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National Volunteer Week recognized locally

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Volunteers are often seen as the glue that holds a community together, contributing both their time and efforts to make a difference.

National Volunteer Week (NVW), which runs from April 18 to April 24, acknowledges the valuable work these volunteers bring to their communities,

Volunteer Dufferin, a project developed by Headwaters Communities in Action that helps connect volunteers and organizations together, is one of the many local organizations giving their thanks to volunteers this week.

?It's always important to acknowledge volunteers in our community. They're unsung heroes and they don't do it for the praise,? said Jennifer Payne, executive director of Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA).

The National Volunteer Week theme for 2021 is ?The Value of One. The Power of Many?, which Volunteer Canada says reflects the ?awe-inspiring? acts by individuals and the ?magic? that occurs working together for a common purpose.

?When you think about volunteering, it's a very personal act, each person is valued in what they contribute to their communities,? said Payne. ?The value of one might be, one person making a phone call to check in on a neighbour, one person dropping off groceries, or volunteering at a food bank. Then there's the power in many, the power in many are groups of people working together to make real change in their communities.?

The volunteer sector, like many, has seen the year plus impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many events that provide opportunities for community members to volunteer were cancelled and organizations either cut back or were forced to change how they worked with volunteers.

?Volunteering gives people a sense of purpose and we've heard from our local polls that some people are struggling to find that sense of purpose without their usual opportunities to volunteer,? said Payne.

Despite this, she adds that for some, the opportunities available have given a sense of purpose.

?After being disrupted in their usual routines, they wanted to get into volunteering and giving back,? Payne explained.

She said it's become even more important to acknowledge the work of volunteers.

?We always want to show our appreciation for our volunteers, this year in particular, many [volunteers] may be feeling displaced, or isolated and not able to give as they have traditionally. It's important for us to say ?it's ok for you to be taking a break', volunteering isn't just signing up for a job with an organization and having a shift, it's all the ways that you care for your community members,? said Payne.

Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC) also shared a message on April 18 from president and CEO Kim Delahunt, recognizing the efforts of volunteers.

?Headwaters and our broader community are certainly enriched as a result of the collective generosity and contributions from out volunteers,? said Delahunt. ?On behalf of our hospital, thank you for your contributions and for your continued connection with us. Thank you for choosing us as your place to give back. We hope, that in the not-so-distant future, we will see a safe return of our

hospital volunteers and a resurgence of the other volunteer activities.?

Headwaters relies on the contributions of over 400 volunteers including Headwaters Hospital Auxiliary, Patients and Family Advisory Partnership, Spiritual Care Chaplains, Telecheck Dufferin, The Friendship Gardens and members of the Hospital Board of Directors.

Payne concluded that there are still opportunities for community members to volunteer, even in small ways.

Organizations searching for volunteers or those looking to volunteer can go to www.volunteerdufferin.ca