



SPRING 2011 NEWSLETTER

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Osborne Village
RESOURCE CENTRE

1-107 OSBORNE ST. WINNIPEG, MB R3L 1Y4
PH: 204.989.6503 FAX: 204.477.0903

A VOLUNTEER'S STORY

By Lyn Stevenson

A few years ago, I embarked on a new and exciting "life chapter"... retirement. The opportunity to volunteer was something I wanted to explore. I was soon to discover many unexpected and wonderful experiences.

Researching where to volunteer and what I would like to do was an important first step.

The "what" part was easy. The constant thread that provided the greatest satisfaction and meaningfulness throughout my career and life involved helping individuals. I also wanted to continue to learn so I knew I needed to be in a totally unfamiliar environment. The perfect fit seemed to be the Medical / Health Care field. The Health Sciences Centre was where I started.

I was amazed to discover that each month, over 700 volunteers assist patients, visitors and staff within a variety of hospital departments and areas.

Choosing to volunteer in the visitor lounges of both the Surgical Intensive Care and Post Anaesthetic Care

Units, was an easy decision. There, I am able to provide information and support to families / friends who have a loved one undergoing surgery. Assisting individuals allows me to meet some amazing people, who are facing some of life's difficult challenges.

Each time I enter both the Surgical Intensive Care and Post Anaesthetic Care Units, I marvel at the professionalism and dedication of the medical team as well as the accomplishments that have come from the advancement of medical technology.

I look forward to my weekly visit, knowing that these experiences continue to enrich my life. I also hope I am able to bring a smile to someone... at least, for a moment or two.

"How wonderful that no one need wait a single moment to improve the world."

Anne Frank

WHY VOLUNTEER?

By Stephanie Ross

I remember growing up in a small town feeling like I didn't have the same opportunities as my counterparts in the city. No environmental club, no drama club, no theatre club, no cultural clubs, nada. It turns out it was as easy as gathering as many people as were interested together, finding a space, and these groups were born! It was an early lesson in taking charge of my dreams to make them come true for myself.

I worked twelve years in the floral design industry after school and found volunteering alongside the



small paid jobs I had helpful in building a network for myself in the city. I was invited to be a volunteer judge at the Skills Canada Floristry Provincials and it was there that I met a very interesting and diverse group of Horticulture students from the inner city RB Russell School. Their drive and determination in the face of many barriers was remarkable. I saw instantly too, how healing the plant world could be.

I began to look into volunteer opportunities in social services to balance the creative and retail work I was being paid to do in the floral industry and find more fulfilling work in the community. In 2005, I discovered a volunteer position with Nine Circles Community Health Centre (NCCHC) as a one-on-one buddy support to someone living with HIV. I immediately signed up for the intensive two month volunteer training to get a better understanding of what HIV & AIDS is as well as what the issues are for those living with the virus. After training, I was paired up with my buddy and to this day remain in touch even though my buddy ended up moving far away. I stayed on with NCCHC as a volunteer events coordinator. As a result of the experience and training I received at NCCHC, I was offered a part-time paid position as Women's Program Coordinator at Kali Shiva AIDS Services. I took this opportunity to go back to school part-time in the Applied Counselling Certificate Program: Addictions Specialization with the University of Manitoba.

I began to wonder how I might incorporate my years of experience working in floral design into my new work in social services. I wondered if I could use horticultural activities as a means of therapy and it turns out we have several schools of horticultural therapy (HT) in Canada. I immediately signed up! In order to become registered as a horticultural therapist

with the Canadian Horticultural Therapy Association, one must accumulate many volunteer and paid hours alongside education in points towards registration. My volunteer experience so far facilitating HT educational workshops in the community has proven to be a wonderful way to build up my HT portfolio, clientele, and network. It also allowed some flexibility around creativity and what hours I chose to work. As a result of the volunteer work I was doing in the HT field, I was offered a position as Community Gardens Coordinator at West Broadway Development Corp.

