

Volunteers are at the heart of healthy *and* vibrant communities

April 23 to April 29 is Volunteer appreciation week and 2017 is a time to celebrate Canada's 150th Anniversary of Confederation.

This coming sesquicentennial is an opportunity to profile what is unique and good about our country. It is also an opportunity to focus on the importance of volunteering at Peel CAS. "Our volunteers provide tremendous support to the work of our agency and enrich the lives of our families," says Carol-Ann Fox, Volunteer Coordinator. "We are fortunate to have an incredible dedicated group of volunteers that serve our families everyday, 52 weeks each year."



For more information, contact Peel CAS at 905.363.6131 or visit www.peelcas.org



Anne and Norm

It was a newspaper ad recruiting drivers that led to Norm and Anne becoming volunteers for Peel Children's Aid. That was 24 years ago. Anne had spent many years volunteering with the Canadian Cancer Society however, after seeing the ad, she and Norm decided they would look into volunteering for CAS. "I only had one child and I would have loved to have more," says Anne.

"When that didn't happen, I figured there must be a reason why we weren't able to have more children. I think that being able to give my time to help other children when they needed it most was that reason."

Just last year alone, Peel CAS volunteers drove children 884,670 kilometres to appointments, parental visits and other outings and events. Volunteer drivers also ensure children reach their scheduled appointment on time and are left in the care of a responsible adult at the appointment location. Many times, drivers work with the same children and get the chance to know them. "We've seen children grow and change and had some pretty amazing conversations," says Norm. "Some children or youth we drive get really excited to see us. They look forward to the time we spend together."

Another reason why Anne and Norm still continue to do volunteer drives after so many years – "it keeps us young!" says Anne. "Our daughter is grown and it is great to spend time with children and youth who have a different perspective."

They also have some words of wisdom to share after giving so much of their time to children involved with CAS. "Be understanding and patient. You never know what the children have been going through so we do our best to make sure that no matter what they always come first."



Odette

Odette initially began volunteering with Peel CAS in order to complete a requirement to get into policing. "I chose to volunteer as a mentor/tutor with Peel CAS and can't believe how fulfilling it has become," says Odette. "I am paired up with a young girl who just turned eight. It is amazing how spending time with this girl brings out the child in me. I have so much fun during our time together. We go to the library, do school work, or make crafts. Just a while ago, we made cupcakes out of play-dough. I've never seen a child light up from something so simple."

Odette's volunteer hours have long since been completed but she continues to be a mentor. "It is such an awesome feeling to see a smile on this child's face and know that I'm the one who put it there. I find it a welcome break from my regular routine and know that she looks forward to our time together."

Odette has a message to share with others who are thinking of volunteering.

"No matter how busy your schedule, if you have even two hours a week to share it makes a big difference. What started out as something I had to do has turned into something I don't want to do without."

Volunteering by the numbers 2016/17

425 volunteers

739 hours supervising access visits

800 children supported by volunteers through the Holiday Wishes program

Supporting **721** children to attend summer camp

Peel CAS is currently recruiting volunteers! For a list of volunteer opportunities please visit our website at www.peelcas.org or give us a call at 905.363.6131 ext. 1423.