

Volunteers crucial to John Howard success

Volunteerism and voluntary activity have enriched Canadian life beyond measure. Volunteers established the earliest hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, and other health and welfare agencies in Canada. Charitable and voluntary organizations continue to depend on volunteers for organizational leadership, fundraising, and service delivery.

— Understanding Canadian Volunteers

“Volunteerism is at the heart of our agency,” says Michael Cardinal, executive director of the John Howard Society of Brandon. “We could not accomplish the amount of work we do over the course of a year without our hard working, dedicated volunteers.”

John Howard Society of Brandon, a community-based, nonprofit organization that works within the criminal justice system, has provided services to inmates, ex-offenders, their families, victims of crime, and the community for over 40 years.

“We seek volunteers with specific skills to enable us to offer relevant programs to our clients,” Michael says. These include anger management, partner abuse, mediation services, and fine option/community service order programs.

Of the nearly 100 people who volunteer their services, 50 percent are students attending Brandon University, Assiniboine Community College, University of Manitoba or University of Winnipeg. The agency and the volunteers mutually benefit; students gain hands-on experience while offering their expertise.

Professionals working in areas such as mental health, addictions, parole and corrections are also part of the volunteer base.

Volunteer Charlene Yaworsky has been involved in over 20 intensive anger manage-



Michael Cardinal

ment programs during the four years she has served as Institutional Services Coordinator. A bimonthly Release Planning course deals with issues of stress, anger, communication, conflict, values, and goal setting. Presentations of various community resources are also scheduled during the two-week program.

Volunteers include qualified mediators who provide services to John Howard's Westman Mediation Services which fosters restorative justice through Victim Offender Mediation.

The agency receives referrals to its Youth Anger Management Program from a variety of sources, including Child and Family Services, Community and Youth Correctional Services and Justice Committees.

Allison Kelland, a Brandon University graduate with a Masters of Education specializing in counselling, facilitates youth anger management counselling programs.

Volunteering with the John Howard Society resulted in a change of career for Sabrina Cutting. The Bachelor of Science degree student was thinking of becoming a forensic scientist until she began working with youth involved with the criminal justice system.


Sabrina found that work so rewarding that she incorporated a Justice System Certificate into her University program. Over the past three years, Sabrina has spent nearly 40 hours a week working with Westman Mediation Services, as chairperson of the Assiniboine Community Justice Committee and on crime prevention projects aimed at reducing youth involvement in crime.



Sabrina Cutting

Volunteering offers many benefits in appreciation for the gift of your time and expertise.

Volunteering can help you: make important networking contacts • learn or develop skills • gain work experience • build self-esteem and self-confidence • improve health • meet new people • feel needed and valued. make a difference in someone's life • express gratitude for help you may have received in the past from an organization,

 Manitoba Network
Canada Volunteerism Initiative

Brandon • 729-8123
manitobacvi.ca

Sabrina received a 2006 Premier's Volunteer Appreciation award in the individual volunteer category. It is presented to five exceptional volunteers in Manitoba whose efforts have contributed significantly to the quality of life in their communities.

Sabrina graduated from Brandon University in May 2006 and like many other John Howard volunteers she will continue to be involved with the agency when she begins her professional career.