



# Volunteering

A Great Way to Grow

National  
Volunteer Week  
April 18 to April 22



15—The Canadian Champion, Wednesday, April 20, 1994

## Volunteers help make prison a place with hope

*Give inmates skills and a role model while serving time*

**FRANCES PEDDER**  
*Special to The Champion*

IT'S THE POLICY of the Ministry of Correctional Services to encourage community participation, through volunteers, in the delivery of well-planned programs and services for persons in its care. Community participation is encouraged for three reasons:

1. Volunteers provide opportunities not readily available to offenders to learn new skills and behaviours;
2. Volunteers represent a positive role model for offenders;
3. Volunteers act as ambassadors by heightening the awareness of the community to the role played by the Ministry in discharging its responsibility to its inmates and also to the people of Ontario.

### Start here

So, where do we start?

As a volunteer programs coordinator in one of the largest correctional institutions in Ontario (Maplehurst), I find the first contact is usually made by a member of the community inquiring as to the availability of volunteer positions.

They may have heard about our programs from a volunteer, a staff member or their local volunteer centre.

Unless I am looking for a specific volunteer for a specific task or pro-

gram, I do not actively recruit new volunteers.

The interest generated by our community is generally recruitment enough.

Each community member is interviewed to determine their suitability and also to ascertain their needs. If I can match the needs of the volunteers to the needs of the institution, the experience is usually more rewarding for all parties.

Once the initial interview is over, the screening is done. Each community member must be police-checked (with their written permission) and two character references are required.

### Final say

Should anything of a serious nature be disclosed throughout this process, the security officer and the superintendent have the final say as to whether or not the person may continue the application. It should be noted that having a criminal record does not preclude anyone from being a volunteer. Once this procedure is completed, the community member is invited to orientation.

Orientation is held on a Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and includes the following: An overview of the Ministry and the institution, a tour of the facility, details on situations such as security, hostage taking, contraband, rules and regulations and inmate types.

After seeing the inside of the institution and having completed the orientation, most community members have a better feeling for where they will be working.

Each individual is seen in a follow-up interview to discuss their placement in a specific job assignment.

Depending on their job assignment, they may need to attend another training session, which is usually held once the assignment has started.

The community member is then asked to take an oath of confidentiality, photographed for identification purposes, given a job description and a volunteer manual for reference. At this point the community member is an officially registered volunteer.

It is a lengthy process but necessary for all concerned, and most volunteers tell me that it gives them a much better sense of the Ministry and the offenders.

We have an annual recognition dinner for our volunteers. Some of the offenders are allowed to participate to say thank you.

### Workshops

We also have various workshops and training sessions available throughout the year, which are greatly appreciated.

Our facility has 160 volunteers who provide programs, support and

friendship to a great number of offenders.

Some of our volunteers have been coming to our institution for more than 18 years.

During 1993, volunteers provided more than 7,000 hours of their time to our institution.

My volunteers tell me that it is a very rewarding experience for them and I think I speak for most of the offenders and staff in saying that it is a much nicer place with them around.

□ Frances Pedder is volunteer coordinator for the Maplehurst correctional complex in Milton.

### An inmate speaks up

## How one volunteer helps me cope with the stress and fatigue

**By WOODLEY WRAY MITCHELL**  
*Special to The Champion*

One of the most astonishing encounters I have had at the Maplehurst complex is meeting a volunteer worker by the name of Yolanda. We are people from separate generations. I didn't know what to expect from our first visit, but from the moment that I walked into the room and saw her, I knew right then we could communicate on a social level.

What makes this program work for me is that I am honest with myself and I respect Yolanda to the highest degree. I feel free to express myself to her in more ways than one — why? Because I trust her.

Throughout my one-on-one visits, we reciprocate views and different opinions to get a better under-

standing about the world that we are living in.

I would like to express that I am a person with a positive attitude towards life in general, but upon meeting this lady, my overall attitude got even better through her advice, thought, encouragement, and her attitude towards me. I know that she is one of the best persons that I have come into contact with at the Maplehurst.

I am sincere, and deeply appreciative of the volunteer program at Maplehurst because it helps me to cope with the stress and fatigue that I encounter throughout my sentence.

I believe that if this program can help me to motivate myself, then more inmates would benefit from similar volunteer programs.

□ Woodley Wray Mitchell is currently serving a sentence at the Maplehurst prison complex in Milton.



Ontario

Noel Duignan  
M.P.P. Halton North

Congratulations to all those who care enough to give of their time and effort for many local and national causes.

Our world would be a poorer place  
Without your participation

Best Wishes  
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