

Celebrating the Spirit of Volunteering **Dec 5th, 2007- Alexandria Mitchell**

It is an honour to be here today.
Hello my name is Alexandria Mitchell,
I am currently a grade ten student here on behalf of the Big Brothers
and Big Sisters In School Teen Mentoring program.

However, I have been involved in the community for a few years with
many organizations, projects, and events.

I have been working to create social cohesion throughout the
community, in terms of acceptance of diversity, and I have been
involved with projects to work for environmental sustainability.

So I will just go through my journey of volunteerism, what it means to
me, and perhaps what it could mean to you.

Three years ago I made a presentation to the Abbotsford School
Board on Recycling within the school district. This was after I had
learned that less than 25% of the Abbotsford schools had recycling
programs. Progress is now being made, and I believe that I can take
a small bit of responsibility for that change. It was an amazing feeling
for me to realize that my efforts affected change and the realization
that with future endeavors, the impact could be limitless.

My progression into high school has offered numerous opportunities
to get involved and also have my voice heard.

I am a part of the school leadership class and Vice President of our
Kiwaniis Educating Youth Club at Abbotsford Collegiate.

I'm involved in the Youth Buddy program (Canadian youth are paired
with newcomer youth for better cultural transition) As well as a very
recent new member of the Human Rights and Dignity Coalition with
Community Services.

I also sit on the Abbotsford Youth Commission Youth Council and
executive board of directors.

Now my weekly volunteer commitment is with Big Brothers and Sisters as an in school teen mentor.

It has been an amazing experience so far in developing a friendship with a vibrant young child. We meet for one hour each week, and are able to learn from one another, and laugh together. I would encourage people to get involved with mentoring as it is so valuable to both people involved.

Throughout the last few years, I have experienced a few minor barriers in my community involvement. The major three are transportation, age, and time.

Transportation bars many youth from getting involved in this community.

Now with my age, I find that it is sometimes assumed that youth have less to offer in terms of service and motivation. Hopefully I can show that this isn't the case. Many youth want to get involved, they just don't know how and where to start.

And time is truly difficult to work around. I love volunteering but I can never seem to fit everything I want to do into one day. For me, it's always been about trying to have good management and striving to create some sort of balance in my life. I've broken things up into 4 main areas: My school and academic area, volunteer/community service area, my social area, and my active area.

As you can see, sleep isn't included!

Now I realize that everyone experiences their own barriers and challenges. Fortunately the things holding me back are very minute details, and I believe that I have been able to work through them to show my true capabilities.

Because I'm a quotes person, I'd like to share this with you: Everyone can be great because anyone can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't even have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve... You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love...

Martin Luther King Jr.

This truly highlights the fact that everyone has something to offer, regardless of their personal diversity.

To me, volunteerism has always been bridged with activism. I was briefly involved with the "Keep Canada Pure Foundation" during the fight against SE2. I was able to give back to the community of life on the whole, and be involved in protecting what I was and still am passionate about: the environment.

A person's personal interest, hobby, or appreciation for something can be followed by participating in volunteerism. I believe that giving of one's time, effort, and care is one of the most powerful revolutionaries out there.

From a teens perspective I can honestly say that youth and children have unique different ideas and ways of thinking that can be so valuable to community building.

Volunteering is important to me because I know that by participating in it, I am slowly and positively affecting change for people. By mentoring, I understand that I am showing someone I care by giving of my time and effort. I believe that by my showing this, I can promote some sort of positive lifestyle and show a different perspective of what is possible with hard work and giving of one's (again) time, effort, and care.

I experience the rewards of volunteering in my daily life. First of all, I have gained many experiences in dealing with situations, human relations, and organizing events. I have also had the privilege of meeting various beautiful and wonderful people throughout my short span of years. All of these people and experiences will impact me for the rest of my life, as they have been a huge part influential factor for where I am today. I've had dialogues with people who might never have taken me seriously because of my age, and I have been to functions and events that I never would have been able to attend otherwise.

I've had to realize this: The true reason I give of my self is because I feel a sense of responsibility. I feel responsible for what people do on the whole. Therefore I feel that I must give back to the community of

life versus take away from it. I feel that I have to do whatever I can to create a better world, even if it's on an extremely small scale. Remember, "With future endeavors, the impact is limitless."

Making a difference is no longer about thinking outside the box. It is now about thinking on the sphere. The world is changing and there is a true need to be innovative. I need to think on the sphere to fight for issues.

Therefore, I will continue to mentor, and continue fighting for diversity acceptance and environmental sustainability. I need to make sure that I am practicing social responsibility and giving back to the community of life. After all, volunteering is the ultimate way to feel like you belong within your community. The community is your community, and if you are involved, you can make it anything you want it to be.

So here is one more quote that I believe is extremely relatable.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

-Margaret Mead

I'd like to thank everyone for listening and thank Big Brothers and Big Sisters as well as the organizers of this event.

I want to encourage everyone here today: stay involved, think on the sphere. Remember, future endeavors will have limitless amounts of influential change.

Thank you