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Charities and non-profits across Dufferin County celebrate National Volunteer Week 2026

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National Volunteer Week 2026 runs from April 19 to 25, and groups across Dufferin County are recognizing the monumental role that volunteers play in local initiatives.

Celebrated annually in April, the week highlights the individuals who give their time, skills, and energy to support local organizations, events, and services.

Several volunteer organizations from across Dufferin County are taking the time to highlight the important roles their volunteers play in their operations.

Dufferin Community Foundation Executive Director Michele Fischer said that despite economic conditions tightening, the volunteer scene in Dufferin County remains strong.

?We are a community of caring people and charities celebrate their volunteers wherever possible,? she said. ?However, people are time-strapped and busy, and it can be much more challenging to find volunteers, especially those who are willing to take on leadership positions in non-profits.?

?We are so fortunate to have a team of exceptional volunteers. They are smart, talented and committed to making an impact on our community. As with most charities, we work with very limited resources. It's fair to say that we would not be where we are without them!?

From community groups and non-profits to schools, healthcare organizations, and service clubs, volunteers are often the backbone of programs that residents rely on every day. Their efforts help deliver essential services, strengthen social connections, and enhance overall quality of life.

Lori Robertshaw, volunteer care coordinator at the Orangeville Food Bank, said that without their dedicated volunteer team, the essential services they offer simply wouldn't exist.

?The Orangeville Food Bank's ability to support our community at such a meaningful scale simply wouldn't exist without our incredible volunteer team,? she said. ?Preparing and organizing food in the kitchen, coordinating deliveries and pickups across town, participating as a board member, and supporting special events like food drives ? every role plays a vital part.?

?The impact of the 250 volunteers at Orangeville Food Bank?Dufferin Food Share truly cannot be overstated.?

Organization leaders said that Volunteer Week is more than a time to thank volunteers for their hard work, it's also a time to remind everyone how much work they really do, and what would be impossible without their continued support.

Ardith Dunlop, organizer with the Shelburne Food Bank, said that volunteer staff take a heavy load off small, charity-driven organizations, allowing them to focus on helping those in need rather than worrying about whether they even have money to operate.

?Volunteers are critical for the Shelburne Food Bank; if we didn't have the 75-plus volunteers we have, we wouldn't be able to open our doors,? she said. ?Volunteers build hampers, sort food, stock shelves, do food rescue at local stores, bag bread, make deliveries, interview clients, bag options, deliver hampers to clients' cars, attend meetings, write grants,sit on the board of directors, fundraise

and the million of other things that are necessary for a food bank to run.?

?Volunteers are absolutely essential in society today. They fill gaps that governments and businesses can't always cover. Without volunteers, many services would either shrink dramatically or become too expensive to sustain.?

Volunteers play an essential role in health and safety. Organizations like Family Transition Place (FTP), which provides shelter and support to those affected by gender-based violence, focusing primarily on women and children, also rely on a dedicated volunteer staff to operate.

Kelly Lee, manager of fund development and communication strategies at FTP, said that their volunteers play an important administrative role, beyond frontline support.

?Volunteers are the heart of Family Transition Place ? from our Board of Directors and Finance Committee to those who help at fundraising events, staff our reception, assist clients with tax preparation, and provide wellbeing support to women and children fleeing abuse,? she said.

?Each role is important, and together they help make our work possible and the lives of our clients more comfortable. They meaningfully extend our capacity and bring a richness to our programs that we couldn't easily replicate otherwise.?

She continued by saying how grateful FTP feels to have the volunteer team that they have. Their skills, dedication and leadership are deeply appreciated not just by staff, but those in need as well.

?To our volunteers ? thank you,? she said. ?What you give goes far beyond your hours. You bring skills, compassion, and commitment that strengthen our organization and, more importantly, bring comfort and dignity to the women and children we serve. We hope you know how deeply valued you are, not just by our staff, but by every client whose life has been touched by your presence. We are grateful every day.?

Volunteers work in almost every support sector in Dufferin County. Social support, food security, even firefighting relies on dedicated volunteers when duty calls. Organizations across Dufferin are making sure to take time to recognize those volunteers.

National Volunteer Week serves as a reminder that every act of service, small or large, frontline or behind the scenes, can make a meaningful difference.