

Volunteering a 'wonderful experience,' says young woman

mother — whom she'd accompany to St. John's Ambulance therapy dog program sessions as a pre-teen — the aspiring social worker has given her time to numerous causes over the past decade.

The desire to help out at Halton Women's Place was sparked during high school, when she and her classmates had to choose a local organization to study — with the winning project earning a bursary for that group.

The local shelter may not have met with a financial windfall from that assignment, but would benefit from it via a future volunteer. Recalled McKay, "I always remembered what I learned from that project. It made me realize how a shelter like this is still so needed in a community... how essential the service is." Armed with a calm and compassionate demeanour, McKay keeps track of comings



The Milton Volunteer Fair, which runs Saturday (November 19) from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. in the banquet room of the Milton Sports Centre, is a one-stop shop for local volunteer opportunities.

and goings at the shelter, as well as directing those in need to waiting staff members and receiving donations.

"When things happen they tend to happen all at once," explained the young volunteer, who has also helped out with the Canadian Mental Health Association's local crisis line, Big Brothers Big Sisters Halton and with some animal rescue groups.

"It can get pretty chaotic." Those hectic moments are tempered with plenty of gratifying ones — when it's evident that a woman and her children are leaving in a better place than when they arrived.

"It's great to see the changes. The staff is fantastic."

Of course the Halton Women's Place staff hold its volunteers in high regard as well. Noted Volunteer Coordinator Deanna Van Herk, "Volunteers help us stay connected with our community and optimize the work that we do. This ultimately helps us deliver great service to our clients."

One-stop shopping

Running from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Milton Sports Centre's banquet room, the annual volunteer fair offers one-stop shopping for those looking to explore the many ways they can help out in the community.

Roughly two dozen organizations — including Darling Home for Kids, Sexual Assault & Violence Services (SAVIS) of Halton, Milton

Community Resource Centre (MCRC), the Special Friends Network, Milton Public Library and the Optimist Club of Milton — will be on hand to discuss their services and sign up new recruits.

"What we're hearing from the various groups is that it's (fair) a great way to educate the community on what they do," said Ann Coburn, Director of Volunteer Halton, who noted that last year's event drew about 150 people. "It's more of an information fair, but organizations do get people signing up."

Those unable to attend the fair can find out more about local volunteer opportunities at www.volunteerhalton.ca.

"I'd say 'Go for it,'" urged McKay, to those sitting on the fence about the prospect of volunteering. "It's a wonderful experience and you definitely see the impact your time can have on the community and the people you work with."

"You learn a lot about yourself."

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Casey McKay
Volunteer

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