

Volunteer Week recognizes contributions of Dufferin's volunteers



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Volunteers are often considered the backbone of a community, and this week organizations across Dufferin County are recognizing the contributions of their volunteers.

National Volunteer Week, which takes place from April 14 to April 20, is a celebration of the work of volunteers and highlights their importance in the community.

"A typical volunteer doesn't ask for accolades or anything in return, this is a modest bunch and they don't ask for recognition. It's very important to take a moment to recognize that contribution," said Jennifer Payne, executive director of Headwaters Communities in Action. "Volunteers are the heart and soul of a community and it needs to be recognized as a valuable and vital sector of our community."

Volunteer Dufferin, a project of Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA), is an online portal that helps match available volunteers with organizations that are in need of volunteers.

The system works by having individuals register a profile on the Volunteer Dufferin website and indicating their interests, skills, availability, and types of volunteer opportunities they're looking for. Volunteers are then able to browse a list of available positions in the community.

Organizations are also able to register on Volunteer Dufferin to post volunteer positions and connect with the best candidates.

While the number of opportunities on the portal fluctuates, Volunteer Dufferin currently has around 65 postings that require volunteers. These include registered non-profits and charities as well as community groups, event organizers, and other types of clubs and groups.

A specific area Payne noted as one in need of volunteers is local boards and committees.

“A lot of organizations are really in need of board members; they're looking to diversify the voices on their boards,” said Payne. “We'd love to encourage people who are interested in giving back in a different way to look at board work and bringing their unique skills and voice to represent the community in organizations that align with their values and passions.”

For those apprehensive about venturing into volunteering or may feel they have nothing to offer, Volunteer Dufferin uses the three W's system – wisdom, wealth and work.

When approaching volunteerism, a resident can think about the wisdom they can bring to the role such as a skill or lived experience; they can think about the wealth they can bring, including financial and in-kind donations; and finally, the work, which is the time and hands of labour.

“There are so many organizations, clubs and groups doing great work in our community and they all need our help. There are so many opportunities for volunteering or giving in the way that you can and the way that you want to,” said Payne.

A key factor in finding a volunteer position that will be successful is one that speaks to the volunteers' interests.

“It really makes a difference when you find an organization or a type of volunteer opportunity that really speaks to your core values, and you're more likely to have fun doing that work,” said Payne. “You can also meet other people who are of a similar mind and share the values and passions that you do. I think that's a great way to make social connections.”

This year, the theme for National Volunteer Week is “Every Moment Matters”. The theme looks to highlight the importance of each volunteering act or each contribution – big or small.

“I know it's really hard on people who are accustomed to volunteering a lot because they feel like they're either letting someone down or they're never giving enough, and I think what's important is for us to underscore that every moment matters; it's all valuable.”

To learn more about Volunteer Dufferin or to look at volunteering opportunities, visit www.volunteerdufferin.ca.