

IT'S TIME TO APPLAUD THIS COUNTRY'S VOLUNTEERS

“Why We Do It”

Interviews with Tutor Volunteers...

Chris



“My volunteer experience has been rewarding, enriching, challenging.”

Adult Education Volunteer, Chris Shoemith

Chris, how did you get interested and involved in volunteering with Hutton House?

When I retired I decided to look for a volunteer position that would use the skills I had developed over 45 years of teaching. I felt that I needed to do something productive in society that would be of benefit and give me a sense of personal satisfaction. A friend, who volunteers at Hutton House suggested I look into Hutton House, I did and have been happy that I took the step.

What do you like most about volunteering as a tutor?

Seeing the progress that the learners make over time, and their appreciation for the time we spend together. It was a memorable moment when, after being away, I returned to tutoring to be told by my student that he had really missed our sessions and was ready to work, seeing the obvious pleasure he had in coming to Hutton House, and the increase in his self confidence.

As a retired person, do you feel there are specific benefits to volunteering at this time in your life?

Yes, I feel useful and a productive member of society, it also gives me a new learning experience and challenges me to provide the best possible help for clients of Hutton House.

What advice would you give to others who are considering volunteering?

Definitely!!

What do you feel is the value of volunteering?

Personally to still have the opportunity to use my teaching skills for the benefit of people who live with challenges, and who have not experienced some of the advantages that I have had, and to give me a sense of purpose, and a new challenge in my life. Volunteering gives various agencies and the programs they run the ability to tap into a vast range of expertise and experience.

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John



"My volunteer experience has been exciting, gratifying, special."

Adult Education & Fitness Centre Volunteer, John Casciano

John, what has kept you interested and continuing to volunteer?

Developing relationships with other staff, my learners and members of the fitness program has been an amazing experience. Between volunteering as a tutor and in the fitness centre I get a lot of self gratification. Being able to make someone smile, laugh or help them when they need it is very rewarding. My time at Hutton house has been amazing so far and I always find myself leaving with a smile on my face.

What do you like most about your different volunteer roles?

My favourite part about tutoring is being able to assist my learner in subjects that may be particularly difficult for them and watching them conquer those obstacles and move on to the next makes me very proud. Volunteering in the fitness program is a lot of fun. The atmosphere is always very upbeat and positive. During fitness class I'm usually in control of the music - being able to ask the participants what their favourite songs are/favourite musicians and then playing the music they want is a lot of fun as our workouts often lead to dance parties!

As someone with a busy work schedule, do you feel there were specific benefits to volunteering with Hutton House programs?

I find volunteering at Hutton House while working full time very beneficial. It has always been a bright spot in my week that I always look forward to. It has been a great way for me to relieve stress and has added another sense of purpose to my life, being able to give back and serve my community.

What do you feel you will "take away" from this experience?

I feel good knowing that I am helping others in the community and that I am promoting healthy lifestyles in the fitness program. I have met a lot of amazing individuals that have changed my outlook on life. Volunteering has taught me new skills that I have been able transfer to many other areas of my life. It has also reinforced existing skills. My ultimate goal is to become a Police Officer here in London so being able to volunteer at Hutton house and serve members of the community I live in is an amazing experience that I feel is very transferable to policing. I would say my time at Hutton House has changed me as a person and has really improved my life.

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Duncan



"It's good for students' self-worth and morale to be progressing and succeeding through material they have chosen to be of importance to them."

Adult Education Volunteer, Duncan Hunter

Duncan, as a retired person, do you feel there are specific benefits to volunteering at this time in your life?

After I retired, I bought into the claim that it was important for seniors to stay active both mentally and physically. So I went looking for volunteer opportunities online that would make use of my academic and teaching background. Adult education at Hutton House seemed to fit the bill, and it has!

Each student brings their own needs and background. Consequently, I am adapting the material to be covered to fit each student. This means that I am constantly relearning mathematics and science that I had not thought about for a number of years. Yes, it keeps me mentally active!

How many learners have you worked with over the years, and what has kept you interested and involved?

I have lost count, but most years it was two students at a time. So, I would guess about 12-15. Each student has presented a new challenge – with their different needs, ambitions and personalities. It's always a learning experience for me, but without being overwhelming. It's been enjoyable, challenging and satisfying.

The theme for National Volunteer Week was "The Volunteer Factor – Lifting Communities". What are your thoughts on how volunteers lift communities?

Communities are comprised of individuals. So, if you lift individuals, you lift communities. Volunteering lifts both the volunteers and those they are helping, whether it's community groups or one person at a time!

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Rachael



"My volunteer experience has been positive, rewarding and supportive."

Adult Education Volunteer, Rachael

Rachael, as someone who continued volunteering for Hutton House throughout your university years, what kept you interested and involved?

I think the main reason why I've continued volunteering is because I genuinely enjoy it. I look forward to seeing my learner every week and have had excellent experiences with Hutton House Staff.

What did you like most about volunteering as a tutor?

My favorite part of tutoring is the people that I work with. My learners have all been great and I genuinely look forward to going every week. It's a nice break in my day. I've also had excellent experiences with staff. I feel comfortable asking for support, say if I don't know how to help a learner reach their goal, and have always received it. The environment you work in is so important.

What do you feel you will "take away" from this experience?

Many things! Including:

-Useful skills. For example, I think that I have become better at adapting my communication style to suit the person that I'm talking to.