I was asked if I might volunteer to write for and edit a zine (magazine) called trans.zine! as well as join the volunteer organizing committee for the Winnipeg Transgender Day of Remembrance which proved to be very valuable experience, building upon and learning new skills, as well as increasing my network yet again. As a result of this and the experience I had accumulated overtime facilitating educational workshops, I was offered a position as Health Educator with NCCHC, where I began volunteering five years prior! Following that position, I was offered another position as Education Assistant/Employment Liaison with Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad Inc.'s Child and Youth Care Certificate Program (a partnership with Red River College specifically for those who have had experience in the sex trade). I love my job. I remember when I was seventeen years old and everyone kept asking what I wanted to be "when I grew up". It was such a difficult question for me to answer at the time. How did I know what was out there? How could I possibly know what I'd like and dislike? Through volunteering, I was able to take risks, build upon a non-existent portfolio, network, develop skills and learn, through experience, where it was I did want to be.

"We are prone to judge success by the index of our salaries or the size of our automobiles, rather than by the quality of our service relationship to humanity."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

VOLUNTEERING TO GAIN CANADIAN WORK EXPERIENCE!

By Sandy Hudson, Career Counselor,
Osborne Village Resource Centre

My family and I came to Winnipeg in October 2006, from Portsmouth, England. Although I spoke English, I was definitely at a disadvantage in a new country and felt like a fish out of water. Settling in Winnipeg was hard for me. I had to get used to a large sprawled out city that was built for cars. I had never learnt to drive – actually I didn't know many people that did drive, as you could get a direct bus or train anywhere you wanted to go in England. I soon found out that here, everyone could learn to drive when they were in High School! The culture here is so different and I had a lot to learn.

Back home, I worked full time as a Community Development Officer and Employment Advisor and I volunteered in my spare time, so I was very active in my community and knew just about everyone. I was not legally allowed to work in Canada for my first year here. This, coupled with the bitter cold winter, contributed to my feelings of isolation and low self worth.

My sanctuary was Fort Whyte Alive, the nature reserve within city limits, with lakes, wetlands, forests and prairie. I lived nearby, so walked there about four times a week - at least this got me out of the house. I missed the buzz of facilitating groups and educating people to improve their lives. I wanted to volunteer at Fort Whyte - but was unsure of if I had enough outdoors skills or knowledge of Manitoba. I built up the courage to speak to the volunteer coordinator, and thought I would discuss this with her and see if there was a role that I was able to do there.

I was rest assured that I had the skills and qualities they look for in volunteers and was overjoyed to find out that there was training available in all areas of the reserve. I started volunteering twice a week and took up all the training I could.



Shown here: Volunteers explore the marshes

“This gave me a purpose, routine, and a sense of belonging.”

I enjoyed building my knowledge of wildlife in Canada and sharing my enthusiasm of the outdoors. Through this volunteer experience, I was able to provide a prospective employer with glowing references and more importantly, to show that I had experience in a Canadian work environment.

This reference also proved to be invaluable later on, when I applied for the Employment Facilitator position at Osborne Village Resource Centre. It turned out that one of my interviewers had previously worked with the Volunteer Coordinator at Fort Whyte. After I was hired, the interviewer told me how valuable the Fort Whyte Coordinator's reference was to her, because they had worked together in the past, so she knew the Coordinator would give an honest opinion.

So, to sum up, as an immigrant and Career Counselor, I value volunteer work because:

- Employers like to see Canadian experience on a resume
- Contributing to the community can help in settling into Winnipeg and the culture
- Establishing routines and setting body clocks help in preparing for paid work
- Volunteering will build confidence and can help to build a network of contacts

AN INTERVIEW WITH NOREEN MIAN FROM VOLUNTEER MANITOBA

By Patti Malo

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We have dedicated this issue of our spring newsletter to Volunteerism, so I decided to contact Volunteer Manitoba. I have found volunteer positions a couple of times over the years through Volunteer Manitoba and been extremely happy with the outcome. This issue was a perfect opportunity to find out more about the organization and volunteering in Winnipeg in general.

Volunteer Manitoba was established in 1978 in order to provide information, training and resources on all aspects of the voluntary sector and to build strong communities with working partners including government, researchers, non-profit/charitable organizations, volunteers, funders, donors, labour and businesses. Volunteer Manitoba's mission is to support groups and individuals in the voluntary sector to develop and enhance their capacity to anticipate, understand, celebrate, and meet community needs in Manitoba. I spoke to Noreen Mian from Volunteer Manitoba and she agreed to answer the following questions.

