

22.2 - Engaging Youth: Editorial

22.2 - Youth Matter! Setting Youth Up for Success when Volunteering

22.2 - Why You Need Social Media to Attract Youth Volunteers

22.2 - The Next Generation: How to Engage and Work with Youth Volunteers

22.2 - Wednesday Morning Lessons: Youth Impelled to Action

22.2 - Engaging Youth: A Success Story

22.2 - Girl Guides of Canada: Encouraging Young Volunteers

22.2 - Get YOUTHED to It!

22.2 - Why You Should Recruit Millennials to Boost Your Nonprofit Organization

## **EDITORIAL**

My first memory of volunteering began at my Halifax HS. I recall walking alone on a dark, damp fall morning, with the steady glow of the street lamps a dim comfort. I was on my way to a very early shift as a volunteer to provide food and other necessities to teacher and student participants in a Teach-a-Thon. This was a not a mandatory placement. A need was simply there, I connected with someone and joined. I do not remember all of my tasks, but what does remain is a feeling of belonging, serving a common useful purpose. I was hooked (and I had fun).

Consider that the tendency of youth today to over-analyze the perfect volunteer role may lead to that road not taken, so they miss the hook. With this issue we have aspired to clear and lighten that path (street lamps or not) for young volunteers to walk confidently down, discover hidden treasures, take a chance and own it!

How does one capture the heart of today's tech-savvy youth? Distraction is always a quick click away. We can offer youth confidence-building adventure, self-discovery and fulfillment, so who wouldn't join us in a heartbeat? But spare time is sacrosanct, so suggesting to others how to spend it needs a smart sales pitch.

Faiza Kanji begins by recommending many excellent tips and youth-centred advisory committees for organizations to bridge the gap between millennials' technology-based learning styles and real-life community engagement. Boost your profile and message through social media to get with the program and entice youth, suggests Veronica Torres.

A keen group of teen youth auditors from Volunteer Toronto encourage reciprocal feedback between youth and adults via surveys and online polls to maximize youth participation. Fahd Alttahab's springboard to volunteering began from his positive experiences as a young boy with the volunteers at the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa, compelling him to give back. Meet Catherine Turnbull, a Halifax high school student whose placement as a volunteer in a local nursing home and other volunteer experiences led to a broader sense of herself and others in the world. Millennials want to know the impact of their volunteering, and need personal fulfillment and mentoring from competent leadership, according to a recent report in Lincoln Arneal's timely article.

Reflect youth passions and assets in your chosen activities and you will have fun, Kathryn Lyons promises ... a big part of Girl Guide's mantra to guarantee lifelong enrichment and commitment. Has youth volunteering changed in twenty years? Lynne Savage's anecdotal 1994 piece, "Get Youthed to it" will enlighten and entertain.

Spontaneously filling a need, as my high school self did so long ago, may lead to serendipity, and we hope, a continuum of lifelong volunteer service.

Jennifer Campbell

Editorial Team

### **Youth Matter! Setting Youth Up for Success when Volunteering**

by Faiza Kanji, Toronto, ON

As Canadian work and volunteer labour forces age, youth are increasingly becoming the focus of plans to engage a new generation of volunteers. In 2013, 55% of over 8,000 volunteers at the YMCA of Greater Toronto were under the age of 29. With a vision that, "Our communities will be home to the healthiest children, teens and young adults" the Y is focused on setting youth up to succeed in volunteering. This article will explore the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets, the current context for Canadian youth and the realities of the teenage brain. Understanding these components of healthy adolescent development will help the volunteer engagement professional when planning to involve youth in volunteering to set them up for successful, achievable and meaningful roles.

Why the need for youth participation in volunteerism, civic engagement and service to others? Published in 1990, the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents outline experiences adolescents can have that will increase the likelihood of healthy development and a positive future as contributing adults. The more assets a young person is exposed to, the more likely they are to develop into contributing members of their community. The fewer assets they are exposed to, the more likely they are to engage in risky behaviours such as substance abuse, violence and promiscuity. There are internal and external assets. Examples of internal assets include the development of positive values such as caring, equality and social justice. They also include developing positive identity through personal power, sense of purpose and self-esteem. Examples of external assets include support through

adult relationships, empowerment in a community that values youth, an understanding of boundaries and expectations with positive peer influences and high expectations as well as constructive use of time.<sup>1</sup> When reviewed, 21 of the 40 assets can be linked directly to the activity of volunteering. This number increases if volunteering takes place within a faith-based community, in the arts sector, school or alongside family. There is no other activity that youth engage in that develops the number of assets that volunteering is able to do.

Today's millennials, aged 13 to 33, represent 4.3 million people in Canada's workforce.<sup>2</sup> This, at a time when Canada is experiencing high levels of underemployment among youth.<sup>3</sup> Within this group, there are three factors that are shaping their development into adulthood in a way no other generation has faced. These are technology, diversity and the rise of mandated volunteering or learning.

Youth today have a very different relationship with technology than the generations before them. Older Millennials and Gen Xers can recall a time without social media, smartphones and personal computers whereas young people today have grown up with these things as a norm and where some media are already yesterday's news. The technology in a smartphone is often more advanced, easier to access and more cost effective than the technology in our work places. In 2012, an Ipsos Reid survey reported that 67% of teens owned a smartphone.<sup>4</sup> As volunteer engagement professionals, we need to examine all aspects of the volunteer cycle to determine where we can make volunteering more accessible and attractive to a generation that uses very little paper, does a lot of learning via social media and connects multiple times a day with others online.

