

EDITORIAL

with Dawn Brown

Mandatory Volunteering?

It is impossible to put a value on volunteers, or what their hard work and generosity bring to the community. Without those people who give so tirelessly of their time and/or expertise, so many of the groups, teams, events and organizations that keep communities like our own thriving would simply cease to exist. And while no one could ever argue the importance of volunteerism, all too often it's the few doing the work for many.

It is perhaps this idea that fed into the concept of making volunteer hours mandatory for high school students. Back in 1999 it became mandatory for all high school students to complete a minimum of 40 hours of "community involvement hours" as a requirement of their high school diploma. The idea behind the concept was to encourage students to "develop awareness of civic responsibility and of the role they can play and the contributions they can make in supporting and strengthening their communities."

And on the surface, this sounds like a great idea. It is important for young people to recognize the needs of their community and the impact they can make by giving back. But is that really what's happening? By making volunteer hours a condition of graduating are they really developing an appreciation for civic responsibility, or is it just another item to be scratched off an ever ex-

panding "to do" list?

According to Statistics Canada, teens between the ages of 15 to 19 have the highest rate of volunteering at 66 per cent, which can be attributed to those mandatory volunteer hours. The rate of volunteering drops significantly for ages 20 to 24 at 42 per cent, as well as ages 25 to 34 also at 42 per cent. While the numbers fluctuated between 2004 and 2013, there were no significant increases.

So, the question remains, do mandatory volunteer hours in high school really encourage volunteerism for adults? And if a student's graduation is contingent on said "volunteer hours", one could argue that they're not volunteering at all.

Now let's face it, 40 hours over four years is not a lot. It equates to 10 measly hours a year. That's not a lot to ask of anyone to give back, but the real question is are these community involvement hours really achieving what school boards and governments hoped? Are young people appreciating civic responsibility, are they likely to continue to volunteer as adults, or is this just another subject to get through that, once they leave high school, they will never draw on that information or experience again? Will those students see the importance of volunteering and continue to do so as they become adults? Maybe some will, and maybe some is enough.



Hearts were racing at Limehouse Public School recently when they held their Jump Rope for Heart fundraising event. Students in all grades participated in this annual event. - Les Schmidt photo

If only we could click on Compare

We are well into the campaigns for the Ontario Provincial election. In just over 30 days, our province will have a newly elected Premier. Will it be a new one, or will the current reigning party return?

I'm finding it really hard to keep track of the campaigning and the promises. I feel the campaigning is all about the leaders not the area candidates this time. Are we going to choose to vote for our area, or are we going to vote locally to elect Provincially?

What I need is an online spreadsheet. One column listing all the promises that have been made by all would-be leaders. The next columns will be their headshots and just last name. Have you ever gone to buy something—let's say a cell phone—visited the retail site of your choice, checked the interested items and clicked "compare"? The site will then list every possible option and detail of the items with a check yes, no, or what the details are. This is what I need for basically every election.

Let's try this...I'm selecting



By
Angela Tyler

Wynne, Ford and Horwath to compare. Along the items that will be compared are:

- prior public service, yes or no
- potential personal scandals to be uncovered if elected, please list:
- increase personal taxes, yes or no
- increase business taxes, yes or no *If you answer no to both the above questions, please indicate how you will pay for your campaign promises:*
- will you continue to support current Ontario education curriculum including sex ed, EQAO, and separate school funding?

This is about the only way we can really compare because they're all basically promising versions of the same stuff—Provincially supported daycare, medical and dental plans while

lowering taxes, spending more, fixing our hospital wait time, increasing support for life saving drugs while reducing the length of times for critical care. All the other issues are "white noise" or like listening to Charlie Brown's teacher...just idle chatter with the exception of Hydro One.

So, what will it be? Will people protest vote? Will they vote against just to not have them re-elected? Will they embrace what is being presented as a Trumpian manner and campaign style? Are we any different than our south of the border friends? Maybe many won't know what to do, so they just won't vote. It's going to get interesting that's for sure.

On a local note, I feel this race could be a bit more interesting than it historically has been since becoming Halton/Wellington. At press time we do not have an NDP candidate. However, we now have Acton's Jon Hurst running for the Liberals up against long time and very visible current elected MPP Ted Arnott for the PC party. This race is one to watch my friends...stay tuned.



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