



Left to Right: Volunteers Shagun Kalia, Malina Stetzel and Abraham Asrat



# VOLUNTEER BURNABY

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT  
STARTS HERE

[www.volunteerburnaby.ca](http://www.volunteerburnaby.ca)

## Resolve to be Involved in 2012

by Kelina Kwan

Imagine this: You spent years planning, saving and preparing. You have packed up your belongings, said goodbye to your friends, and brought your family to a new country to start a new life. You set out to find a home, find new schools for your children, and now you need a job to support them. Where do you begin? This is where Abraham Asrat comes into the picture.

Asrat is the Outreach Worker of the Workplace Connections Mentorship Program at MOSAIC. The Workplace Connections Mentorship Program is a program funded by the BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation for new immigrants actively seeking work in Canada. The program pairs a volunteer mentor in the specific field where a new immigrant is seeking work. "For example, if a skilled worker comes in with an engineering background, we will find a professional engineer currently working in the field in Canada, and put them together in a mentorship relationship," said Asrat. "We will ask volunteer mentors to assist new

immigrants by opening their network, helping new immigrants to understand Canadian workplace culture, and helping mentees to improve their English if necessary - ultimately to help mentees build a professional network."

The program prepares the volunteer mentors and mentees by putting both groups through an orientation. "What we ask for is a three month commitment from the volunteer mentor," Asrat said. The mentor and mentee will meet once a week, usually for 2 hours. They will have an activity plan, which could consist of reviewing the mentee's resume, practicing in a mock interview, or it could be talking about workplace culture and so on. The mentor will help the mentee understand what the hidden job market is for their specific field, as most jobs are often not advertised. This is a very powerful relationship and a great opportunity for mentees to expand their network not only to include the volunteer mentor, but also the mentor's own network. The notion of networking is new to a lot

of immigrants, according to Asrat, and this program is a tremendous help to new immigrants in breaking through not only into the Canadian job market, but finding a job in their own field.

According to MOSAIC's estimates, it generally takes a new immigrant up to five years to get into their field of work in Canada. But some of their mentees have found jobs in their field within months of arriving in Canada directly due to the assistance provided by volunteer mentors. It is perhaps easy to see why mentees will find this program tremendously helpful. But what about the mentors? Why do they volunteer? Asrat told me about a recent encounter: In a winter party where both mentors and mentees attended, Asrat talked to one lady who has volunteered to be a mentor many times. She is now on her fifth mentee. Asrat thanked her for her commitment and dedication, and asked why she keeps coming back to volunteer. The lady replied, "I really have to thank you! Because by giving me this opportunity, you have broadened my view of the world. You brought a lot of interesting people into my life. I was able to help people who are new to Canada in the same way I was helped when I first came to Canada as a new immigrant years ago."

Volunteer mentors also found that the program helps them understand the challenges faced by new immigrants, and they discover firsthand the high skill levels that immigrants bring into Canada. Mentors realize that immigrants are coming in with incredible skill levels, good English, and excellent work ethics, and that they can tap into this huge pool of talent. It changes their own hiring practices, and puts their business at an advantage, especially in a time when

many volunteer situations, it doesn't take a lot to change someone's life and your own as well. The fact that many of their mentors keep coming back to help more people is proof of his belief that you can enrich your own life by helping others. So please get involved!

For more information on how to get involved in your community, please contact Volunteer Burnaby through their website at [www.volunteerburnaby.ca](http://www.volunteerburnaby.ca).

But above all, mentors found this program inspirational because they are directly involved in changing someone's life and giving someone hope. Asrat, an immigrant originally from Ethiopia, first realized the amazing credentials of new immigrants when he had to review many resumes working in industry. He believes we can all do better if we give new immigrants a better chance.

At the beginning of a new year, Asrat hopes that everyone will resolve to get involved and volunteer to make someone's life better. If you think you don't have time, Asrat said that all they ask is 24 hours of a mentor's time spread over 3 months. In



**Volunteer**  
...you'll be glad you did



**Volunteer Opportunities**  
To learn more, visit these websites.  
[www.volunteerburnaby.ca](http://www.volunteerburnaby.ca)  
[www.govolunteer.ca](http://www.govolunteer.ca)  
[www.volweb.ca](http://www.volweb.ca)  
[www.getvolunteering.ca](http://www.getvolunteering.ca)



**I volunteer because...**

Alfred Shum has volunteered with Volunteer Burnaby for six years. Starting at age 15, Alfred has evolved into a leader. Alfred continues to volunteer as he lives to mentor younger volunteers.

**ALFRED SHUM**  
Volunteer

**VOLUNTEER BURNABY**

203-2101 Holdom Avenue Burnaby  
604.294.5533 [www.volunteerburnaby.ca](http://www.volunteerburnaby.ca)



**Your hearing is a priceless gift,  
don't take it for granted**

*Do you avoid social situations and activities  
because you cannot hear well?*

**When was the last time you  
had your hearing tested?**

Call today to book a **FREE** Hearing Assessment  
Proudly serving the Lower Mainland for 40 years



**Sears**  
hearingcentre

**Metrotown Centre**  
604-434-2070

Guildford Town Centre  
604-583-1316

Coquitlam Centre  
604-464-8090

**Voted Best Hearing Centre  
for 13 years in a row!**

BurnabyNOW