Q. *What is your role at Volunteer Manitoba?*

A. I seem to do a little bit of everything! My official title is Program Manager and I look after volunteer referrals and the MYVOP program.

Q. *How long have you worked for Volunteer Manitoba?*

A. 4 years

Q. *What else should the readers know about Volunteer Manitoba?*

A. We provide training for people who work in the not-for-profit sector through an annual calendar of workshops that focus on board development, organizational management and volunteer management. The MYVOP program conducts presentations about the value of volunteering and offers a website for youth: www.myvop.ca. Volunteer Manitoba also runs Contact Community Information, a provincial information and referral service. We have a library with access to Imagine

Canada's online database of grants and foundations, as well as books and periodicals that relate to the not-for-profit sector.

Q. *You stated that the MYVOP program, which I understand is short for Manitoba Youth Volunteer Opportunities, conducts presentations about the value of volunteering. For people who have never volunteered or thought of volunteering can you tell me a little more about the message in those presentations?*

A. These MYVOP presentations focus on the benefits of volunteering for youth in high school and university. We demonstrate how volunteering can lead to career exploration, job skills, networking, access to certain post-secondary programs, a high school credit and scholarships. Of course, volunteering is also a great way to get involved with a cause that you're passionate about or to contribute to your community.

Q. *Why do people volunteer?*

A. Well, this depends on a person's goals. We find that the reasons people volunteer depends on their stage of life. For example, youth are volunteering to gain high school credit, to improve their resumes or to gain access to a specific post-secondary program. Older adults (seniors) volunteer to share their skills and stay involved in the community. Of course, many people may feel motivated to give back or to be involved in their communities.

Q. *We are a pre-employment Centre, we also promote volunteerism within the Centre, especially for those individuals who have never volunteered and who have been out of the work force for some time or who don't have a lot of work experience. Sometimes I find it hard to convey the idea that volunteering could be a viable solution for them. Can you share any advice on how to encourage our clients that volunteering is a good idea in their situation?*

(Continued on Page 5)

"If anything, volunteering opens the door to new experiences."

A. We never know what our strengths are until we find ourselves in a new situation. Volunteering can be this new experience. Even if someone is volunteering in a field they do not want to work in, they are still gaining skills, meeting new people, networking and learning about themselves.

Q. What are some of the benefits of volunteering?

A. There are many depending on where you are in life. For youth there are youth-scholarships, high school credit and of course the experiences. Young professionals can develop leadership skills, gain experience become involved in their community and maximize the benefits of networking. For adults volunteering is an excellent opportunity to give back to the community and have a voice in one's community. Older adults (seniors) involvement will help them achieve better health and stay connected to their community. For people with barriers to employment, and Newcomers it gives relevant work experience, opportunity to network and an introduction to Canadian work culture.

Q. Can you talk more about the benefits of volunteering, in particular the opportunities for networking and its importance in today's society?

A. Although Winnipeg is a mid-sized city, it can at times, feel like a small town. Many of us have encountered the one degree of separation phenomenon. Networking becomes very important—for references, to find out about jobs that may not be posted etc. If you have volunteered at an organization and apply for a job there, your foot is already in the door.

Q. You mentioned one of the benefits of volunteering is "having a voice in one's community" can you elaborate on that and the impact it can have on the person?

A. Well, when people can actually see the impact of their time it is gratifying and it creates a sense of pride and ownership within the community.

The following is an example of a success story that will answer this question for readers!

Volunteering has many benefits, often leading to

employment and creating a sense of belonging in Winnipeg. At the Osborne Village Resource Centre, we recommend volunteering as an excellent way to gain new skills to put on a resume, network with employers, and contribute to the community. One example of someone who has found employment through volunteering is one of a former client, Shauna Carmichael.

Shauna began volunteering with OVRC in 2008 as a Resource Assistant doing weekly updating for the job board. With a past work history in teaching and interpretation, her passion for education and helping others became apparent when assisting clients in the centre. She soon began assisting with our evening computer classes, and continues to tutor clients individually in basic computer skills. In 2008, she also contributed to the OVRC newsletter which featured articles on community gardening and sustainability in the Osborne Village community. Through connections and the support of the Centre, she took on the project of starting a community garden in our neighborhood and is now the Founder and Coordinator of the River Osborne Community Garden.

