

April 21-27 National Volunteer Week

Peel CAS volunteers help children and youth to succeed



Brad

For me, volunteering is about taking the time to help youth succeed. I had a difficult time in school which negatively affected my self-esteem. I felt that my creative energy was trapped, causing me to feel unsure of my future. Then I discovered kung fu. As I trained, my confidence quickly grew and opened many possibilities for me. This experience motivated me to help youth. A good friend of mine has worked for Peel CAS for many years and she thought one of the youth she worked with could use a mentor.

I started taking this youth out once a week when he was 11 years old. He is now 18 and out on his own. I am glad to have had the opportunity to be a mentor and play a role in his life. I've learned through my role as a volunteer that many young men don't have a positive male role model to guide and support them. There is a need for volunteers to help youth and there are

many ways to help. A few hours a month for a child can make a huge impact on how he or she sees the world – whether it seems full of opportunity or closed doors. It is a gesture that shows the world is a caring place where success is possible. Our community is stronger and more inclusive as a result of volunteerism.

Another way I've been able to serve youth involved with CAS is by teaching them kung-fu. Students quickly come to understand that the firm discipline is backed by the intention to raise their self-esteem; it's about building them up, not breaking them down. Kung fu is a foundation for greater academic, social and behavioural excellence. It builds emotional resilience, stronger mind and body, and helps student's express their natural creative energy. I am thankful for my teachers and honour them by sharing this wisdom and knowledge with others.

Brad has been volunteering with Peel CAS for eight years. He is a special friend who works with and mentors young men involved with the agency. He is an author and motivational speaker. For more information on kung fu visit www.beyondkungfu.com

"Children and youth who have been struggling are quickly able to connect with Brad. He has a calming personality and is able to make a big difference in the lives of the children and youth he volunteers with."

Jeanne, Peel CAS

Peel CAS currently needs male volunteers to provide mentorship to young men involved with our agency.



My Van

I love volunteering. It is almost therapeutic to do something for no other reason except to help. I think volunteering gives you an advantage because it is where you gain real life experiences.

When I came into the care of Peel CAS it seemed like a pretty big place with a lot of adults around. I started going to agency events as a way to meet other youth. I became involved with the Youth Steering Committee and eventually joined the Youth Council as a youth representative. This council met each month and gave me the opportunity to have input into ways youth could make a positive difference for other youth in care of CAS.

When you are not expecting to get anything in return, it often leads to other opportunities. I volunteered at the Red Cross and eventually ended up being able to use some of my graphic design and art background to create promotional materials for them. And I volunteered so much for the Art Gallery of Mississauga that they gave me a part time job. I believe in karma. If you work really hard then you will be given better things in the future.

My Van is a youth volunteer with Peel CAS and will be attending university in the fall to study film production. She is currently working at the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies.



Angela

I believe that Peel CAS does wonderful work and I've always felt a need to support this work. As a member of the agency's Board of Directors, I had the opportunity to look at the work of the agency from a different vantage point and provide my perspective and ideas. Essentially, the board is a group of people bringing minds and skills together for a common cause.

Although I am no longer on the Board, I continue to support the agency as a member of the volunteer bursary committee – The Firefly Fund. This bursary is given each year to a youth in the care of Peel CAS to provide them with an opportunity to pursue a post-secondary education. Every bit of support these youth receive helps them to achieve their dreams.

The same can be said for volunteering. Every bit helps. Most people say they don't have enough time to volunteer. It's true that one person may not have ten hours to spare. But if 10 people give one hour each then it really makes a difference. So, take that first step and become a volunteer for something you believe in.

Angela was a volunteer on the Board of Directors for 16 years. She continues to be an active volunteer with Peel CAS.

Take the time to volunteer and you could change a life

Each year, more than 450 volunteers support various agency programs and events at Peel CAS. Last year, volunteers provided more than 40,000 hours of time to the agency. All volunteers must be 18 years of age or older, be screened which includes passing a vulnerable sector check and signing an Oath of Confidentiality.

Volunteers at Peel CAS are members of the community who give the gift of time and abilities to children, youth and families. "Our volunteers reflect the diversity of Peel and are from many different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds," says Margaret Smith, Team Leader of Volunteer Programs at Peel CAS. "We have volunteers from all age groups – including youth who have been involved with our agency."

Peel CAS volunteers all have different skills to share. Some work directly with children and youth, others offer their expertise to provide leadership and guidance as members of the Board of Directors and others work behind the scenes at special events and in administrative roles.

Peel CAS is always looking for volunteer drivers, especially for the Mississauga area. Last year volunteer drivers drove more than one million kilometers in Peel transporting children and youth to school, family visits, therapy and medical appointments.

Last year, Peel CAS sent 686 children to camp with the help of volunteer drivers who drive children to and from camps each summer. Various local camps that support children involved with the agency include: Great Big Theatre Company, Royal City Soccer Camp and Girls of Destiny Leadership Camp.

For more information on volunteering with Peel CAS please visit www.peelcas.org or call 905-363-6131 ext. 1423.

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CAS  905-363-6131
www.peelcas.org

