

## What do consider before selecting a volunteer responsibility: tips for getting the most out of volunteering

### Did you know you must complete 40 hours of volunteer work to graduate?

The Ministry of Education requires the completion of 40 hours of community involvement for completion of your high school diploma. The aim of this initiative is to encourage you to become actively involved in the community.

While you have the period of time in which you are enrolled in secondary school to complete the 40 hours of volunteer work, you are encouraged to complete it by the end of grade 10. Ministry guidelines have established eligible and ineligible activities for the community involvement requirement—students and parents must follow these guidelines. With the help of your parents, you are responsible for completing the 40 hours of volunteer work.

### Before you begin, here are some things to think about:

- In 2007, 58 percent of people aged 15 to 24 volunteered an average of 138 hours. Volunteering provides you with learning opportunities that last a lifetime. Volunteering helps you:
- understand people better, gain confidence to handle difficult situations and motivate others
- develop communication, public speaking, organization, writing and public relations skills
- learn about issues such as health, women's issues, politics, criminal justice or the environment
- explore your strengths, use your skills and experiences and improve job opportunities through networking

As a volunteer, you also reap personal benefits and enhance your personal growth by:

- increasing social awareness
- learning through service
- enjoying better health
- gaining self-confidence
- discovering your talents
- building a sense of independence
- expanding your social circle

And volunteering gets you ready for the workforce. By helping you:

- develop employment related skills
- gain work experience
- explore career options
- develop a job-finding network

The result? You'll find it easier to market yourself to prospective employers, fill out university or college application forms, talk to scholarship or bursary offices or take on more challenging volunteer positions in the community.

### So how can I get started?

Your volunteer role should suit you and your personality as much as your clothes, hairstyle and lifestyle. To find the right fit, take time to consider what you have to offer and what you want to learn. If you're into fitness, you know you need a workout plan. Having a plan can also help you get the results you want through volunteer work. But first you need to evaluate yourself and set some goals.

You'll want to:

- assess your skills and abilities
- decide what you want to accomplish
- link your interests with an eligible volunteer activity
- research volunteer opportunities in your community
- visit the board web site at [www.peelschools.org](http://www.peelschools.org) and go to Your Time Counts in the "Student Stuff" section for more information and volunteer postings
- contact Volunteer MBC at 905-238-2622 for suggestions on finding a volunteer position in the community
- search the internet for volunteer opportunities with companies or organizations you are interested in or just search volunteering in Peel.

Evaluating your skills has never been more important. You can make the most of your volunteer activities by applying your talents, values, interests and abilities. So take time to think about yourself.



## Where should I look for volunteer opportunities that suit my interests?

Once you've identified your interests, you can begin looking in more specific areas. For example, if you like working with senior citizens, a volunteer placement in a seniors' residence might be a good choice. Or, if you think public broadcasting is the environment you'd like, look for opportunities at a local radio or television station. Here are some other places to consider:

- amateur theatre groups
- daycare centres
- community celebrations, fairs and festivals
- art galleries
- sports centres
- libraries
- parks and historic sites

## Choosing a volunteer placement

Before selecting a volunteer placement, you and your parents should determine if the activity meets the ministry guidelines. It is a good idea to have the volunteer activity approved by the principal if you have any doubts.

Now you're ready to find out more about the organization. Make an appointment with the volunteer co-ordinator at the organization to get your questions answered. Here are some questions to ask:

- May I see a written job description for my volunteer work?
- How will my volunteer work help fulfill your organization's mission?
- What is the required time commitment of the volunteer position?
- What skills will I be able to use/develop?
- Do I have a trial period? How long is it?
- Who is my supervisor?
- Describe the working environment?
- Will my out-of-pocket expenses be reimbursed?
- How is your organization funded?
- How many volunteers are involved in this program/organization?
- Does the volunteer position require you to run any background checks on me?
- Can I be sued for any activities I may be involved with during my time as a volunteer?
- When can I start?

## The organization will have questions too

Naturally, as you screen an organization and the volunteer activity, staff will also have some questions for you.

While your resume may provide a lot of information, the organization may need more. Here are some questions you can expect to be asked:

- How did you find out about this volunteer opportunity?
- Have you volunteered before?
- Why do you want to volunteer with this organization?
- What would you like to get out of the volunteer experience?
- What are your interests?
- What skills, abilities, and qualities do you have to contribute to the organization?
  
- How long do you think you would like to volunteer?
- Do you have any special needs?
- Are you prepared to attend training and/or information sessions?
- Are you prepared to undergo screening and/or a background check for our safety, your safety and our clients' safety?

## Participating in a volunteer activity

Now that you've chosen your activity, you're ready to begin. Complete the 40 hour **Activity Record** form by outlining the volunteer work you intend to do in the first section entitled *Notification of Planned Community Involvement Activities*. Have the form signed by a parent/guardian.

As you complete each volunteer placement, record your activities in the second section of the **Activity Record** form entitled *Completion of Community Involvement Activities*. Remember to get the form signed by the supervisor of each activity. When you've completed your 40 hours, have a parent/guardian sign the form, make a photocopy for your records and hand it in to the school.

## Where can I get more information?

There are many web sites that will provide more information on volunteering. Here are some sites you can visit:

- [www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca)
- [www.charityvillage.com](http://www.charityvillage.com)
- [www.voe-reb.org](http://www.voe-reb.org)
- [www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org)
- [www.volunteermbc.org](http://www.volunteermbc.org)

For more information on completing the community involvement requirement, talk to the guidance and career education department.