

Volunteering in 2009

A few weeks ago, my husband asked me if I thought we volunteered less than our parents. I was aghast, and shot back indignantly, "Well, of course we do!" But then, I got to thinking about my parents and the incredible amount of time they spent volunteering to make our hometown a better place to live. From the Windsor Art Gallery to our church, from the Torch Club to the Victorian Order of Nurses, they were always helping someone. On the other hand, I am a member of Cairn Rescue USA; that's about it, one organization, one passion, rescuing puppy mill dogs!!



So, why is volunteering important to libraries in 2009?

- **Community benefits** - Volunteering encourages us to focus on our community and how we can support others, including the library!!
- **Health benefits** - A study funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health found that volunteering improves self-esteem, reduces blood pressure, and lessens the negative impact of stress. Volunteers are healthier!!
- **Learning benefits** - Volunteering improves interpersonal and communication skills, teaches practical skills plus promotes life-long learning.
- **Job benefits** - More than one million Canadians obtained employment through their volunteer experience, and over 50 percent of unemployed volunteers believe their volunteer experiences improved their chances of finding work.
- **Professional benefits** - Volunteering ourselves, helps us work more effectively with trustees and board members and our own volunteers. It helps us remain focused on how to work best with folks who give to us on a daily basis.

In 2009, volunteers benefit everyone: themselves, the organizations they support, and most importantly, the community they serve. Particularly in these tough times, libraries need to create volunteer opportunities in the library. We need to welcome them into our library's, not to replace salaried staff, but to reach out even farther into the community. In this new world in which we find ourselves, volunteers are supporting resume writing programs, reading in senior centers, riding the bookmobile, and even planting reading gardens. Volunteers are flocking to libraries like never before and we need to welcome them by making their work satisfying and productive. The end result: we all win!!

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PS Huey, the Cairn terrier in the photo, now lives happily with a wonderful family and three cairn brothers. I made a small difference in his life, but he has made a **huge** difference in mine! kp