

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK April 6-12, 2014



Maggy Mae Sawatsky and Miguelson

of thousands of dead Haitians from the earthquake, having crying and deformed children being given to me to care of, and being begged for just "one American dollar".

In December of 2012, a friend asked me if I wanted to go to Haiti. Having been to New Orleans and Alberta for previous mission trips, I was super excited to go, and I quickly raised enough funds to go in February. I joined a group of 20 adults and 3 teenagers, to Cabaret and Labouderie, Haiti. When I got there, it was nothing like I had ever experienced. When you see poverty on TV, or famine, or disaster, you think you fully grasp how horrible it is. It isn't until you step foot into country, where the putrid smell of garbage, the sadness that coats everything, and the poverty that overtakes every sight you see, that you realize how little you know. I spent the rest of that day, walking around the graves

were there, I participated in a clothing and necessity giveaway. We clothed, gave toothbrushes, soaps and baby products to over 150 people. This process though incredibly rewarding, overwhelmed me, and I

found myself hysterically sobbing over a church bench as little Haitian children's hands poked through the cracks and holes in the wall, asking for a piece of my trail mix. About an hour later, a little boy named Miguelson, snuck into the church, and with his little dirty hand, wiped off my tears. He comforted me in Creole and continued to wipe off my tears, before falling asleep on my lap. I spent the rest of the week, in this numb state of confusion and hope. December 2012 comes around, now being 9 months since I was last in Haiti, I get a text saying I should go back. Not sure whether or not I can emotionally handle it, I prayed. Later I found 20 creole dollars rolled up in my back pocket. I went, again. This time completely filled with joy. The first time I drove through, we passed this place called Cite de Soleil. A shanty town, so filled with garbage that the river water was lime green and naked children ran through it. This was the poorest town in the world. The second time to Haiti, the garbage was gone, trees had been planted and fresh water had started to trickle

through. Completely unrecognizable. The second time in Haiti, I realized that poverty wasn't sadness or despair, but that as much as Haiti is physically impoverished, Canada has much more emotional and spiritual poverty. This completely changed how I viewed the Haitians. They were no longer the people I was trying to help, but they were now, the people helping me. Haiti has become my new home, a place where I feel alive. This February, I am going back, hopefully one day, to stay. There is hope. Volunteering does help. It changes their lives and yours.

Maggy Mae Sawatsky

To other people, it is a mystery why I continue to volunteer, even though I have well over the 40 hours required to graduate from High School. To me, it is a mystery why other people stop volunteering after they get their 40 hours.

In my opinion, volunteering is one of the best things anyone can do with their time. It is a way to make a difference in the lives of others, as well as in the community. Plus, volunteering doesn't just benefit the people you are helping; by brightening other people's days, yours will also become brighter.

I have been volunteering at a local retirement centre for 4 years. I also volunteer as an assistant at my dance studio and at various events at my school.

There are so many different ways to volunteer, so it is easy to pick an opportunity based on your interests and skills. By doing this, you practically guarantee that you will enjoy your volunteering experience, because it will be coupled with things you enjoy - and are good at - doing.

Though there are so many different ways to earn the title of 'volunteer', they all have one thing in common: the fact that you have to help someone, or a group of people, or a cause. You have to help in some way, shape, or form. Sometimes it doesn't seem like you are helping - but trust me, you are. Even the smallest acts of kindness are

appreciated, and they can ripple into something even bigger, without you even realizing.

In the words of television anchor and journalist Tom Brokaw, "It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference." Volunteers do not get paid in money - but rather, in gratitude, and it is with this gratitude that we make a difference.

Sherina Harris,
Grade 10 student,
Dr. Frank J. Hayden S.S.



Haiti trip 2012

Many thanks to all of you.



For your spirit of generosity,
and your "hands on caring".

Cheers to Volunteers!

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

For bringing comfort and joy to medically complex children in our community. You are the heart of *The Darling Home for Kids!*

The Helping Hands Volunteer Program is generously sponsored by



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