

Submitted Article
August 2011

Community responsibility – changing the lives of others

Recently, I was waxing philosophic with a friend about the benefits of helping others. The conversation reminded me of a quote by famous author and teacher Leo Buscaglia. I first heard it in the 1980s and the fact that his words stayed with me for two decades is tribute to their power: "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

We can easily get caught up in the "bigger is better" syndrome – not just in material things, but in giving and volunteering. Wendy Ladurantaye was recently developing a calendar featuring people across Haliburton County who volunteer. When she was contacting people, she heard time and again "oh I don't do very much – there are lots of people who deserve it more than I do." Even in volunteering we can make the mistake of looking at the big events, grand gestures and high profile volunteer endeavours – and don't get me wrong, those are fabulous and necessary and impactful – and underestimating the power of the small gestures.

I read a recent obituary that said "Known for her small acts of kindness – bouquets picked from her garden, fresh baked cookies, cards or letters with newsy stories – she loved to make people's days just a little brighter." People in every walk of life can and do change the lives of others and their communities – simply by giving of themselves. You know them: the guy who shovels the walk of a senior; the teacher who buys an extra pair of shoes for the kid whose parents can't afford them; the person who brings a casserole to her new neighbour; the cottager who donates time at the Volunteer Dental Outreach; the person who slips a toonie in the jar for a charity. It's like those people have a mission, and sense of responsibility to ensure that their neighbours are living their lives to their fullest potential. You probably are one of them. The benefits of the big efforts and the small gestures, create an exponentially better place to live.

We know that from the grateful words of those who are the beneficiaries. "You know, having you sit with me and talk for awhile made me feel like I could cope again." "That card came just at the right time – it brightened my whole week."

To each of you, this is what you do each and every day that you volunteer - you turn lives around and we are so lucky to share that with you! Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

*Submitted Article written by Nancy Brownsberger of SIRCH Community Services
For information on volunteer opportunities or to make a donation: 705-457-1742*