



Citizen Support Services, North Lunch Program volunteer driver Nathan with client Evelyn

VOLUNTEER BURNABY

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Traditional and Innovative Volunteer Roles for Men

by Kelina Kwan

During a round table discussion at Volunteer BC's Volunteer Futures Conference last year, an interesting question was raised: how do organizations attract more men to volunteer? It transpired that many organizations have many more female than male volunteers. "What happened to gender equality in the volunteer sector?" One volunteer manager jokingly asked. As we approach Father's Day, I spoke with Shauna Grant, Volunteer Program Coordinator for Citizen Support Services in the City of Burnaby about how she feels about this issue. "We do have mostly women volunteering, but we do get some men," Grant said. Citizen Support Services operates programs for seniors, people with disabilities, and families. Their programs include a shop-by-phone grocery program, a shopping-buddies mall shopping program, a lunch program in North and South Burnaby, a volunteer visitor program, a phone program, a bus trip program called "Get About" and a similar program for people

who use wheelchairs called "Wheelers." For young families, Citizen Support Services provides child health clinics, parent-infant drop-ins, breast feeding clinics and a "Cuddle Program" where they match volunteers to families with a new baby while the family adjusts to having a new baby in their home. To co-ordinate so many programs with only 5 staff members, Grant needs a lot of volunteers. Grant is currently looking for volunteers for their volunteer visitors program and volunteer drivers for their bus trip and lunch programs. The volunteer visitor program matches volunteers with lonely and isolated individuals for home visits. "Most of the women volunteers prefer to visit with women, there are more men waiting on our wait list," Grant said. Grant does get a fair number of men volunteers, especially volunteers in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The program is an excellent way for the volunteers to practice their conversational English, learn about Canadian culture,

and get Canadian work experience. References are always provided to good volunteers and that is one of the many reasons Citizen Support Services uses to attract volunteers. Other programs that need more men volunteers for are programs that involve driving. "This is what men like to do - drive!" Grant's volunteer drivers, drive clients to Edmonds Community Centre in South Burnaby and the Confederation Centre in North Burnaby for lunch programs. They also drive clients to bus stops or activities locations for bus trip programs. The number of volunteer drivers is decreasing mostly due to age and Grant thinks this is a good opportunity for men who have not volunteered before, to try their hands at these programs as volunteer drivers. One of their volunteer drivers is Burnaby City Councillor Pietro Calendino, which is a great example of how men can find volunteering fulfilling.

"Society has changed a lot since the

time when men were bread-winners and women did the helping work," said Grant. While a lot of men are attracted to driving, more are also drawn to non-traditional roles such as being a shopping buddy. Gentlemen are going shopping with senior ladies in the mall and acting as hosts for their lunch programs, and Grant has seen a number of men volunteers enjoying and growing with these experiences. Citizen Support Services also has a small group of volunteers with developmental disabilities, and the experience can be life-changing. Grant has seen volunteers go from being a shy and introverted individual to blossoming into a confident, friendly and out-going host for their programs. Grant's volunteer recruitment strategy has expanded from attracting only the newly retired to younger professionals and students, and trying to reach everyone who may not know that volunteer opportunities that suit their lifestyles are out there. A diversified recruit-

ment strategy is needed to attract more men to volunteer. Grant has connected with retired teachers' groups, realtors who may have more flexible work time, legions and various services clubs to advertise their volunteer positions, as well as advertising through more traditional means such as at the program location and in local newspapers. So gentlemen, if you want to give back to your community, help others and have fun at the same time, volunteer with Citizen Support Services. Submit your applications online and start getting involved! For more information on Citizen Support Services, City of Burnaby and current volunteer opportunities, please visit www.burnaby.ca/citizensupportservices. Or call 604-294-7980. For more information on how to get involved in your community, please contact Volunteer Burnaby through their website at www.volunteerburnaby.ca. Or call 604.294.5533.

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Volunteer of the Month...

Rahim Rajan is a longtime volunteer with many organizations including Burnaby Hospital Foundation, Burnaby Community Connections, and Aga Khan Youth & Sports Board Canada.

"As a parent, you hope that your children carry with them a sense of responsibility, compassion, generosity, confidence, community and a true sense of what it means to be fortunate in this world. As a volunteer, I have had the blessing of experiencing all of the above and I can think of no better way to instill these traits in my own two daughters than through encouraging their own volunteering efforts."

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