



# Volunteers are lifting up their communities

By Rosemary Ann Coburn

National Volunteer Week is an opportunity to honour and celebrate volunteers whose efforts lift up communities.

The Volunteer Factor – Lifting Communities is the theme for this year's tribute that runs from April 7 to 13. The theme recognizes the impact of Canada's volunteers and their efforts toward lifting up others and their community. Volunteers are everyday people who recognize the needs of others and are willing to give of themselves.

Former Governor General of Canada, David Johnston in his inaugural speech, outlined three essential elements needed to achieve a vision of a smart and caring nation. The third was encouraging philanthropy and volunteerism. He went on to say that "Canadians have a long history of coming together and helping one another. Service to country shaped us, service to family and community sustains us, and this tradition of service will carry us forward into the future."

If we look at the history of Canada as a nation, we see the first acts of volunteerism can be traced to early settlers. They depended on each other to survive and prosper. Neighbours helping neighbours was vital in the creation of healthy communities which prevented isolation and loneliness during



those harsh times.

Over the past 150 years countless organizations have formed to address areas of injustice and the needs of society. In Canada, organizations emerged in direct response to a need in a community all of which involved volunteers as founders, supporters and front-line workers.

The Marching Mothers is an example of the power of volunteers to lift up communities. In the 1950s a group of mothers

desperate to find a cure for polio, formed the Marching Mothers and went door-to-door collecting dimes to fund research. The mothers were instrumental in supporting the research of Dr. Jonas Salk, whose polio vaccine was released in 1955, putting an end to the epidemic. The Marching Mothers movement today is known as the March of Dimes.

Volunteers played a vital role in forming our earliest hospitals, housing for seniors, and many health and social service agencies across the country. Today volunteers can be seen reaching out and giving back to their communities through organizations, neighbourhood groups, faith communities and various levels of government.

Marjorie Moore, a volunteer development coordinator in the United States offers this definition: "Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections every four years, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in."

Volunteer Halton acknowledges the region's volunteers who give their time and expertise and have a positive impact on the community. To become part of the powerful force of volunteering visit the website [volunteerhalton.ca](http://volunteerhalton.ca).

*Rosemary Ann Coburn is director of Volunteer Halton.*



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**– EVERY MOMENT**  
**MAKES A**  
**DIFFERENCE**

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**APPRECIATION**  
**WEEK**  
**APRIL 7 - 13, 2019**



Halton Healthcare is fortunate to have a wonderful team of dedicated volunteers making a difference every day. The Georgetown Hospital extends a huge THANK YOU to all our volunteers for making every moment count in supporting our hospital to provide exemplary care to our patients and visitors.



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