How do we leverage the communication and learning style of this generation to engage them in building community? The creation of a Youth Advisory Committee to the Board of Directors at the YMCA of Greater Toronto has proven to be one successful model. Committee members are invited to participate in person, virtually and by telecommuting and have been consulted on various aspects of the charity's strategy for a vision where youth are very much at the centre.

Whether it be landscape, language or heritage, our country is one of the most diverse in the world. One of the challenges is a lack of shared meaning around concepts. When it comes to volunteering, a degree of cultural competence is required of volunteer engagement professionals. The word volunteering does not have a direct translation in many languages and the concept of organized volunteering is not a global phenomenon. Among newcomers, translations like community involvement, service and neighbouring often ring truer. It is important when screening potential volunteers to understand what cultural, religious and social values they place around volunteering.

Today's youth are often volunteering for the first time as part of a mandated program for high school, within post-secondary institutions, in corporate giving programs and through retribution programs in our legal system. Often, a young person's first connection with volunteering coincides with the idea of receiving a benefit for their volunteer service such as the ability to graduate high school or a successful application to a post-secondary program. In 2006, Volunteer Canada published a report challenging volunteer engagement professionals to rethink the volunteer cycle when mandated volunteers are

being considered.<sup>5</sup> The challenge is in leveraging new forms of engagement with potential young volunteers offering a contribution regardless of their initial motivation.

When considering the best ways to work with youth, a key to success is an understanding of the changes in the brain's development through adolescence. Research shows that "the greatest changes to the parts of the brain that are responsible for impulse-control, judgment, decision-making, planning, organization and involved in other functions like emotion, occur in adolescence. This area of the brain (prefrontal cortex) does not reach full maturity until around the age of 25." When planning for volunteer roles that are suitable for youth, consideration needs to be made for the level of responsibility, decision-making and judgment that is required and whether they are appropriate for an adolescent or teen. Placing youth in roles that play to their existing assets and help them build the skills that the brain is developing at the same time is important in making them feel successful as volunteers. One strategy implemented at the YMCA is the recruitment of adult allies who often volunteer alongside youth. The partnership allows for a supportive environment for younger volunteers and plays to the established strengths of adult volunteers.

Organized volunteering has long-established roots in Canada and continues to increase in relevancy. Youth volunteering makes sense from a developmental perspective and as a measure of community health. As the population ages, as technology continues to change rapidly, as we continue to embrace growing diversity in Canada and as the number of youth volunteers rise, an exciting opportunity exists to re-think the engagement of youth volunteers. A unique privilege also exists to ensure someone's first exposure to community involvement is supportive and positive; an experience developing today's youth and possibly cultivating future leaders.

- 1 <http://www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-assets>
- 2 <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/pick-choisir?lang=eng&p2=33&id=2820002>
- 3 [http://www.cga-canada.org/en-ca/ResearchReports/ca\\_rep\\_2012-10\\_youthunemployment.pdf](http://www.cga-canada.org/en-ca/ResearchReports/ca_rep_2012-10_youthunemployment.pdf)
- 4 [http://www.ipsos.ca/common/dl/pdf/ipsos\\_InteractiveReidReport\\_FactGuide\\_2012.pdf](http://www.ipsos.ca/common/dl/pdf/ipsos_InteractiveReidReport_FactGuide_2012.pdf)
- 5 <http://volunteer.ca/content/volunteering-and-mandatory-community-service-implications-volunteer-program-management>

---

A volunteer herself from a very young age, Faiza Kanji has successfully managed volunteers at the Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC), Youth Employment Service (YES) the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation (CBCF) and currently as Manager of Volunteer Services at Surrey Place Centre in Toronto. Faiza is also Program Chair of the Toronto Association for Volunteer Administrators (TAVA), member and volunteer of PAVR-O and a member of CAVR. Faiza believes strongly that a community with a sound sense of volunteerism and a committed volunteer base improves the overall quality of life and health of all its members.

## Why You Need Social Media to Attract Youth Volunteers

by Veronica Torres, Toronto, ON

What is social media? Many of us still scratch our heads when asked this question and the answer is really quite simple. It is a vital way of communicating with others through social networking sites and communities where one can share ideas, thoughts and information.

Social media has exploded over the last few years and it is not going away! According to the Statistics Canada website, volunteering numbers have steadily increased by 8% over the years 2004-2010. Youth volunteers represent more than half of this increase and what better way to keep in touch with these tech-savvy volunteers than to offer them a way to communicate in a style they know all too well—social media.

What is considered part of the youth volunteer group? Anyone from age 15 to 24. This is a generation of people who grew up with the Internet at their fingertips and probably know how to navigate it better than their parents. Maintaining a relationship with these young volunteers will not only promote future volunteerism, but may assist your organization to grow.

Using social media to reach out to your volunteers is not hard. Here are a few tips and tricks to get you started.

- Know your audience: who are you reaching out to and how do you get your message to them?

Would having a social media site like Facebook or Twitter help you get your voice out there? If you are willing to post your available opportunities and offer a quick and easy way for people to apply or get information on how to reach you, you will have succeeded in reaching out to your audience.

