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Volunteer Dufferin showcases local opportunities at annual volunteer fair

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Local charities and community groups are always looking for volunteers, and on Oct 22, they gathered at the Edlebrock Center in Orangeville to find community-centered volunteers.

Led by Volunteer Dufferin, the day was an opportunity for those looking to volunteer their time and for those seeking volunteers to meet, exchange contact information, network, and sign up.

The group had just gone through a rebrand aimed at streamlining its processes, according to co-coordinator Jennifer Payne.

?We've been around for a while, and we used to be run wholly by volunteers ourselves,? she said. ?But just in the past year, we've launched a reboot of the portal itself.?

The organizations had a wide variety in what they were looking for and offering, ranging from wildlife and outdoor conservation groups to senior care and child support and care. The volunteer fair was an open forum for everyone.

Volunteer Dufferin's role is to provide a bridge between volunteers and potential roles in the community. They will help pair volunteers with roles that best suit their skill set or interests, and connect them with like-minded organizations.

Payne said that what people think about volunteering might not reflect the reality of it today. There are a plethora of new types of volunteering.

?Volunteering can look like a lot of different things,? she said. ?It's not just showing up for a shift; it could include serving on a board of directors, or volunteering just for an event, one time, easy peasy.?

?There's a growing movement of micro volunteering, which is one-off little projects, maybe just hanging some posters around town, but also participating in focus groups or completing a survey or joining an advisory Team,? Payne added.

This was reflected in all the groups present at the volunteer fair.

Sunny Bhogal represented the Orangeville Lions Club.

Originally established in 1917 in Chicago, Illinois, the Lions Club runs and supports charitable programs, such as SightFirst, which supports the blind. They also run disability programs and coordinate international donations to support humanitarian projects.

Bhogal said they are looking to highlight the critical importance of volunteer work and seek new potential members.

?We're finding that a lot of people aren't making time for volunteering, so this event is all about getting more community outreach,? he said. ?It's important for us to come out and show the importance of volunteering and why the Lions Club has been doing what it's doing for so long. It's so important for everybody to give a little bit of their time back to the community.?

Situated not far from the Lions Club table was Caledon Meals on Wheels.

Established in 1984, Caledon Meals on Wheels provides volunteer-driven programs for seniors and people with disabilities. They run programs designed to get seniors moving and engaged, and offer visiting services so seniors are less isolated, wherever they live.

Maureen Chilko, program and volunteer services supervisor, said they are actively seeking volunteer drivers and visitation volunteers.

?We're always looking for volunteers to help deliver our hot and fresh meals on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and there's also friendly visiting opportunities to support clients with mobility issues,? she said. ?Some of our clients aren't able to get out to activities, and senior social wellness programming can help to get seniors moving and socializing. We want to get them spending time with their community.?

For those looking to use their administrative experience in a volunteer capacity, the Alzheimer Society of Dufferin County may have opportunities available. Lauren Culver, manager of fund development and representing the charity, said that they have officer and support roles that need to be filled.

?We have various volunteer opportunities available,? she said. ?One would be an office assistant, who would help us out with stuff around our office space. Another would be education support. They would go out into the community with our education coordinator, and talk to community leaders about dementia.?

From Orangeville to the wider Dufferin Country, volunteer groups are seeking a variety of roles and are offering unique opportunities to expand skill sets and connections, all while serving the community.

For more information on volunteer opportunities, head to https://www.volunteerdufferin.ca/.