

Helping others is mainstay of society

Herald Special
An article published in an American news magazine not long ago described how women were using volunteer work as a foot in the door to the employment market. It said that the feminist movement had accelerated this trend by urging women "to seek work that is 'real' - in other words, paid."

The co-ordinator of volunteers in a large institution was quoted as saying that women were doing unpaid work to improve their skills and hence their career prospects. Also quoted was a former volunteer who had moved on to a full-time position: "I guess finally I was interested in being paid for a job. Money is the way society shows that it values what you are doing."
If that is so, it makes a disturbing commentary on current social values. For surely much of the work that is done for money is worthless to anyone but those who profit by it. Voluntary service, on the other hand, is so valuable to its beneficiaries as to be literally priceless. Who could ever count what it is worth to a crippled child to be taught how to swim, or to an elderly shut-in to have someone do the shopping and drop in for a chat once or twice a week?
The attitude that only paid work matters is lamentably common. You will look in vain in books on economics for so much as a mention of the contribution which voluntary service makes to the national wellbeing. In fact, voluntary activities account for an estimated 3.3 per cent of Canada's gross national product. One in every seven adult Canadians is engaged in some sort of volunteer activity. Organized volunteer work in Canada amounts to some 374 million man-hours a year.
One of the mainstays of society, after all, is the common understanding that the stronger must share their

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strength with the weaker. There could be no social order if the community interest did not come before purely selfish pursuits. The religions which did so much to establish that social order in the first place have always stressed that the individual has an obligation to his fellow human beings. The concept of mutual support is implicit in every major religious belief.

John Ruskin made an acute observation of scriptural teachings when he wrote: "It is written, not 'blessed is he that feedeth the poor,' but 'blessed is he that considereth the poor'. A little thought and a little kindness are often worth more than a great deal of money."

Laissez-faire dominated the social policies of western countries in the 19th and early

20th centuries. Governments shied away from dealing with social problems. It was left mainly to individuals, churches and other charitable organizations to attend to the public welfare. Though it was a full-time job for many of them, the people who worked in charitable institutions were essentially volunteers.

The present century brought the birth of universal tax-supported programs in health, welfare and education. The political thrust for more government involvement came from early socialists who believed that undeserved privileges were perpetuated by laissez-faire. They regarded the old system of charity as not much more than self-serving paternalism, a scattering of crumbs from rich men's

tables. They insisted that the needs of society could never be met by private benevolence alone.

Today, even right-wing political parties agree that governments should provide some basic measure of social service and security for people who really need it. At the same time, even left-wing parties (in the western world, at least) agree that governments cannot do all that has to be done. Public services lack the human touch that people in distress need so badly. Volunteers can either supplement the services provided, or take care of special problems which government programs tend to overlook.

After many years of governments taking on more and more of the social responsibilities once borne by private citizens, the pendulum is now swinging back to the voluntary sector. Governments everywhere are deeply in debt, and they are finding that there is a limit to how heavily they can tax people without damaging the economy and their own political appeal. As a result,

they have been cutting back on publicly-funded services.

In one country where drastic economy measures have been imposed, the United States, President Ronald Reagan is trying to rekindle what he calls "the spirit of volunteerism."

"The truth is, we've let government take away many of the things we once considered were ours to do voluntarily, out of the goodness of our hearts and a sense of neighborliness. I believe many of you want to do those things again," he said in a recent speech.

When volunteers are asked the reasons why they volunteer, they usually cite the satisfaction they derive from helping others. A typical reaction came from an ex-champion figure skater who teaches skating to blind children. "Don't get me wrong, I don't teach these classes as charity. I'm basically a very selfish person. I teach them because I get tremendous gratification," she said.

The Report of the National Advisory Council on Volunteer Action to the Government of Canada in 1977 noted a "new and healthy realization that the volunteer himself does and should benefit from voluntary activity." It said: "Today, many volunteers tend to place less emphasis on a charitable motivation and frankly admit that their involvement in voluntary activity arises from their need for self-expression, self-development and self-protection. Given that large numbers of Canadians are heavily engaged in voluntary activity, many are seeking to fulfil their personal needs."

The need for volunteers is bound to grow, not only because of this but because there is so much trouble and hardship to be alleviated. During Volunteer Week in North America, held this year from April 18 to 25, we should honor the volunteers among us and think about what else we could be doing ourselves.

The watchword of volunteerism is "do what you can". If you do all you can, it can never be too little. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize of 1979 for her

work among the poor in India, put the idea of service into perspective when she said: "We feel ourselves that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But if that drop was

not in the ocean, I think the oceans would be less because of that missing drop."
—Reprinted from the March-April Royal Bank of Canada Letter.

Letter from the Premier

It is with the greatest pleasure that I extend to the Ontario Association of Volunteers, Bureaux and Centres my warmest congratulations and best wishes as you mark Volunteer Week from April 18 to 24.

Volunteer activity epitomizes the humanitarian principles that are the foundation and strength of our nation, and which have underlined its growth into a land of compassion, civility and human dignity.