- Do your research: investigate what social media applications may work best for your organization.

There are many apps, but discovering which one will work best is key.

- Create a social media policy for your organization.

This is a very important step as it will outline a strategy and explain the guidelines necessary for working with online social sites. Large organizations may already have one in place which you can request. If not, meeting up with the right people (communication department) can help you to determine the dos and don'ts of online interaction. Create a social media checklist and make sure to establish communication standards and use a consistent approach.

- Find the right person to run your social media; you can even include virtual volunteers!

Is someone in your organization already involved in social media? Maybe they have an interest in running it for you. You can even consider recruiting a volunteer to run your social sites, (with some guidance and training). Social media is something that can be done anywhere, so virtual volunteers are also assets. Finding someone who is committed is very important as most experts suggest posting at least three to four times a week to keep yourself visible.

- Encourage conversation by using social media to answer questions, survey and promote events.

Social media is all about keeping the conversation going. Surveys and polls may increase traffic to your social media sites. Offering contests also helps tremendously as you can direct people to your pages in order to enter and there they will find information regarding your organization.

There are many options to choose from when deciding which social media site is right for you. Make sure to research companies that may be doing the same type of work as your organization to see how they are using social media to reach out.

Here is a rundown of the most popular sites currently used by youth around the world.

#### **Facebook** (1.15 billion users)

Facebook offers users the opportunity to connect with people in their community and around the world. Users can be heard by adding posts they want to “share” with others. This can be anything from a funny video they may have seen on YouTube to a recipe for chicken linguini. When one posts something, others can then “like” or “share” it with their network of friends. This is a great way to advertise a service or spread the word about something, as it can reach a large number of users in a matter of minutes.

How does this benefit you? Facebook offers a great way to monitor the progress of your page with a tool called Insights. Use this free analytic tool to see how your page is growing, which posts people are liking and engaging in most, which demographics you have reached and much more.

#### **Twitter** (500 million users)

Twitter is a microblog social media site that allows users to send out quick “tweets” that are posted to their personal profile, sent out to their network of followers and are searchable. These tweets are limited to 140 characters to keep your message short and sweet. Think of Twitter like a newspaper headline. You can add photos and links to your tweet to get the attention of others and they can lead the user to your site. Users can also categorize what they are talking about by using searchable hashtags (#). Hashtags can be used in front of any word, so that when someone searches that particular word, your tweet will pop up. You can also follow others that share your same interests and likes.

How does this benefit you? Twitter is quickly becoming the favourite social media forum for youth ages 15 to 24 as many are abandoning Facebook because parents and older family members are joining.

Twitter is youthful and more in your face and offers quick reads versus longer posts. Choosing Twitter over Facebook may save you some time as you will only need to manage one site.

**Instagram** (130 million users) and **Pinterest** (70 million users)

Today's youth have learned to become better visual storytellers through social media. Sites like Pinterest and Instagram work mainly on visual stimulation and offer the user the opportunity to engage via photos. On Pinterest users can create boards where they can "pin" images they like. Instagram works the same way except that the individual using it is the one creating the photos. These pins and photos can then be shared with anyone using the site and photos can go viral in minutes.

How does this benefit you? Using a picture to tell a story has always had an impact on previous generations, but today's youth require a visual in the story to garner their attention. Using such sites offers your organization an easy way to reach out without needing any words.

And how can your organization manage all of this easily? Create monthly post templates and spreadsheets and try different online applications such as Hootsuite or TweetDeck to organize your posts and automatically set them.

Ultimately, using social media is all about engaging people, communication and putting what you need out there to benefit you. Relationships are an integral part of any organization. Opening new channels of communication is often the best way of connecting with people. How better to engage youth, than to use tools they already have at their fingertips.

---

Veronica Torres is the Program Coordinator, Volunteer Resources, at the University Health Network – Toronto Rehab, Toronto, ON and the Social media Monitor for Toronto Rehab's Social media sites (Facebook and Twitter).

## **The Next Generation: How to Engage and Work with Youth Volunteers**

by Katie Chen (16), Joshua Camson (16), HyunGu Kang (15), Robyn Matuto (16) and Steven Wang (17),  
Toronto, ON

In May of 2012, we met for the first time at Volunteer Toronto's headquarters. We were a crew of eleven high school students, representatives from several diverse communities in Toronto. We attended different schools, lived in different neighbourhoods and were enrolled in different grade levels. The one thing we had in common was our passion for and expertise in youth volunteerism. Our mission was to help nonprofits in engaging youth volunteers and providing meaningful volunteer opportunities for them.

Our ongoing challenge from that day to today has been to quantify our volunteer experience. Why do we volunteer? What makes a great volunteer opportunity? How can organizations benefit from youth volunteerism? After much discussion and sharing of our experiences, we created the Volunteer Toronto Youth Audit, a tool developed and used by us to provide tailored feedback and recommendations to organizations to help improve their volunteer program for youth volunteers. One year later, after conducting five audits of various nonprofit organizations (added to the findings from our personal volunteering experiences), we have come to a few conclusions regarding youth volunteerism.