Shauna also began volunteering at the Manitoba Museum in 2008 at the "Dinosaur Dynasty" exhibit. With her



Shown here: Shauna Carmichael at the Osborne Village Community Garden

extensive work experience in natural history interpretation, she was soon hired on as staff in the Science Gallery, where she continues to be employed today.

Shauna is a strong advocate of volunteering. She is also a great example of how volunteering can open the doors to employment by networking and gaining new skills, as well as contributing to and creating a sense of belonging in the community.

Q. Can you give any advice on how to go about choosing a place to volunteer? What are some key points to keep in mind?

A. I always suggest that people consider their objectives: Do you want to commit to a position that is ongoing? A one-time event? What are your values? Interests? What is your work/educational background? What are your strengths? Do you want to incorporate these skills in a volunteer position? What areas of the city do you live in and do you want to volunteer in that area? What don't you like to do?

Q. Is there a certain time of year that you see more people volunteering?

A. Yes, generally people want to give back during the holiday season in December.

Q. What are some of the misconceptions when it comes to volunteering?

A. Sometimes, when people think about volunteering, the image of a "candy striper" in a hospital comes to mind. However, these days, the hospital is not the only place to volunteer. There are at least 300 positions on our website and they cover many different areas. From non-profit Boards to committee work, volunteering with youth, with animals, in offices and with newcomers. There are highly skilled positions—for experts in marketing, disaster relief, even volunteer management. The breadth of skills and the variety of opportunities that are available are endless.

Q. I know Volunteer Manitoba hosts an Annual Volunteer Awards dinner? Can you tell me more about these awards?



A. This formal dinner recognizes outstanding volunteers from across the province. The city of Winnipeg, the Province and the private sector come together to highlight the contributions of 10 volunteers in their communities. We welcome nominations, visit: www.volunteermanitoba.ca for more information.

Q. What is the process as far as finding a place to volunteer through Volunteer Manitoba?

A. Visit our websites: www.mbvollunteer.ca or www.myvop.ca. We also offer face-to-face referral interviews. I should be clear that we do not place volunteers; however, will use the websites and make suggestions about a possible good fit.

Noreen has provided useful information on how to get started on your search for that perfect volunteer opportunity in Manitoba. As stated volunteering is an excellent way to becoming involved in your community and obtain the many benefits that come with putting yourself out there. And maybe for the first time in your life you can be a part of something bigger than yourself. I hope you find something in this article that gives you the incentive you need to get out there and make a difference in the world!

**"You make a living by what you get.
You make a life by what you give."**

Winston Churchill

NEWCOMER LITERACY INITIATIVE

at the Immigrant and Refugee Organization of Manitoba

By Krista Law

As Program Coordinator of the Newcomer Literacy Initiative (NLI) the value of volunteering to our program and in the lives of our volunteers is apparent each day.

Officially our program teaches English as an Additional Language to newcomers, primarily women who require childcare and have low level English skills. However, far more is often "taught" in the class room than just language!

The learners in our classes have widely varying levels of English. As a result, our teachers rely heavily on capable volunteers to tailor group work to the specific needs of the learners. Without these innovative volunteers it is fair to assume that many of our learners would find themselves either lost or bored with the content of our classes.

"The most remarkable, human benefit we see from volunteers as a settlement agency though is the formation of friendships."

To watch newcomers and Canadian volunteers bond and create friendships, in and outside of class, demonstrates a significant step in the acculturation process. Donnalee Sharpe has been a long time volunteer with our program and was kind enough to share some of her experiences with me.

"The students were so grateful for my presence! I really did not do too much but follow instructions from the teacher and give some encouragement, but it was so appreciated by everyone. It was fun! The students have been through so many hardships in their home country or in a refugee camp. They are so grateful to be in Canada. They are so proud when they have children who have been born here and are Canadian! The first time I was in class they were singing Oh Canada! With such pride! It really choked me up! I love to



hear their stories from their home countries and how they got here. They still have some hardships here, but they are not afraid of hard work, and are very anxious to learn.

