunteering about money? Most people would say no. Volunteering is about giving, contributing and helping other individuals and the community at large. Volunteering is working with a team of dedicated individuals making a meaningful contribution and pulling a community together. To me, a volunteer is someone who cares, who wants to be engaged and impact their community.

Throughout my life outside the Kin family, I have volunteered in many ways, as a teacher of Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation to teenagers and adults, instructing children the skill of Cross Country Skiing and volunteering for the local South Shore Lumberjacks Junior Hockey Team. The satisfaction is the adult who saved a four year old boy, in cardiac arrest, who was revived to live a normal life. The young children who developed cross country skiing skills, eventually making the Junior National Team was rewarding for both children, parents and the volunteers. As a Kin, dedicating my time for the Salvation Army Kettle Fund Drive, Food For Families to mention a few has been self rewarding.

As Kin volunteers, we can confidently say, volunteering has positively effected changed in our life's. We have acquired new skills and knowledge, such as time management skills, communication skills, teaching skills and listening skills. Through the “Jack Rabbit Program”, my own cross country skiing skills excelled, allowing me to compete competitively. The knowledge of current social and political issues has contributed to our improved well-being, which has impacted our careers and benefited our health. Volunteering has expanded our horizons, gaining new experiences and has challenged us to create new connections.

Volunteering is also an act of kindness. Personally, volunteering has provided me with a sense of purpose, helping the elderly in my neighbourhood, shovelling snow, mowing lawns or reaching for that product high on a shelf at the grocery store. Personal volunteering benefits the people around us and increases our self-esteem as well as our own personal well-being.

As Kin, volunteering builds up our personal skills, increases our self confidence, develops our organizational skills and creates a team atmosphere. As members from diverse backgrounds, volunteering brings Kin together to work on projects such as raising money for our Cystic Fibrosis partners, resulting in a sense of belonging within our community.

Kin volunteers strengthen our communities by “Serving The Community's Greatest Need” which permits us to stay connected, provides a sense of purpose and belonging, allowing us to be active members, and creating a meaningful contribution to a better community. As Kin, we have been fortunate to have had the opportunity of creating a positive impact in our communities in the hope of making a valued difference in someone's life. We also garner the positive benefits through our relentless community involvement.

To quote the late Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau: “One measure of the spirit of a county is the service it's citizen give voluntarily for the welfare of others.”

Finally, here's one way I visualize the impact of volunteers. Imagine if one day all volunteers simply did not show up. What would our cities, provincial parks, schools, youth programs look like? What basic needs such as providing food to those in need would go unmet? What opportunities to grow, learn and thrive would be lost? As Kin, we never volunteer for the recognition or the glory, we volunteer because we care about those around us and wish for a better tomorrow. With this in mind, I challenge Kin and myself to continue with the unselfish volunteer hours, which has and will continue to impact the future health of our communities.

Respectively Submitted

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