Reaching youth is key. Interested in increasing recruitment numbers? Try reviewing your website, Twitter account, Facebook page or any other social media outlet you maintain. These online marketing tools give organizations the opportunity to reach out to applicants in a uniquely youth-oriented environment free of charge. Facebook and Twitter should be used only to update viewers on important events or deadlines. An organization's website, however, should be a comprehensive summary of the organization's goals, values and community involvement. The Volunteering tab should be easy to find. All application forms, medical sheets and reference checks should be uploaded to the page so that applicants can conveniently access them. Another important rule of thumb is to update your volunteering pages regularly. It can be very demoralizing to see a volunteering webpage that has not been updated for a year or to go through the trouble of filling out an application to find that only newer, more updated copies are accepted at the front desk.

One of the things that we discussed at length was the unique perspective of youth volunteers. Being full-time students, youth must find time to volunteer under strenuous time constraints. High school students are financially dependent on their families, which makes it difficult for them to afford public transportation. In addition, youth are held accountable to the rules of their parents: they have to be home by curfew, keep their grades up and stay in contact while they are away from home.

All of these limitations should be addressed by organizations that wish to run healthy youth volunteer programs. Despite the time constraints involved with being enrolled in high school, many students



actively search for meaningful, long-term volunteer opportunities. To engage with motivated youth, organizations should commit to regular, realistic meetings where youth can contribute to ongoing projects. Online volunteering portals can help to engage those who do not have time to commute. Google Hangouts, for example, is an online platform that allows people to video-chat while collaborating on documents and presentations. This article in fact was written over Google Hangouts!

Another defining characteristic of youth volunteers is a deficit of professional work experience. Because students have not had the chance to immerse themselves in a work environment, it can be disorienting and genuinely scary for them to volunteer for professional organizations. It may not even occur to youth that things adults take for granted (e.g. business attire and etiquette) are important elements of volunteering. This makes it even more critical to be clear, concise and considerate when communicating with your youth volunteer team, especially during orientation and training. Encouraging volunteers to ask questions when they are unsure of their roles minimizes miscommunication while providing valuable feedback to volunteer coordinators.

If your youth volunteer program begins to stagnate, gather information from participating youth. Printed questionnaires, brainstorming sessions and online polls on SurveyMonkey can provide some of the most valuable and specific feedback a volunteer department needs. Just as volunteers depend on feedback from the organization to improve their performance, volunteer departments can learn a lot simply by asking youth to reflect on their volunteer experience.

Another way that organizations can foster continued, sustainable growth is by creating youth advisory councils. These groups of experienced student volunteers provide direction to otherwise mellow volunteer programs. In addition, the leadership aspect of youth advisory roles can be very alluring to youth applicants, increasing recruitment turnout and thereby contributing to growth of the volunteer department.

It may be surprising, but a multitude of youth do want to volunteer, get involved and contribute to their community on a local or global scale. Youth may be the leaders of the future, but they can also be the leaders of today. Creating a volunteer program that is understanding, welcoming and engages youth can greatly enhance an adolescent's volunteering experience, giving them the opportunity to grow and become the leaders and citizens of tomorrow.

---

HyunGu, Joshua, Katie, Robyn and Steven are part of a group of 13 high school students aged 14 to 18 who volunteer for Volunteer Toronto as Youth Auditors. Between them, the students have completed over 1,000 volunteer hours for various non-profit organizations and causes and they continue to volunteer to create change in their local communities. They deliver their Volunteer Toronto Youth Audit to nonprofits in Toronto to help them improve their youth volunteer engagement. To invite the Youth Auditors to provide your organization with specific recommendations on how to better engage youth volunteers, contact <a href="mailto:info@volunteertoronto.ca">info@volunteertoronto.ca</a>.

### Wednesday Morning Lessons: Youth Impelled to Action

by Catherine Turnbull, Halifax, NS

As an overwhelmed 12-year-old junior high girl with an awful haircut, I clearly remember looking up in awe at the Grade 11 girls in their enviable maturity and imagining the excitement of their Wednesday mornings. These Wednesday mornings remain devoted to sending the Grade 11 girls out into the city to a variety of volunteer placements. These girls weather whatever weather they face, be it pelting rain or blinding snow, to make the trek to whichever hospital, charity or institution they have been selected to lend a hand. This program is an essential part of the high school curriculum at our school, where one of our goals is to educate to a sense of social justice that impels to action. Volunteering is such a valuable way to teach not only classroom lessons, but to encourage growth through real-life experiences. Young people like me are not often exposed to the many things that happen in our communities; any effort that propels us to see things differently and with a better and wider understanding is therefore worthwhile.

Volunteering has always been something I have seen as crucial to being an active citizen and this is especially important for youth to experience. This year, through our Social Action course, I have been able to discuss the importance of volunteering and explore human relationships on a weekly basis. In addition to our Wednesday placements, our class meets to address questions and themes that tie in to the experience of volunteering and help us to become more socially and empathetically aware. Using various media (films, songs, poems, images), we discuss questions such as, “What inspires social action?”; “What does it mean to be human?”; “Why do we need each other?”; “Are we good?”; “What is a civil society?” and because we are a Catholic school, “What does it mean to bear witness to Christ?”. We explore the topic of each student’s presentation from the viewpoints of different world faiths and lead an in-depth discussion, during which we openly express our opinions. These Friday afternoons of reflection have helped us grow together as a group and have contributed, I believe, to our individual awareness of the way we spend our time.

