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From Green Team to Stage Crew: Volunteers needed for Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival

Written By Sam Odrowski

Orangeville's favourite festival is returning in early June, and volunteers are needed to make it a success.

The 22nd Annual Orangeville Blue and Jazz Festival (OBJF) will be held along Broadway and in Alexandra Park from June 5 to 7. Anyone looking to get involved is encouraged to express their interest to organizers.

?Volunteers are the backbone of the festival,? said Norm Trudeau, OBJF volunteer coordinator.

?On average, I try to recruit 230 people across 14 different teams, which is no small task? We need everything from event staff, our food and beverage team, operations people and fundraising, to merchandise, and admissions.?

He added, ?Anybody who wants to volunteer between the ages of 14 and 95 can come and volunteer ? I'll have positions for them.?

There are two key dates for interested individuals to watch out for ? April 21 and May 27. Volunteer orientation and training meetings will take place on both dates at the Orangeville Seniors Centre (26 Bythia St.), each starting at 7 p.m.

Roughly 50 per cent of OBJF's volunteers return each year and are put in key positions to run the festival, while the other half is made up of new recruits.

?They really are some of the greatest people I've ever met,? Trudeau said of the volunteers. ?They're just wonderful. We're like a big family.?

Perks of volunteering

While volunteers generously give their time to the OBJF and make it possible, the festival gives back to them and provides them with great value as well.

?It really is a fantastic experience for any demographic,? Trudeau said. ?I've personally been a volunteer with the festival for 20 of its 22 years, and every year the experience has just been amazing.?

He continued, ?The real big advantage of being a volunteer is you get to be up close and personal to the music ? and the music is what the festival is all about.?

Larry Kurtz, OBJF festival director and founder, praised the volunteer experience, noting that people have made lifelong friends by getting involved.

?A lot of people have made lifelong friends by volunteering, so it's a good social aspect. You get to meet people in the community who are like minded and want to give back,? he said.

Kurtz added that to reward volunteers, he puts together a celebratory appreciation party a few weeks after the festival. The event features live music, refreshments, and an opportunity to reconnect with fellow volunteers.

Available volunteer positions

There are several different types of volunteer positions to be filled. OBJF organizers are seeking a leader for the festival's Green

Team, which handles garbage, compost, and recycling.

The Merchandise Team and Fundraising Team also have positions open.

Experienced bar staff or people with a Smart Serve Certificate are needed on the Food and Beverage Team.

?We are expanding our Broadway Beer Garden this year, which is awesome, but we'll need more people for that,? Trudeau said.

Individuals with sound, stage or emcee experience who can volunteer are of great value to the festival, helping to run its three stages.

Kurtz highlighted the volunteer Roust About Team, affectionately called the RATS, who assist with setup and teardown.

He also noted the Artist Hospitality Team, which looks after musicians as they get to the festival, setting them up with passes and meal vouchers.

How to sign up

Anyone interested in volunteering, or looking for more information, can visit orangevillebluesandjazz.ca/volunteer to sign up or contact Trudeau by phone at 647-281-1575 or by email at Norm@orangevillebluesandjazz.ca.

?I would be more than happy to walk through the process of applying to become a volunteer,? Trudeau said. ?It really is a fantastic experience. I can't say enough about how rewarding it is to get involved with this festival.?

While anyone interested in volunteering is encouraged to express their interest in advance, volunteers will be accepted until the end of the festival; there is no cut-off date.

?If a person wants to become a volunteer, all they have to do go to our main Volunteer Centre at the gazebo in Alexandra Park, and we'll put you to work,? Trudeau enthused.

High school students looking to complete their volunteer service hours while enjoying a fun local event are encouraged to get involved.

?It's a great experience for them. They get to work with experienced people, and see the festival from the operational aspect, not just being a patron,? Trudeau noted.

Anyone who'd like to meet the team in person and learn more about the festival can visit them at two upcoming home and garden shows.

OBJF organizers will have a booth at the 26th Annual Orangeville Lions Home and Garden Show, which runs from March 27 to 29 at the OAS Event Centre on the Orangeville Fairgrounds (247090 5 Sideroad, Mono). The team will also be at the Erin Home and Garden Show from April 24 to 26 at the Erin Agricultural Society (184 Main St., Erin), seeking volunteers.