If I am away for a few weeks for a holiday they welcome me back. I feel I have made many friends! I feel I have truly been given so much more from the students than I have given them. It is very rewarding! It is so great to see when someone has learned something new for the first time. We had one student who had never been to school before. The first time she counted and she remembered and she got the concept, it was great! Now to see the progress this student has made is so much fun! They are such great young people who just want to give back to Canada.

Volunteering is important to me because I feel I can help these people in their first years in Canada and now that I have the time in my life, I too can give back!"

With long term committed volunteers like this our program can really continue to thrive and make an impact on our communities. We have seen many volunteers choose a career teaching EAL; in fact two of our current teachers started out as volunteers in our program. Our program has seen the real difference that this kind of community engagement can make. The quality of the program, and our community as a whole, is directly impacted by volunteerism. Without a doubt, we could not serve our community in the same way without these committed individuals.



YVETTE BEAUDRY:

Leading the Fight Against Diabetes Through Volunteerism

By Allison Langridge

Locally, the Canadian Diabetes Association is served by hundreds of volunteers, and is always on the lookout for more people to help champion the cause of diabetes, living well and choosing a healthy lifestyle. One of the Association's outstanding volunteers is Yvette Beaudry...

It was in talking with an immigrant child from a war-torn country, that Yvette Beaudry was really awakened to the value and importance of healthy eating.

"With her mother admirably keeping the children healthy amid atrocities," says Yvette, "this seven year-old's family had survived war and famine." She observed that coming to Canada where "it's often easier and cheaper to eat unhealthy foods than it is to choose healthy options," this young girl had "gone from healthy upon arrival, to carrying too much weight."

In Yvette's view, North America is not just the land of plenty, but the "land of all too much." She says she feels that to maintain a good quality of life, one must do what they can to try to preserve their health, and that keeping active and eating healthy helps prevent many kinds of health problems – not just diabetes. "Healthy living is healthy living, and by trying to prevent diabetes you're enhancing all other aspects of mental, physical and cognitive health."

While her husband lives with type 2 diabetes, Yvette points to the young immigrant's story as a driver for wanting to volunteer with the Canadian Diabetes Association as a Learning Series presenter. That paired with her years as a registered nurse and a public school teacher, she has a personal commitment to, and passion for, life-long learning and connecting with others.

"As a presenter, I tend to relate well to women who are trying to cook for their husbands who have diabetes: I know where they're coming from and I can speak from the heart and empathize."



About the Canadian Diabetes Association

Across the country, the Canadian Diabetes Association is leading the fight against diabetes by helping people with diabetes live healthy lives while we work to find a cure. Our community-based network of supporters help us provide education and services to people living with diabetes, advocate for our cause, break ground towards a cure and translate research into practical applications.

For more information about who we are, what we do, and how you can get involved, please visit diabetes.ca or call 204-925-3800 in Winnipeg.



Shown here: Yvette Beaudry

VOLUNTEERING WITH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY WINNIPEG

By Ken McIntyre



Volunteering with Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg means different things to many people because of the wide selection of different opportunities. We build houses, so naturally a great number of volunteers choose to work on construction at our build sites. Not all volunteers are able and/or willing to do the physical work so there are also other important ways they can contribute to Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg.

The construction is where the vast majority of our volunteers are utilized and contribute to a wide array of needs at the build site:

Volunteer at Large

These people help us early on in the process when we first start to dig the foundations. They may shovel gravel, dig the hole for the sump pit, lay out floor joists or spread mulch around the build site to help keep things clean and safe.

Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg still embraces the "Blitz" style of building which could be likened to an old fashioned barn-raising. During a two week period every summer, 200 to 300 people come together each day (depending on the number of houses being built) to help us build a number of houses.

Some of the more experienced and skilled volunteers work in the capacity of House and Crew Leaders, and Builders. The House Leader is responsible for all aspects of the house build and assigns tasks to his Crew Leaders. The Crew Leader is responsible for specific tasks that are accomplished by his crew of five to six Builders. As an example, one Crew Leader will have his crew build the exterior walls of the house, while another Crew Leader will have his crew build the interior walls. Still more crews are utilized to install windows and doors, with another responsible for the roof trusses. These volunteers take the house to a level called "Close Up", which means the walls are up, the roof is on, sheeted

and shingled, the siding complete, and the house can be locked up. At this point the volunteers' work is done with the remaining work completed by professional trades people. Habitat Winnipeg uses about 6000 volunteer days in construction each year.