My own placement was at a local nursing home, to which I walked with another girl from my class. Honestly, I was a bit apprehensive, especially after our initial visit to the home. This was unfamiliar territory for me. An institution like this exposes me to events and emotions beyond my comfort zone. It is humbling. I have grown to love the home and the residents there and to eagerly anticipate my time spent with some very special people every Wednesday, despite the instances of walking there in a blizzard or arriving with numb extremities and rain-soaked shoes. This time, I have found, has paid off in ways more valuable than an hourly rate.

On Wednesdays, I often spend my time with the women of the third floor—there’s Beth, the “maniac” from Maine, whose timeless jokes are recounted on a weekly basis and who I am not sure truly remembers me, yet treats me like she has known me forever. Then there are Roxanne and Winifred, who were always up for intelligent conversation until Winifred’s unfortunate passing. Roxanne is now left to converse with others as well as sings along to the 50’s hits on her own. Anne is another resident,

and one who reminds me of my own grandmother residing too far away in Ontario. I have been reading an Agatha Christie novel to Anne, who was once an avid reader but is now too visually impaired to read and often dozes off when she tries to listen to audiobooks. I treasure this time with her.

There are some residents who are not able to form words or phrases, some who seem to sleep continually and others who tremble with fear because they cannot recognize their surroundings or themselves. Quite poignantly, one woman is always clutching a baby doll to her chest, convinced that it lives and breathes, transported back to a time that makes more sense. Ours is, at times, a challenging placement, faced with the reality of old age and the sadness that comes from watching minds and bodies wear out. I have learned so much from those who work daily with the residents and, of course, from the residents themselves.

For my Friday presentation, however, I chose to discuss another volunteer opportunity I've had this year—a trip to Haiti with a group of youth to spend time at an orphanage and an artisanal centre that employs parents. My volunteer work has helped me to develop as a person, forming ideas about those things that shape community and how to better relate to and serve people selflessly. A step away from the stresses and pressures of the academic high school life has instilled a change in perspective for my classmates and me. We are grasping a wider view of what it means to exist on this planet, to be present to those around us and to learn from each other.

It is clear to me that service, in some form, is necessary to the development of youth. My other classmates have learned varieties of lessons at their placements at hospitals, centres for disability support, nonprofit and educational organizations. Volunteering offers a clear contrast to what modern society values (especially when it comes to high school students). Simply giving of one's time with no wider agenda, based on a sense of connection and caring for others and interest in learning more about the situations experienced in our communities, has results that will alter the way students approach the rest of their lives. Perspective is vital when making the many big decisions that we make as soon-to-be high school graduates, and for this reason the volunteering experiences we are offered in high school contribute to the formation of a well-rounded, empathetic, aware individual and will always be crucial for the further endeavours we pursue.

(\*names changed to protect the privacy of residents)

---

Catherine Turnbull is a Grade 12 student at Sacred Heart School of Halifax in Nova Scotia. She is an active member of the student body as the head girl on student council and a committed member of various environmental action and global citizenship clubs. Catherine believes strongly in the importance of service, uniting for a cause, and learning how to better understand each other. She is passionate about travel, conversation, the written word, tea, and freckles.

## Engaging Youth: A Success Story

Profile of Fahd Alhattab

by Inika Anderson

Fahd Alhattab describes himself on his LinkedIn page as “politically engaged, socially engaged, and personally committed”. Just a short phone conversation with Fahd confirms that this young millennial is indeed an engaging and passionate young man dedicated to volunteerism. Fahd’s energy, enthusiasm and true commitment to his community is inspiring.

At 21 years old, Fahd is studying political science at Carleton University, works at three part-time jobs, and volunteers for numerous organizations including the Children’s Wish Foundation, Youth Ottawa and the Lowertown Community Resource Centre. His leadership skills and achievements were acknowledged in 2013 when he was recognized as an award recipient of Youth in Motion’s Top 20 Under 20TM.

Fahd moved to Canada with his family in 1998 and experienced first-hand some of the challenges of integrating into a new culture in a diverse, low-income neighbourhood. Struggling with a new language and school, Fahd joined the Boys & Girls Club of Ottawa (BGCO). Fahd describes his experience with the club as starting him on his journey of self-growth, helping him to overcome barriers and to develop life skills and confidence. Eventually Fahd became president of the Youth Council at BGCO, and he has been volunteering ever since.

Wanting to give back to his community, Fahd and his friend Muhammad Zaman started the York Street Ultimate March Break Day Camp when they were just 17 years old. Over the past four years, more than 200 at-risk children have participated in the camp, thanks to the \$33,000 raised by Fahd and his team. The March Break Camp is possibly Fahd’s greatest passion, not only because he started the program but because he can see himself in some of the children. Fahd tells a story about one young boy who struggled with the sports-oriented focus of the camp. This boy played in games and seemed to have fun, but was not as athletically inclined as some of the other kids. Fahd spent some one-on-one time with the boy demonstrating a magic trick. The next day, the boy showed Fahd that he had not only learned that trick but had mastered a new one. Fahd describes it as a moment of pure joy; it may be a little magic trick, but the sense of accomplishment and mastery will boost his confidence and help him grow.

Through his volunteer opportunities, Fahd has learned key skills that will help shape his professional career. In his role as a camp director at age 17, Fahd learned how to take initiative. Within his responsibilities of the volunteer position, he was able to create opportunities for himself. Working as a volunteer in a team environment allowed him to make mistakes and to learn from the guidance and direction of supervisors, developing his leadership skills.

