



Survey reveals how volunteering boosts enjoyment in retirement

Toronto, April 20, 2022 – While volunteering benefits the community, it also offers meaning to those who give their time. In the recent survey, 62% of RTOERO members agreed that volunteering contributes to the enjoyment of retirement life.

Since 1968, RTOERO has been a voice for teachers, school and board administrators, educational support staff and college and university faculty in their retirement. The organization promotes healthy, active living in the retirement journey for the broader education community. Its vision is a healthy, active future for every member of the education retiree community in Canada. Volunteerism is a big part of that.

In advance of National Volunteer Week (April 24-30), RTOERO surveyed its 81,000 members about how and why they volunteer. The results show a large and committed volunteer force.

Almost two-thirds of RTOERO's 81,000+ members (64%) volunteer regularly. That's well above the Canadian average for this age group, which hovers at around 40% according to Volunteer Canada.

In a typical month, these individuals volunteer 20 hours. Do the math, and that's more than 12 million hours a year from RTOERO members: 1 million hours a month towards volunteer activities across Canada.

"We're a volunteer-led organization, and are also an organization filled with volunteers," says Rich Prophet, the chair of the board at RTOERO. "Within our membership, there is a strong culture of community service."

Members volunteer for RTOERO itself, and also for every imaginable community cause – organizing events, serving on committees and boards, fundraising, mentoring, collecting and delivering food, supporting health care, protecting the environment, and much more.

Community connection is one of the stated values of RTOERO, and volunteer service is one of the major ways that plays out.

When asked why they volunteer, a majority of members cited things like a desire to give back and make a difference (71%), the social interactions related to the volunteer role (66%), and the chance to make new friends and meet people (60%).

What else do RTOERO members gain through these experiences?

“It gives a sense of purpose, an opportunity to meet and interact with others, and to contribute to the well-being of our neighbours however we can,” said one RTOERO member. Or, as another member put it succinctly, “It feels good to help.”

That impulse didn't start in retirement. The RTOERO survey found that 72% of members volunteered when they were in the workforce.

A snapshot of RTOERO volunteers reveals the many ways they contribute:

- Rosemary Robertson, District 26 Kenora: She chairs the recruitment committee and creates beautiful welcome packages for all new retirees. Rosemary has also spearheaded a project to purchase a book written by a former Kenora resident with Down syndrome and donate it to each elementary school in the district.
- Lynne Horvath, District 24 Scarborough & East York: As the goodwill chair for her district, Lynne reaches out to members in good times and bad – when they're hospitalized or dealing with a loss, and on birthdays and other special occasions. Lynne is always just a phone call away from any seniors who are isolated, and provides a warm and comforting voice.
- Rebecca Crouse, District 50 Atlantic: Rebecca is membership chair of the Lunenburg District Rotary Club, and the immediate past president, and has done a lot of work supporting local schools, students and their families. Rebecca is also president of the Fishermen's Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, a key group supporting a new palliative care unit, and is a hospital volunteer.
- Richard Bird, District 19 Hastings & Prince Edward: Across the community, he has made an indelible impact now and created a legacy for the future. Richard has served on the boards or as an organizer of the Bay of Quinte Remedial Action Plan, Hospice Quinte, Hastings and Prince Edward Land Trust, Moira River Cleanup, South Shore Joint Initiative, and the Bay of Quinte Yacht Club. He has also donated hand-crafted canoes to raise funds for a few of the above organizations as well as for Ducks Unlimited, North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery, Quinte Healthcare, Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory and South Shore Legal Fund. Richard has done additional fundraising for the Miller Family Nature Reserve, Hudgin Rose Nature Reserve and Ostrander Point Nature Reserve. That's not all – he has volunteered for Nature Conservancy Canada, the Eastern Bluebird Recovery Program, and a Learn to Sail Adult Program.
- May Seguin, District 43 Nipissing: In East Ferris and North Bay, May is a member of a seniors group (Club Action 50+) that offers a variety of physical and social activities, and piloted a project to support isolated seniors. She has been an executive of the Anglican Church Women for the Diocese of Algoma and is active in her church. She also volunteers at the North Bay Serenity Hospice. Last year, the Municipality of East Ferris gave May one of their Volunteer Recognition Awards. For her RTOERO district, May is the goodwill chair. She has also been part of organizing

- grant applications to support groups that provide needed supplies to students and food/necessities to infants.
- John Hake, District 6 Parry Sound: He is the district's webmaster, membership coordinator and communication lead. In the community, John has also been his church's webmaster, supported various recreation events and served as a community chef.
- Don Sankey, District 10 Bruce Grey & Dufferin: He is the district's public relations chair, canvasses for Heart and Stroke, and chairs the Grey Sauble Conservation Foundation. He is also a member of the Friends of Moreston, the fundraising division of Grey Roots Museum outside Owen Sound. Don is a volunteer in the schoolhouse during the summer, and organizes cleanup of the grounds and painting of the buildings in Moreston Village. As well, he spearheads a group of volunteers to do an annual clean up the conservation areas around Owen Sound.
- Barry Silmser, District 27 Ottawa-Carleton: As a member of the communications team for the district, Barry excels in the digital layout of their newsletters. He is also involved with the Political Advocacy Committee, collecting and sharing information on issues that are vital to the well-being of all seniors.

To augment the many volunteer and advocacy roles that members play in their communities, RTOERO also runs an annual grant program within its districts that support local, national or international causes. Typically, RTOERO members also donate their time to these causes.

"RTOERO members cared about their communities throughout their careers and now serve them every day in retirement," says Prophet.

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