ReStore Volunteers

Many volunteers work occasionally or regularly in Habitat Winnipeg's retail outlet, the ReStore which sells new and gently used household and building products. The volunteers work in many capacities. They help unload donations and place them on the sales floor, check donations to make sure everything is in working order, and help customers carry out purchases when required. We use about 450 volunteer days in the ReStore.

Administration and Special Event Volunteers

Habitat runs a number of special events every year, and utilize volunteers to help make these events a success. Volunteers sit on committees, do planning and assist in the execution of the events. Positions may range from food support and trail bosses for our cycling events, to working at registration tables and silent auction set up at our Gala.

If you are interested in volunteering with Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg, please feel free to go to our website for more information. www.habitat.mb.ca





ASK THE CAREER COUNSELLOR

Tips for Job Seekers

By Jude Gaal

Dear Career Counsellor:

I have just been laid off from my job of the last 15 years and am having a hard time coming up with three references. The company I work for does not allow my manager to give me a reference. What can I do?

- Help!

Dear Help!

Don't despair. You have a solid work record that is demonstrated through your 15 years of work with the same organization. You have undoubtedly helped countless internal and external customers over that time period. Think about the people you worked with on a regular basis to accomplish goals. What departments did you liaise with? Which co-workers did you work closely with? Were there external customers that you developed good working relations with?

I am confident that if you sit down and think about these questions, you will be able to come up with your list of three references. In fact I am confident that you will be able to choose between a number of people to speak on your behalf. Also, send each of your references a copy of your resume; this will help them provide relevant information for the position you are applying to. OVRC has the free, References: A Do-It-Yourself Guide, booklet that is filled with lots of valuable information regarding references. Drop by and pick one up. If you have any other questions don't hesitate to call us at 989-6503.

Dear Career Counsellor:

I hate my job and want to make a career change but I don't have any paid experience in the field I want to get into. I have volunteered a lot but someone told me that doesn't count. So how can I write a resume that will get me into the field? I can't afford to go back to school right now, but don't think I'll be able to cope much longer in my job.

- Stuck Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Dear Stuck Between a Rock and a Hard Place:

I am very glad you wrote to me for help and didn't get discouraged by that someone who said that volunteer experience does not count. This information is totally wrong. Volunteer experience does count. A lot! This experience will provide the material for your targeted skill based resume. You will also need the name of the position you will be applying for, and a job description. The job description has all the details you need to write the targeted skill based resume.

It is helpful to jot down all the tasks involved in your volunteer position. Next, sort the tasks into skill sets. Don't forget to include essential skills* such as communication and computer skills. You can get a skill based resume by:

- Making an appointment with an employment facilitator who will work with you to write a skill based resume, or by
- Coming down to OVRC and picking up a copy of Writing a Successful Resume, which provides you with step-by-step instructions to write a skill based resume.

Finally, don't forget to get a reference from the person you report to at your volunteer position!

Also include a targeted cover letter explaining your career change to the employer. Being up front will go far towards erasing any hesitations an employer may have in hiring you. Be sure to include the relevant skills and attributes you possess that are related to the field you want to enter into. We at OVRC can also help you with writing the targeted cover letter. You can either attend our monthly free Targeted Cover Letters Workshop, or pick up a copy of the Targeted Cover Letters booklet, or make an appointment with a staff member to help you write that targeted cover letter!

(Continued on Page 11)

ASK THE CAREER COUNSELLOR (Continued from Page 10)

You may be thinking, “Why do I have to also write a targeted cover letter?” Because 93 % of employers that were surveyed by OVRC said that it was extremely important, or very important, to include a cover letter that demonstrated knowledge of the job and the organization. If you are going to take the time to write a skill based resume for the position, take the extra few minutes it takes to write a targeted cover letter to grab and hold the employer’s attention. If you have any questions along the way, don’t hesitate to call us at 989-6503.

