

To our volunteers, I say thank you

COUN. LINDA MCPHAIL / RICHMOND NEWS
APRIL 4, 2014 12:00 AM

Volunteering is the most fundamental act of citizenship and philanthropy in society. It's an extension of being a good neighbour: it moves citizens from their front porch into the neighbourhood and it transforms a collection of houses into a community.

Volunteers participate as board and committee members, advocates, fundraisers and providers of numerous direct services.

The efforts of volunteers, including individuals and organizations, have been very important throughout Richmond's history.

Our large base of volunteers can be attributed to many community organizations that have significantly supported volunteer recruitment, training, retention and recognition.

Volunteering is one of the primary contributors to building a strong community. It fosters civic responsibility, participation and involvement. In a nutshell, community

growth and development relies on citizenship and volunteer engagement.

One of the guiding principles endorsed by Richmond City Council in the Parks,

Recreation and Cultural Services Master Plan 2005-2015 (the 'PRCS Master Plan') is continuing community involvement in all aspects of the parks, recreation and cultural services system. Volunteering is key to this.

This PRCS Master Plan outcome focuses on the basic physical, mental and spiritual needs of individuals and families who want to live healthy, happy lives. Many of the benefits associated with 'to live' outcomes are in the 'public good' realm and have a high priority for the City of Richmond.

In the PRCS Master Plan, the City of Richmond gave a commitment to work with the community to develop a Volunteer Management Strategy to ensure meaningful and varied opportunities for volunteers, and to strengthen the community volunteer system. A new approach to the way we work with volunteers is the outcome of that commitment.

Within the city's volunteer management data base, volunteer hours recorded by community groups increased by more than by 35 per cent in the past year - more than 50,000 volunteer hours were recorded. Over 7,300 active volunteers are now registered in that database.

Volunteers are no longer a 'value-added' component of how PRCS delivers its services to the community. Rather, the city relies on volunteers and not-for-profit organizations as an integral part of services and programs to the community.

Another arm of volunteerism is to get involved in Richmond government.

If you are interested in volunteering your time and expertise, in an unpaid capacity, on any of a number of advisory bodies, please visit www.richmond.ca/cityhall/council/boards/advisory for more information.

All vacancies are advertised in the local newspapers and on our website when the city is accepting applications.

Many volunteers are surprised at how rewarding it can be to help others. Not every volunteer experience is the same. By finding an opportunity that matches your interests, you have a good chance of enjoying yourself while giving to others.

There is evidence that volunteering can improve an individual's health, through increased confidence and a heightened sense of well-being. Many volunteers encounter a variety of new challenges when giving time in their communities.

By sharing new experiences with new people, you can learn additional skills that can give you confidence to face challenges in other areas of your life.

Volunteering brings people together who may otherwise never cross paths in their daily lives.

I wish to express my gratitude, during volunteer week (April 6-12) and always, to all Richmond volunteers.

© Richmond News

- See more at: <http://www.richmond-news.com/opinion/editorial/to-our-volunteers-i-say-thank-you-1.942380#sthash.VoOnaalW.dpuf>