In Ontario there is almost no aspect of our society that is not touched by the efforts of our volunteer workers, kind and dedicated individuals who have given tirelessly of their time and means to make their communities a better place in which to live.

In our increasingly depersonalized society it is important to recognize the worth of our volunteers, for their "personal touch" is a force for good of love and caring in the lives of us all.

As Volunteer Week is celebrated throughout our province, I extend the heartfelt gratitude of the people and the government of Ontario for all that our volunteers have accomplished on our behalf, and express the hope that we will long have the benefit of your service and commitment.
William G. Davis

Battlefield scene shocks Henry Dunant, 1859 Man's suggestions formed Red Cross

Henry Dunant, founder of the world Red Cross movement in the mid-19th century, was the first Red Cross volunteer.

In 1859, the young Swiss businessman was horrified when he came upon 40,000 wounded, dead and dying lying unattended on a battlefield in northern Italy.

Dunant quickly organized a corps of volunteers to provide first aid to the wounded. He wrote a book describing his experiences and recommending the formation of volunteer relief societies to care for the wounded during wars, and international treaties to ensure their humane treatment.

His recommendations inspired the people of Europe and in 1863 the Red Cross movement, with the emblem of a red cross on a white field, was born.

In Canada, the appearance of the first Red Cross volunteers and flags occurred in 1885 when militia forces from Eastern Canada were sent to quell uprisings of Metis and Indian settlers on the prairies.

In 1896 Surgeon Major George Sterling Ryerson organized the first overseas branch of the British Red Cross Society in Toronto. Red Cross volunteers raised money for the relief of combatants on both sides in the Spanish-American War and then, along with volunteers from new branches in Montreal, Quebec, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Fredericton, sent food and funds to help the wounded in the Boer War in South Africa.

During the First World War thousands of volunteers of what had become the Canadian Red Cross Society contributed more than \$35 million in relief, established hospitals in England and France and, among other things, set up comfort and care centres for Canadian service men. During the Second World War Canadian Red Cross volunteers sent 16.5 million prisoner-of-war packages overseas, contributing goods and money amounting to more than \$125 million.

Today Red Cross volunteers across Canada give more than one million units of blood every year. Volunteers work at blood donor clinics; they help develop and teach first aid, water and boat safety and health programmes. Volunteers visit veterans and senior citizens, loan out crutches and wheelchairs and provide emergency and disaster services. Volunteers raise money for overseas disaster relief and development programmes and trace and reunite separated family members. It is estimated that volunteers perform 90 per cent of Red Cross work in Canada.

The story of the Red Cross in Canada and around the world is the story of volunteers.

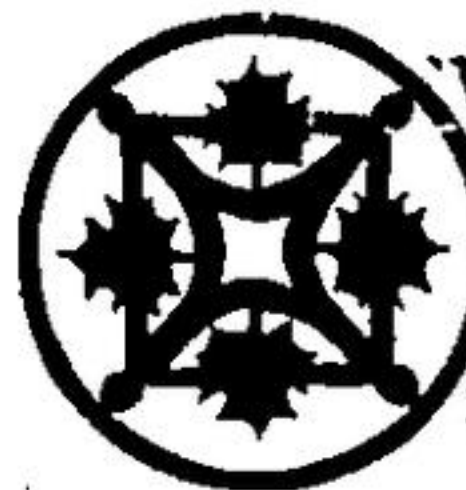
volunteers who care about other people and are willing to share their good fortune with others. It's the story of people inspired by the Red Cross goal of relieving human suffering in

war and peace and promoting health - and doing something about it.

Call your Red Cross today to find out how you can become part of the Red Cross story.

This week, get involved!

Volunteer Week was officially proclaimed in Halton Hills April 5 by town council. In doing so, council acknowledged that formally designating April 18 to 24 "Volunteer Week" will enable local social and health agencies to promote "volunteerism" and encourage non-involved members of the community to put their spare hours to better use. For more information, call the North Halton Volunteer Agency at 877-3219.



Volunteers - Canada's greatest natural resource

Tip o' the hat

The Halton Hills recreation department expresses its thanks to the many volunteers who've assisted its programs and, in doing so, ensured their success. Special thanks go to Jillians helper coach Jennifer Melville, outdoor cross-country ski workshop host Rob Taylor, Acton pool staff Carolyn Sewell, Lori Fountain, Jack Ninaber, Sean McVeigh, Melanie Bray, Marla and Laura Brillinger, Trevlynn and Shelly Mason, Shannon Johnson, Paul and Lisann Doubt, Adrian Alder and Denise Looyenga, and Georgetown pool staff Andrea Norgate, Johanna Delroy, Glen Farrow, Tim Hancock, Kevin Stein, Melanie Jankins, Chris Hughes, Beth Gibbs, Jenni Lusby, Karen Pepper, Denise Duffie, Kim Penna, Jodi Collins, Christian Wasserman, Ron Siderius, Janice Atherley, Christian Book and Cathy Lenz.

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