Fahd feels that the key to encouraging volunteerism in youth is empowerment. Youth volunteers do not just want to show up and sit at a registration desk, they want to feel a commitment to the cause, and to be engaged at the grass roots level. They want to feel good about their contribution no matter how

small or large it may be. Youth volunteers need support and guidance from supervisors and encouragement to take on projects that allow appropriate decision making within their roles. Fahd believes that encouraging today's youth to take ownership of their volunteer experience will foster lifelong commitment to volunteerism.

With Fahd as a role model, there will no doubt be many young girls and boys volunteering in their own communities and blossoming into future leaders. For Fahd, his personal goals include entering the political scene. With his leadership skills and commitment to his community, we will surely see Fahd Alhattab on his local city council one day soon.

---

Inika Anderson is a Liaison Officer with the Canadian Bar Association, providing support to volunteer-led committees. Inika has 15 years' experience in non-profit, working with a variety of volunteers, and has significant experience writing and editing newsletters and proposals. Inika joined the editorial team in 2012.

### **Girl Guides of Canada: Encouraging Young Volunteers**

by Kathryn Lyons, Ottawa, ON

Picture this: a girl, 7 years old. Her body is full of energy and her mind is bursting with about a hundred different things, from her loose tooth, to the hamster her class has as a pet, to her favourite, super-cute stuffed animal and just how much she is starting to love the colour turquoise. She has a blue t-shirt, scarf and badge sash that identify her as a member of Girl Guides of Canada. She is, of course, a Brownie. She loves to play, make crafts and go outside with her Brownie friends. And did you know, when you ask her what being a Brownie is all about, there is a really good chance she will say it is about, "being kind," or "helping the community"?

I know because I did ask. I am a volunteer Brownie Guider with the 12th Ottawa Guiding Group based in downtown Ottawa. We are about 50 girls and women, spread between four different age groups. The youngest, Sparks, are ages 5 and 6; the Brownies, ages 7 and 8. The older girls are Guides and Pathfinders. They range from 9 to 14 years old. The group has grown every year, with new girls joining, and most of our girls staying with the group as they progress. We do many of the things you might expect: we go camping, try new sports and games, we sing songs, earn badges, and of course, we sell cookies. No matter what we do, we definitely have a lot of fun. All of these things are part of how Guiding helps girls and women become confident, engaged members of their bigger world. This does not quite fully explain why even the youngest girls say that a big part of what we do is about sharing and caring, nor does it explain why they enjoy it so much.

Spending time with Sparks and Brownies has given me a few ideas about how volunteerism and community service can be encouraged in even fairly young children. Probably the most important things

are fundamental to who we are as part of Guiding: contributing to our communities is in our Vision, Mission and Promise; as adult leaders we are girl-centred; and we really value fun.

### **It is who we are**

Girls see volunteerism in every aspect of what we do. We all make a Promise when we join, whether it is to “Share and be a friend” or “Take action for a better world.” As a Girl Guide leader, or Guider, I help girls understand those words in how we conduct ourselves and in what we do. Guiders are volunteers themselves. (It cannot be taken for granted that the girls always know this. After the first time a girl asked if we sold cookies so I could be paid, I have made a point to tell them that we are all volunteers!) Seeing older girls in action and joining them for big projects helps Sparks and Brownies see there will always be a place for them in Guiding. This kind of sharing between the age groups encourages the older girls to take the lead and also help the younger girls.

### **It matters who they are**

Getting the girls involved means understanding them as best as possible. I do this by regularly asking questions, always, always listening, and whenever possible, shaping our activities from their own interests and ideas. When they tell me they like to spend time outside, we think of ideas for community service we can do outside, like cleaning up the park near where our unit meets. Every year, they tell me they love animals and crafts, so that might turn into making pet toys for an animal shelter. Being girl-centred means that our meetings and activities flow from their interests and strengths as much as possible. This goes a long way in keeping the girls engaged and enthusiastic.

### **And sometimes it starts small**

I think that a girl’s belief in herself—her abilities and potential, (whatever they are) is fundamental to her capacity to care about others. A lot of what I do with the girls is about encouraging and supporting them. I help create conditions where each can feel safe to try new things, and they can all experience success. I think when girls are shown respect and compassion, they become more able to demonstrate it themselves. It can be as simple as when a 5-year-old Spark shares scissors, or as profound as when an 8-year-old Brownie spontaneously offers to make extra Valentine’s cards for some lonely people she knows.

### **And it helps to be concrete, and direct**

Young children are generally less able to think abstractly. Long-term projects, or actions that are far removed from their own lived experiences, are a little harder for them to grasp. I try to match their energy and aspirations to things that connect directly to their lives. If I can connect what they have done to an observable outcome, it really helps sustain their enthusiasm. When we collected milk bags to make into bed mats, we kept a visual tally of our progress—a sort of thermometer—and I brought completed mats in for them to see. When we sent decorations to a long-term care home, I took pictures

of where they were displayed to share with the girls. In the future, I hope to build on this by having the girls even more directly involved at the home.

