



YMCA of Oakville

Postcard from the Y –

Leave a Legacy – Volunteer!

Tuesday, December 5 is International Volunteer Day – a day recognized by the United Nations as a day to celebrate the work of volunteers. The YMCA of Oakville would like to celebrate the contribution of our Y volunteers by presenting a volunteer ‘journey’ from an outstanding volunteer – Bonnie Jackson.

“September 19, 1978 my life changed! My eldest daughter, Joanna, was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes at the young age of 5 years old. What a shock and life-changing event for the whole family. How could we channel our energy, time, talent and dollars in a positive way and help the diabetes cause?

Thus began our foray into the world of Philanthropy. I became a full-time volunteer with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) and over the years have held many positions with the Toronto Chapter, such as V.P. Public Relations and President, and more recently as Chair of the biennial Toronto Gala & Auction, with the goal to raise \$1 Million for Diabetes Research. I also participate annually in the door-to-door canvassing for the Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA) and look upon this as an opportunity to connect with my neighbours while I raise funds.

A few years ago my husband, Terry and I felt the need to lend our support to the Oakville Community which we are proud to call our home since our move from Montreal in 1980. The Community Foundation of Oakville was an excellent fit, and we support the foundation in various ways, including holding a Family Fund through which we channel support to other charities in the Oakville and Toronto regions.

Last January I received a phone call from Peter Campbell, a Board Member of the Oakville YMCA, with a request for me to attend a brainstorming meeting to discuss ideas to help the Y celebrate its 50th anniversary. I agreed to come, but was not eager to volunteer after just finishing the 2005 JDRF Gala, and felt the urge to refresh and reenergize for a while.

Well, I was instantly taken with the enthusiasm and giving spirit of all around the table at the Y. Ideas were generated by volunteers and staff alike, and soon it was unanimous – we would hold a ‘sock hop’ at the Y, to introduce people to the facility and raise funds for **Give Kids the Chance** and the **Relocation of the Cardiac Rehabilitation** to the Y from the Oakville hospital. Peter turned to me, and with a twinkle in his eye, asked if I would use my charity event experience to Co-Chair the event. I was honoured to have been asked and because of the support I felt around the table from other volunteers and staff, my answer was “Yes”.



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Once again my life took on new purpose and a life-changing course. The Y 'At the Hop' event took over my Spring, Summer and early Fall, but what a ride it was! It was such a joy for me to work with a fabulous team of volunteers, friends and staff and my eyes were opened even further to the incredible value this YMCA offers for the Oakville Community, and to the fee assistance that they provide as part of their mission to be 'open to all'.

Our meetings were all held at the Y and I saw first-hand what a vibrant, active environment it is. Daily I witnessed people of all ages, colours, shapes and sizes walking in and out with gym bags in hand, hair wet from showers or heavy exercise, with a smile on their faces and a quickened step to their gait. Because Terry and I have always had a 'home gym' we had not felt the need to be a member of a local facility, but this too is about to change for me, as I become a new YMCA member, gym bag in hand. My grandson, Owen, is now also enrolled in Y Child Care where my daughter and I know that he is in good hands enjoying friends and learning.

My life is full – the volunteer 'high' I continue to receive when I say "yes" to causes in which I believe enriches my life beyond imagination. I will continue to do what I can because being a volunteer makes me who I am and gives me a purpose to leave a legacy and to make a difference. I encourage everyone to do whatever they can to help others- it is always a 'win-win' situation for all involved."

Bonnie Jackson

For information about becoming a volunteer at the YMCA of Oakville, call Tammy Smith at 905-845-3417, ext. 230.