

## Volunteering Counts

### **Are you looking for volunteering opportunities for Boomers and their Families? Let Changing Gears be your guide. Feel good and make a difference.**

Changing Gears

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By Richard Atkinson

Volunteering Economics. Get bitten by the altruistic bug. Helping others gives you a sense of accomplishment unlike anything you've ever felt before. For tips on finding your own volunteering niche, Richard Atkinson shares his own volunteering experience.

### **Don't Just Retire – Live It, Love It! Volunteering – Is It For You?**

Many retirees tell me the one thing they miss most from their working lives is the structure. It's the need to get up in the morning, be at work for a certain time, attend meetings, solve problems, be with people and have a sense of accomplishment. If you crave structure then volunteering may be for you. By being a volunteer you are able to give back through your time and talents, to the benefit of others. It may be a fulfilling way to be involved and get the structure you are looking for.

For myself, I am a volunteer adviser with CESO (Canadian Executive Service Organization). Founded in 1967, CESO is a not-for-profit, volunteer-based organization providing social and economic development expertise to Canadian Aboriginal Peoples, non-Aboriginals and international clients. Since '67, CESO's volunteer advisers have completed approximately 45,000 projects in more than 50 countries. For information about CESO, visit the website: <http://www.ceso-saco.com/>. For the past six years, as a CESO volunteer adviser, I have mentored both Inuit and non-Inuit in Nunavut, Canada's newest territory, established in 1999. As part of its growth strategy, the Government of Nunavut set as one of its objectives that by 2020 Inuit will hold the majority of the responsible jobs.

My first assignment in the North was mentoring several Inuit employed by the Department of Health and Social Services. Since then I have worked with managers and supervisors of the Baffin Island Regional Hospital located in Iqaluit and currently a mentee with Nunavut's Department of Justice.

As a mentor, I share my human resources training and experience gained over a 35-year career as a human resources specialist. I provide my mentees with the human resources skills needed within their respective positions. In return, my mentees have provided me with an insight to their culture and way of life including the challenges faced as they transition to managing Nunavut's territorial affairs. They have shared their 'love of land', family structure, beliefs, teaching and much more. They even taught me a little Inuktitut, their Inuit language.

I have witnessed climate changes occurring in the North including the thawing of the tundra, thinning of sea ice and smog which blows up from Southern Canada and the United States. I have experienced a Northern blizzard, summer days and nights of 20

hours of sunlight and sampled traditional Inuit foods including Musk Ox, Cariboo and Arctic Char.

I have wonderful memories. One incident I remember well is when one of my mentees, Mary E., one day came dressed in native costume with her 18 month old niece in an 'amantiq' (a baby carrier worn on the back). Mary quietly said, "I thought you may appreciate seeing one of our costumes." It was a touching moment. Through my CESO volunteering, I have met marvelous people. Not only the people I've mentored but also fellow CESO volunteers. This has led to friendships I know will last a life time.

If you have a strong need to help others, consider volunteering. CESO volunteers are called upon to help clients with governance, business plan development, financial planning, tourism training, ISO certification and much more.

CESO is one alternative. The options for volunteering are limitless. Examples of volunteer activities are:

- Teaching English or French as a second language
- Assisting new immigrant children with math and other school subjects
- Assisting in local art galleries, museums and zoos
- Volunteering in local hospitals
- Working with disadvantaged youth
- Delivering meals to shut-ins
- Counseling young mothers
- Participating in housing programs like Habitat for Humanity

No matter what your career skills or background experience, find your own volunteering niche. If you are interested in volunteering, contact your local library or the Internet under 'Volunteering' for contact names and organizations specializing in placing new volunteers. Here are some suggested websites to visit when considering your volunteer options:

<http://volunteer.ca/>

[www.givingandvolunteering.ca](http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca)

[www.unitedway.ca](http://www.unitedway.ca)

<http://www.altruvest.org/>

<http://www.ceso-saco.com/>

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