### **It is always fun**

One of the best pieces of Guiding wisdom ever passed on to me is, “If it isn’t fun, it isn’t Guiding.” I think this is probably as true for me as it is for the girls. Even when we are confronting more serious and potentially abstract topics like water conservation, I find a way to have fun. We chose leaky toilets: first of all, it was something we could all relate to, and secondly, really, from a child’s perspective, what could be better than talking about pee and poo? Park cleanups can be relay races, and learning a new craft can be a way to make something to brighten someone’s day.

Everything we do in Guiding is imbued with a sense of making a positive difference in the lives of girls and women with the ultimate goal of enabling and empowering them to contribute to their communities—according to their capacity and ability. Volunteering is an important aspect of that, but it is not the only one. Girl Guides offers young girls early volunteer experiences that are supportive, age-appropriate and fun. This certainly helps build a foundation for an ongoing commitment to volunteering.

In the end, it is not as much about the badges, cookies or the s’mores at camp as it is about every girl, whether she is 5 or 15, discovering that she has the power to make a difference. That is not just fun. It is amazing.

---

Kathryn Lyons started in Guiding as a 6-year-old Brownie. She has been a Guider with 12th Ottawa Guiding Group for the past four years, a role that she shares with 12 great co-Guiders.

Further Reading:

Girl Guides of Canada

[https://www.girlguides.ca/GGC/Parents/Who\\_We\\_Are/Mission\\_Vision\\_Promise\\_and\\_Law.aspx?WebsiteKey=eea3528e-7748-497f-96cd-a4c39f08750d&hkey=f333c929-bd80-4396-a8d9-2aca2d81a5fa](https://www.girlguides.ca/GGC/Parents/Who_We_Are/Mission_Vision_Promise_and_Law.aspx?WebsiteKey=eea3528e-7748-497f-96cd-a4c39f08750d&hkey=f333c929-bd80-4396-a8d9-2aca2d81a5fa)

Leaky toilets <http://www.thisbluedot.ca>

*In our Spring 1994 issue of the Journal (Issue 3.2), our theme was Youth Volunteers. After reading the articles over, we felt that some ideas about engaging youth twenty years ago are still relevant today. One member of the editorial team from twenty years ago, Lynne Savage, wrote a column that appeared in several issues, called Whit and Whimsey. Today’s editorial team felt that the column she wrote for the 1994 issue on youth should be shared with readers again, since it is as relevant today as it was twenty years ago. Our files showed that the original article had been shortened to ensure the article fit in the allotted space. The following reprint includes originally excluded material. Enjoy!*



## Get YOUTHED to It!

by Lynne J. Savage

How do we sell young people on the idea of giving 2 to 3 hours each week towards volunteer service?

You let them know that volunteering will provide them with plenty of opportunities ... OPPORTUNITIES to: develop a skill, pursue a career, earn a credit, create a plan, initiate change, study a case, kindle a friendship, discover resources, experience an adventure, instill a commitment, recognize potential, appreciate an effort, design a better tomorrow, touch a heart, lend a hand, bend an ear, share a laugh and smile a SMILE!!

That's the simple part. The difficult step is not in gaining their attention and acceptance, but in creating fair, fulfilling and favourable volunteer service positions.

Please make and take the time necessary to complete the job design. Include others in this process – a receiver of the service, a potential volunteer, the person in charge of training, development, supervision ... etc.

Once you know how, when, where, why and what you have to offer your teenaged community ... go ahead and get YOUTHED to it!!

Several years ago I advertised in a special Your Help is Needed column in our local newspaper for a senior who would like to sell crafts and hand-knit items one morning a week in the Senior's Craft Boutique. At 4:20 pm I received my first call in response to the ad. The caller was so enthusiastic and sounded so right for the job. She said she loved crafts and was available to volunteer every Saturday morning. When I mentioned the store was only open on weekdays she said she could not help then because of school. I was taken aback that she would be in day school. "The ad mentioned wanting a 'senior'. Are you a senior?" I asked. "Oh, yes!" she responded. "I'm in grade 8." ... Get YOUTHED to it!!

During a grade 12 Family Life class at a local high school, I was promoting Ivan Scheier's discussion paper on the Window of Work. The concept of course is to recognize and write down your glad gifts ... things you enjoy doing, do fairly well and would be willing to do for an organization. One 17-year-old male answered in such general terms as, "I could coach kids in any sport. I'm into all kinds of sport!" When I asked him to be more specific, he replied, "I tell you I like all physical stuff ... any sport, any age." So I smilingly suggested, "How about synchronized swimming?" He quickly jumped in with a "No way!" ... I got YOUTHED to it!

The Young Leaders Tomorrow program sponsored by the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture in the '80s was one of my most memorable opportunities for youth involvement. It offered board placement, a mentor and training within a one-year period. Many of those young people continue to serve in a leadership role, as board or committee members, project managers, fundraisers ... the list is long. They began as 15 to 25 year olds seeking leadership skills and decision-making opportunities. Today, they



continue to call on the knowledge and experience gained from that program. No doubt they are pleased and thankful that several years ago ... they got YOUTHED to it!

My funniest memory concerning young people is in the area of special needs. I was returning to Niagara Falls from a weekend at our cottage near Kearney, Ontario. During my usual washroom stop I overheard the most interesting conversation! I was taken by surprise when two teenage girls flew into the washroom. One rushed to the only empty stall remaining as the other yelled, "No! No! You can't use that one. It's for the handicapped!" To which her friend quickly replied, "I am handicapped! I have to pee so bad I can't walk!". I laughed as I ... got YOUTHED to it!