-Meeting people with different life experiences than myself. I think that this has served me more broadly by expanding my understanding.

-Positive experiences. Tutoring has been very enjoyable for me and it was nice to learn new things myself and have fun with my learner.



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As a busy student, do you feel there were specific benefits to volunteering with Hutton House programs?

Definitely! The convenient location and flexible time commitment (through my time at Hutton House I've volunteered about 1-2 hours per week) made it easy to incorporate tutoring into my weekly schedule. I didn't feel like I was overextending myself.

What advice would you give to other young people who are considering volunteering?

If they are interested and able, I suggest that they go for it! Volunteering has been an enjoyable way for me to learn new skills and support other people in my community.

Has your volunteer experience helped you to achieve some of your goals?

Absolutely! Through volunteering, I have had the opportunity to work with and shadow various Hutton House employees. These experiences helped me make informed choices about my future career goals. I've also had the opportunity to develop useful skills which have been transferable to paid employment.

A bit of a philosophical question....

What do you feel is the value of volunteering... for you personally? for our program participants? for the community / society at large?

There are so many benefits of volunteering. On a personal level, I was able gain valuable experience that I believe will serve me in the future. I was able to meet new people and have fun while doing it.

From talking to participants, I understand the value of Hutton House programs. They provide an inclusive environment where people can enjoy themselves and reach their goals. As Hutton House is not-for-profit, volunteers are required to operate many of these services. Volunteering gives people options.

As for the community, I think that everyone benefits when people are supported.

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Grant



"My volunteer experience has been fun, engaging, and insightful."
Adult Education & Fitness Centre Volunteer, Grant Favell

Grant, what has kept you interested and involved and continuing to volunteer?

The main thing that has kept me interested in volunteering with Hutton House is the people that I get to spend time with. The staff, other volunteers, and participants that I get to interact with always make me feel appreciated and make any time I spend volunteering both fun and memorable!

What did you like most about volunteering as a tutor? in the gym? and with bowling?

What I like most about volunteering as a tutor is that it often challenges me in ways I don't expect. Sometimes I have to learn something new before I can teach it to someone or I have to figure out a new way of explaining a concept so that my learner understands it better. I have to think on my feet to effectively teach the topic at hand.

What I like most about volunteering at the gym is that I get to share my passion for health and fitness with other people! I'm big on healthy, active living and being able to teach people effective exercises to stay healthy is a great way to channel my interest into something helpful to other people.

What I like most about volunteering with bowling is that I get to meet so many new people. I get to socialize with the participants, staff, and volunteers while helping with a fun activity. Volunteering with bowling is so fun and relaxed that it really doesn't feel like work in the slightest.

It's always a positive experience that I enjoy, regardless of what activity I'm doing. Each activity also keeps me interested and involved so that I never get bored or feel unproductive.



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What do you feel you will “take away” from this experience?

I think something important that I've learned from volunteering is that compassion is a skill as much as it is a feeling. It's easy and simple to feel compassion for someone when I acknowledge that they need help or are experiencing a difficult situation, but it takes practice and time to actually provide help for people that need it, to engage with them in ways that work for them, and to fully understand how their situation is different from my own. Volunteering with Hutton House gives me plenty of opportunity to practice compassion and interact with people experiencing challenges that are very different than my own.

I've learned a lot about other people's experiences and how to engage and communicate effectively with them in order to connect with them. Overall, volunteering with Hutton House has been a valuable opportunity for me to meet new people and grow as a person.

As someone who is a busy student, do you feel there were specific benefits to volunteering with Hutton House programs?

In a general sense, volunteering always looks good on a resume and will help you stand out when applying to academic programs or job opportunities. For me, as a biology and prospective medical student, volunteering with Hutton House has provided valuable perspective on many of the concepts I learn about during my studies. Many of the conditions I learn about are nothing but words on a page, or data points on a graph that I understand in a theoretical sense, but volunteering with Hutton House helps make these conditions real and personal. I feel it's important to truly internalize that research topics in medicine and biology are important because they affect real people.

What advice would you give to other young people who are considering volunteering?

The best advice I can give is to use volunteering as an opportunity to channel your interests into something productive or to learn about things with which you're unfamiliar. Volunteering is an opportunity for you to help others grow and for you yourself to grow as well. Use these opportunities to learn, to lead, and to teach. You'll come out a better person for it and it can only help you with whatever kind of future you're pursuing.

Has your volunteer experience helped you to achieve some of your goals?

As a prospective medical student, something I always try to do is engage with people that come from situations or experience challenges that are different than my own. It's important to be able to empathize and communicate with so many different people as a doctor and even just as a well-rounded human being. While



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I'm not in medical school quite yet, volunteering with Hutton House has definitely helped me gain a better perspective regarding what kinds of difficulties other people have to cope with on a daily basis. My experiences with Hutton House have certainly helped me learn and grow into a more empathetic person, which should always be a goal even if you're not trying to get into medical school.

A bit of a philosophical question....

What do you feel is the value of volunteering... for you personally? for our program participants? for the community / society at large?

I think the answer is the same for all of those questions. Volunteering programs help remind us that we are connected within our community and that our choices affect that community as well as the people living in it. It can be easy to feel disconnected if we just go about our daily routines and get lost in our own small personal world, but volunteering, especially with people who experience challenges different from our own, is a reminder that we're very interdependent within our society. Feeling connected with other people is not only an important aspect of mental health, but can also help us make better decisions about our behaviour and how we treat others.