

NEWS RELEASE

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MBA Service Corps assists not-for-profits and raises awareness *Some 200 business students help solve business challenges of 100-plus social agencies*

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WATERLOO – An organization that trains service dogs for the disabled and another that provides new back-to-school clothes, shoes and backpacks to needy children are just two of the not-for-profit agencies benefiting from the work of The Laurier NFP MBA Service Corps. The Service Corps will celebrate more than 100 successful placements with a closing colloquium in Laurier’s Paul Martin Centre on July 13.

Friday morning’s event is designed to celebrate the work of the Service Corps and raise awareness. The keynote event at 10:30 a.m. involves a panel discussion with senior executives from Electrohome Ltd., the Royal Bank of Canada, Ford Motor Company of Canada, Ltd., and Checkfree Financial and Compliance Solutions. The panel will discuss the importance of having future business leaders support not-for-profit efforts.

“We currently have more than 200 MBA candidates working on projects for more than 100 agencies – most here and some in Toronto,” explains Tony Abbruzzese, an MBA candidate who serves on the Service Corps steering committee. “Friday’s event is designed to demonstrate how business professionals can contribute to their community’s quality of life.”

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Now in its second year, the Service Corps grew out of the non-credit practicum that has been an important part of the MBA program since 1995. Participants devote a minimum of 40 hours of practical service that adds value to a registered not-for-profit organization. They may provide management-consulting services and/or perform tasks that are valued because of the time commitment required.

Organizations benefiting from the Service Corps this year include National Service Dogs and Send 'em Off Smiling. The first group trains Labradors and golden retrievers as service dogs for individuals with physical disabilities, hearing impairments, autism and epilepsy. Volunteers help foster puppies, train the dogs, select appropriate recipients, maintain the kennels, fundraise and coordinate volunteer activities.

The Service Corps helped evaluate the agency's current fundraising strategy and devise new initiatives. MBA candidates recommended two new strategies – one annual effort tied to the MBA program and an as-yet scheduled community event.

When it began six years ago, Send 'em Off Smiling helped outfit 27 students in one school. This year volunteers and two staff members helped 730 students from 50 schools in the Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge area, but found little time to address fundraising challenges. The Service Corps developed a strategy and completed fundraising efforts targeting corporate sponsors and a community event.

Eighty MBA candidates who worked in 13 groups – including the ones for National Service Dogs and Send 'em Off Smiling – will be on hand to explain their involvement with the Service Corps. The panel discussion will feature John A. Pollock, chairman and chief executive officer, Electrohome Ltd.; Norman Stewart, vice-president of government relations, Ford Motor Company of Canada, Ltd.; Ray Simonson, senior vice president and chief technology officer, CheckFree Financial and Compliance Solutions; and Stephan Voisin, national manager of donations, Royal Bank of Canada.