

Youth Are Volunteering Program Model

Engaging Resilient Youth in Volunteering

Youth Are Volunteering (YAV) is a model developed by Community Sector Council NL in partnership with Waypoints, with funding from Community Youth Network St. John's, to engage resilient youth in volunteerism. The model can be incorporated into a pre-employment program to enhance its effectiveness. Good volunteer experiences enable youth to develop self-confidence, use their skills, explore their interests, learn new things, build their resumes and give back to the community. However, young people facing barriers to employment also face challenges to volunteering. With commitment on the part of the youth and dedicated support in the form of an experienced Community Project Leader, a volunteer program that is appropriate and beneficial for everyone involved can be implemented. Financial resources for materials, supplies, transportation and recognition items will greatly enhance the program, and ongoing relationships with community partners make it all possible.

Importance of Community Project Leader

The Project Leader is crucial to the success of a supported youth volunteer program. With the right skills, experience working with resilient youth, an understanding of the barriers they face and knowledge of community resources, the Community Project Leader will:

- Build cohesion among a group of youth
- Facilitate discussion around volunteer interests, opportunities and benefits
- Be sensitive of confidentiality issues
- Make community connections to pave the way for youth involvement
- Track community partners' contact information, events and volunteer opportunities
- Facilitate volunteer project development, both group and individual opportunities
- Help youth use volunteer experiences to build their employment portfolio
- Participate in and supervise volunteer activities
- Evaluate the volunteer program
- Keep records, files, spreadsheets, a journal and photographs
- Write fact sheets, good news stories and reports.

A Community Project Leader might work part-time over several weeks or months with one group of youth, on a full-time basis with several groups of youth at a time with salary costs shared, or incorporate the YAV program component into their regular job description.

Community Partners

There are hundreds of community groups in the metro St. John's area and thousands of groups province-wide that use volunteers in one way or another. Some post their volunteer opportunities on the Community Bulletin Board at www.communitysector.nl.ca, CSC's online resource centre for the community sector. Through the original **Youth Are Volunteering** program, a list of potential community partners was started. Five of these were able to use the volunteer services of youth during the fall of 2010: Eastern Edge Gallery, Cabot Habitat for Humanity, Karwood Retirement Retreat, the Jamie Pratt Memorial Soup Kitchen (at George Street United Church) and Canwest Raise-a-Reader through The Telegram.



I love it here. It's cool.
Eastern Edge Gallery



I enjoyed serving the soup and seeing people coming and going.

Jamie Pratt Memorial Soup Kitchen



I met a lady that couldn't see that well and I helped her with bingo. It was definitely the most enjoyable part of my day.

Karwood Retirement Retreat

Finding Appropriate Volunteer Opportunities

Youth Are Volunteering begins with a workshop, *Shaping Your Future Through Volunteering*, available for a fee through the Community Sector Council NL. This session, which can be adapted to serve the needs of the group and cover 1-4 hours, will help young people think practically about matching their interests, abilities, needs and limitations to volunteer opportunities in their community. There are specific volunteer positions posted online on [CSC's Community Bulletin Board](http://communitysector.nl.ca) at communitysector.nl.ca, and there is a directory of numerous registered charities, incorporated nonprofits and other NL community groups, with web links, at communitysector.nl.ca/directory. These are excellent resources for potential volunteers who want to consider the full gamut of possibilities. It is important that organizations clearly define their expectations of volunteers.



Having a reading disability myself, I felt I had a connection.

Canwest Raise-a-Reader

Resources

To manage a **Youth Are Volunteering (YAV)** program for a group of 8-12 young people, a part-time Community Project Leader for 6-10 hours per week will be required over several weeks or months, depending on the group. Some youth will be working on high school credits and may have to complete 30 hours of community contribution for Career Development 2201. Some youth may have extraordinary needs. Regular meetings will enable the Project Leader to learn about the individuals and the group as a whole, obtain information such as certificates of conduct, build rapport, involve the youth in planning, possibly help develop their own volunteer project, and evaluate activities. The Project Leader should have business cards and a cell phone so that both youth participants and community organizations can easily make contact.



I felt really good knowing that I was helping low income families. I love doing this kind of work because at the end of the day you are so happy.

Cabot Habitat for Humanity

Team building, recognition and appreciation are important. Youth respond well to incentives, so budget considerations should be made for food, prizes, give-aways and transportation. Printing T-shirts or hoodies with their own custom-designed **Youth Are Volunteering** logo is a great way to build morale, create a sense of belonging and promote youth volunteerism in the community. (Waypoints' YAV logo is shown below.) The program will require a few office supplies and some project materials, especially if the group is going to design their own volunteer project. (See communitysector.nl.ca/youth for useful activity sheets, including *Youth Volunteer Projects*.) Youth also like to see their volunteer stories with pictures and quotes posted online, printed for their portfolio or on the wall of their meeting room. Photos of the original YAV program with Waypoints youth can be found at communitysector.nl.ca/gallery.

Evaluation

Youth should complete evaluation forms after each activity to monitor the benefits to both the individual and the community. This will provide useful information regarding the experience from the perspective of the participant. Questions may be amended based on the needs of the youth or to include areas of interest to the partner agency. Literacy levels are a consideration and staff should support youth during this exercise and document all informal comments regarding the volunteer opportunity.

Graduation

Celebrate group success and present certificates of participation to each individual. Youth then have something tangible for their employment portfolios acknowledging the time and effort they put into volunteering. Certificates may also be awarded to organizations that provided volunteering opportunities. Aim to develop community relationships that will be sustained in the long run.

Cost

The cost of implementing a YAV program will vary according to the plan you wish to put in place. To chat about your needs or to arrange an information session, contact Fran Locke at 753-9860 or email franlocke@cscnl.ca.

