

"Just get involved!"

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"You can be surprised sometimes, because those things won't happen to you if you haven't got involved."

Stephen Sjoberg, Volunteer Burnaby President



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Resolve to be Involved (2013)

by Kelina Kwan

At the beginning of a new year, many of us are looking forward and making new plans. Whether it is leading a healthier lifestyle, spending more time with family, or working (or playing) better, it is a time we are filled with hope and enthusiasm for the coming year. It is also a time for renewal in the community, when new programs and projects are starting and volunteer help is needed from many different organizations.

I recently spoke with Stephen Sjoberg, board director of Volunteer Burnaby and Volunteer Grandparents, about the new year and volunteering. It is hard to imagine Sjoberg's life without volunteering. In his hometown in the Cowichan valley, Sjoberg used to volunteer as a camp counsellor, as a youth baseball and basketball coach and referee, and as a school

mentor for younger children. After moving to Vancouver, he volunteered with organizations such as the BC Children's Hospital and St. John's Brigade, and he also acted as a soccer coach referee for more than 10 years. And then of course, there is Volunteer Burnaby and Volunteer Grandparents. Sjoberg has been a board director of Volunteer Grandparents for 10 years and a board director of Volunteer Burnaby for 7 years. How did he come to be involved with these two small but very active and vibrant organizations? It began with Volunteer Grandparents. Someone Sjoberg knew asked whether he would be interested in working with the organization, knowing that he has extensive experience working with youth. He said yes, and never looked back. "I got started, got involved, went

to some events, enjoyed myself, and enjoyed very much working with the people there. I have a lot of appreciation for the things that Volunteer Burnaby does. ... It was a good fit for me, and I think, for them ever since!"

When asked why he volunteers so much of his time, Sjoberg said first and foremost you have to think about your community. "The beautiful thing about volunteering locally and volunteering in your community is that you can have a direct impact on something that is an immediate focus of your life. You can talk about all the things that aren't right about society, but at the most basic local level, you can participate, get involved and have an impact, and try to positively affect the most immediate area around your life – where you live." He pointed out that when things are looked at in the global or provincial level,

they sometimes become too big and unwieldy and you may feel there is no way you can make an impact or change. Whereas a local civic kind of interaction and involvement is not only more accessible, reasonable and feasible to do, but it is something that can directly affect you and help others around you. Sjoberg went on to say candidly that "you do it for yourself." He admitted that thinking about volunteering in a more pragmatic way will stimulate more people to get involved. "You do it for yourself because it feels good, and you get rewards from it – the rewards of interacting with people and supporting causes that help people. It is part of being connected to your community. The more you are connected, the more people you will know, the more ownership and pride you will have in where you live." Sjoberg's message for the New Year? "Just get

involved"! He always tells kids he worked with that "90% of life is showing up." By showing up and getting involved, you never know what tertiary and positive spin-offs will happen. Without having particular expectations, you may meet certain people, and get different opportunities that present themselves just because you got involved. "You can be surprised sometimes, because those things won't happen to you if you haven't got involved." Stephen Sjoberg works at the Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre in Burnaby, a facility that supports communities in caring for and treating troubled 12 to 17 year-old youth with significant psychiatric and behavioural difficulties. For more information on how to get involved in your community, please contact Volunteer Burnaby through their website at www.volunteerburnaby.ca.

Volunteer

...you'll be glad you did



Every day, thousands of people voluntarily give their time and talent to thousands of organizations across Canada. They give their time freely and with no expectation of monetary reward. Their hours of service ensure that many activities are accomplished and many people are helped. They build houses for the homeless, care for the elderly, and provide counselling and support services. They are youth group leaders, program coordinators, coaches and fundraisers. They represent every walk of life, professional, homemaker, student, retiree as well as every age and cultural group. Explore www.volunteerburnaby.ca

Volunteers of the Month...



Christina and Ariela
Volunteer Burnaby
Office Volunteers