Our own teenage sons brought me great moments of knowledge and laughter. To keep them quietly busy during a long car trip to Cape Cod, I surprised one with Ripley's Believe It or Not book and the other with a skateboarding magazine. At no time did my brain ever consider that my knowledge would be put to the test ... the Ripley's test!

Larry: "Mom, where does banana oil come from?"

Me: "Bananas?"

Larry: "No. It's a bi-product of petroleum."

Me: "That's strange!"

Larry: "What's so strange about it?"

Me: "Well wouldn't you think banana oil would come from bananas?"

Larry: "Not necessarily. Does baby oil come from babies?"

Today's young people are indeed an incredible breed! They initiate and participate. They see the less complicated path to travel. They are ready and waiting to move forward! So ... go ahead ... get YOUTHED to it!!

---

Lynne Savage spent several years putting smiles on readers' faces through her Whit and Whimsey columns for the Journal. In 1994, her byline read: "Lynne J. Savage is a speaker, writer and trainer whose philosophy is Laugh and Learn.

*Editor's note: Sadly, Lynne Savage passed away in 2010 at the age of 67 in Niagara Falls, ON.*

## Why You Should Recruit Millennials to Boost Your Nonprofit Organization

by Lincoln Arneal, North Bend, Nebraska

Millennials, often categorized as people born in the early 1980s to around 2000, grew up with a computer in their home and a smartphone in their pocket.

(Full disclosure: I am a millennial!)

They generally operate differently than other generations both in lifestyle and in how they choose to spend their time. While you should be open to recruiting all volunteers, no matter their age, recruiting millennials can add new life to your organization and help provide a new energy to your projects and mission. Plus, the younger generation is here to stay with your organization through the years (if done correctly). Here are some reasons your nonprofit could benefit from specifically targeting millennials.

Millennials are focused on causes

More so than older generations, millennials are more likely to get involved with a nonprofit than they are to make a donation. And they do not want to volunteer just to pass the time (but then again, who does?). They want to know how their time will make a difference in the grand scheme of things.

When recruiting, keep your message cause-focused. How many families will be helped by spending an hour sorting through items in a food pantry? What impact will they have by spending an hour mentoring an elementary student?

Millennials want to know the direct results of their volunteering and feel that immediate satisfaction. Asking millennials to donate is not a doomed venture, but they are more likely to be willing to give of their time than their cash ... at least at first.

Narrow your target market even more

Again, all volunteers are valuable, but if you segment millennials even further, targeting the youngest and oldest parts of the segment can pay off in greater numbers. (It is the bread of the millennial sandwich, if you will.)

The oldest group of millennials is the young professionals just establishing themselves in the real world. Most are looking for a way to give purpose and meaning to their lives outside their work universe. If you target the fresh-faced college graduates, you can help fill a void in their life that was previously occupied by part-time jobs, extra-curricular clubs, activities or studying. Now, as part of the adult world, many are looking for a way to give back to the community.

On the other end, the youngest millennials are still discovering who they are and helping nonprofits by connecting with causes and organizations can help define their identity. They might not even realize what they are looking to get out of life or even that they are looking. By reaching out to the youngest

millennials, you can have double impact by having them help fulfill your mission while also shaping their outlook and setting up a lifetime of volunteering.

#### Longer relationships with volunteers

If you recruit younger volunteers to help, common sense says they will have a longer relationship with your nonprofit. The goal should be to get volunteers when they are young and keep them coming back for more positive experiences. Inevitably, they will grow older, their financial situation will become more stable and you will also be able to add them to your donor pool.

These reasons explain why recruiting millennials is a great idea, but how do you go about engaging these eager, young helpers?

The Millennial Impact's 2013 report<sup>1</sup> identifies three opportunities to recruit more millennials:

- Support activism: This goes back to my first point above. Millennials believe in causes and want to support activism. They are still looking for their passion in life and often that can come through activism and helping nonprofits.
- Participate in young nonprofit professional groups: Millennials are not just there to help. They are also there to develop themselves personally and professionally. On the professional side, they get to meet other people in their community who they might not interact with otherwise. Meeting people and forming new relationships is exciting and your nonprofit can provide that opportunity for millennials to make new friends and increase the size of their network.
- Provide ongoing leadership: On the other side of personal growth, leadership development is more skill-based, and can help millennials with their professional lives. Working with nonprofits gives millennials opportunities to learn new skills and further develop ones they already possess.

The one area not covered in the Millennial Impact's report is branding, which is vital to engage millennials. Many love not only being involved with nonprofits, but also advertising to the world that they are involved. Whether it is shirts, mugs, bumper stickers or other swag, millennials like to show who they are and what they support to everyone. Providing volunteers with branded physical goods not only let millennials be proud but can easily recruit new people.

Millennials can be a vital part of your nonprofit's mission and operations. By targeting and engaging them you can help build your volunteer base for years to come and inject energy and new life into your organization.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.themillennialimpact.com/2013RESEARCH>

---



Lincoln Arneal is a senior editor at Nonprofit Hub where this article was first published in June 2014. He is the current executive director of a nonprofit that provides leadership development to junior high and high school students. Lincoln also has a legal background and has written for various newspapers (covering high school sports) for the past 15 years.