

Community Information & Volunteer Centre

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Skilled volunteers are award winners

Have you heard this comment? 'I don't have time for this administrative stuff, I'd like to get a volunteer to do it.'

If you hear this type of comment in your organization, pay attention because it likely means that staff think of volunteers as people who accomplish necessary, but less important work.

What typically happens is that volunteer roles are poorly defined and training is minimal. Volunteers are not engaged to understand how their role helps the organization achieve its mission and as a result they quit feeling unfulfilled.

Earlier this week, a former volunteer manager confided, "I volunteered for that event once and never again; they wasted my time, offered no training, and ignored what I did for them."

Why not use a skill based volunteering approach? Think about the work in terms of the personal talents, professional skills, experience and education required.

Chunk the job into blocks of time, project steps or sections of content. Add flexibility, self-scheduling and input into how the work is done and you have gone a long to recruiting and retaining committed volunteers.

Laurel D'Andrea and Beryl Itani each recently won Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medals for their extensive volunteerism in our community. Congratulations, Laurel and Beryl.

I am privileged to work with both of these award winners on the Volunteer Fair Steering Committee and have learned a great deal from them.

They each bring their abilities, connections and energy to the table and we rely on one another to follow through. We are in this together and what we do is bigger and better because we work together.

A mutual sense of trust grows and produces enthusiasm, creativity and a willingness to take on a challenge from beginning to end with minor and major tasks.

A skill based approach works. Why not try it?

Dawn Wilkinson manages the Community Information and Volunteer Centre at Kelowna Community Resources. Go to kcr.ca and click on Volunteer Opportunities Search to create your volunteer profile. View all the Volunteer Centre columns at: kcr.ca/volunteercolumn. Contact 250-763-8008 ext 24 or informkelowna@kcr.ca.