

VOLUNTEERING IS FUNDAMENTAL TO ACHIEVING TRUE GROWTH

Volunteer involvement has long been an important tradition for Saint Johners. Currently tens of thousands of local citizens volunteer. They coach, tutor, chair meetings, visit, plan, drive, organize. When opened in 1973, the Saint John Volunteer (Bureau) Centre was established to better mobilize individuals and organizations to build the health, social service and education sectors, the arts and culture community, sports and recreation, and the faith communities. The Saint John Volunteer Centre is a cornerstone of this city's foundation. Volunteers Grow Community: a community which retains and attracts people to live here. It is essential to a good quality of life for all. This is a natural fit with Saint John's "True Growth Strategy!"

Employer Supported Volunteerism: The term refers to a continuum of employer support for employee volunteer activities. It describes a company that voluntarily supports its employees' involvement in the community (*Volunteer Canada*). About one half of all employed volunteers (Stats Canada 2000) received some form of support from their employer: use of workplace facilities, time off, and change in work hours to accommodate volunteering.

Employees benefit from Employer Supported Volunteerism by enhanced morale, increased motivation and job satisfaction, and have a more positive attitude toward their employer. Volunteering enriches personal skills like problem-solving. Volunteering is proven extremely beneficial to the health of those engaged in it; it creates better immune system functioning, lowers stress levels, helps in the retention of mental acuity, and heightens sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

Businesses benefit from Employer Supported Volunteerism by demonstrating commitment to the community, enhancing their reputation, increasing consumer loyalty, and attracting prospective employees. Employers whose employees volunteer gain a more highly skilled workforce as a direct result of volunteering: the skill acquisition and enhanced team work capacity (collaboration, communication, creative thinking, influencing). Increased morale and motivation have also been proven to increase customer relations which pay off in increased sales and profitability.

Employees contribute in a wide variety of activities: one type of ESV project may coordinate a team effort - one day (or half day) building, painting and repair projects; park clean ups; and a great variety of other projects. Other example are providing recognition to their employees who volunteer, or coordinating a Volunteer Fair for their employees; or helping with community special events and holiday celebrations. It can be as simple as posting volunteer opportunities in the lunch room or via internal newsletter or email networks. Tell us what fits for your company.

The Saint John Volunteer Centre can help your business to coordinate an ESV project. We can help you to make the necessary connections; offer appealing projects to choose from. If you are an employer in the Saint John area who would like to get involved in ESV, please contact the Saint John Volunteer Centre, (506) 658-1555, and ask to speak with Eileen McLaughlin, Executive Director, or email me at: volunteer.sj@nb.aibn.com