The Nine Essential Skills

A huge survey of Canadian employers found that there are nine skills that are essential in today’s workplace. All nine are used in different combinations in different applications in every occupation. They are the foundation skills you use to carry out your work tasks, and they are the building blocks you use to learn new ones. They are essential to your success at work.

Reading Text – Reading and understanding information in many different types of workplace documents, e.g., work instructions, emails, health and safety bulletins, policies and procedures manuals.

Document Use – Finding and using the information you need, putting information where it is needed

and construction information displays: these are all document use. Icons, labels, lists, tables, forms, graphs, signs, maps, gauges, images, schedules, computer screens and technical drawing are all examples of documents or information displays used in the workplace.

Numeracy – Using numbers and thinking mathematically to measure and make calculations, to estimate, to work with money, to analyze trends and to create schedules and budgets.

Writing – Using the written word to create a message.

Oral Communication – Talking with others to give and exchange information and ideas, such as asking questions, making presentations, explaining and persuading.

Thinking Skills – Problem solving, job task planning and organizing, finding information, critical thinking, significant use of memory and decision-making.

Computer Use – Using information and communication technology.

Continuous Learning – Using learning skills to support lifelong learning.

For more information about Essential Skills, please visit Workplace Education Manitoba, at www.wem.mb.ca



Shown here: Sandy Hudson, Career Counsellor working with a client



Shown here: The client is accessing an inventory of the skills he would like to learn or use as part of his career counselling experience.

WHERE DO I BEGIN...

By Patti Malo

.....

In 1997 I was unemployed and looking for something meaningful to do with my life. I was feeling nervous about doing a job search, so I decided to take a different path and find a place to volunteer. I felt it was one way to re-enter the work world without all the pressure that comes with starting a new job. I was also hoping to find an organization where I could sharpen my office skills in a supportive and relaxed environment with minimal pressure. After seeing someone at Volunteer Manitoba I decided to check out the Osborne Village Resource Centre. In an interview with the Office Manager, Caroline and I agreed that my job would be to type resumes and perform general office duties. Even though I did find that OVRC was a busy place, I could tell right from the start that this was a great place where wonderful work was being done by good people.

I enjoyed spending my time at OVRC and the staff were wonderful to me. They made me feel included and more importantly useful. I hadn't felt useful for a long time, which happens when you are out of the work force for a significant period of time. I really wanted to get back to that feeling of being valued and productive and my wish was granted! Little did I know that a single act of volunteering would end up changing the course of my life!

I volunteered at the Centre for a year, and then, one day out of the blue the Client Services Representative, Jenny called to say she had found a new job and the Centre would be hiring someone to fill her position. Was I interested? Boy was I! This seemed like the answer to my prayers - a job I could find fulfilling, enjoyable and be passionate about!

Following that invitation, I immediately went to my computer and started to develop a resume and cover letter for the position. I spent hours perfecting both documents with just the right wording. I submitted my application and shortly after they contacted me to



schedule an interview. I was very nervous about the interview but at the same time I felt hopeful because I had worked along side the staff all year with no problems. The interview went well. I went home and anxiously waited for the call.

Well, they called all right, to say that they were sorry but I was their second choice for the position. Despite having my hopes up I took it well. I realized that it had been a good experience for me no matter what the outcome. But this was not the end of the story!

A few weeks later I received another call saying that the person they had hired was not working out. Dana, the Centre Coordinator suggested that because the Centre was so busy, which was part of the reason the initial hire did not work out, she wanted me to come in a couple of days on a trial basis to see if I could handle the pace. Based on my performance during this trial period they would decide whether or not I would be hired for the position. I hadn't received this sort of proposal before but I was willing to try it, one, because I enjoyed volunteering at the Centre so much and two, I didn't have any other offers on the table.

The three day trial went extremely well and I was officially hired on March 3, 1998. I have been working at the Centre ever since, starting out working at the front desk on reception and performing clerical duties. Over the last 13 years I have taken on different roles in the office including work as an Employment Facilitator for two years which was an excellent growing experience but not completely the right fit. Two years ago I was given a promotion that allows me to work directly with the volunteers, develop and edit the newsletter, perform administrative tasks, back up the front desk and supervise on the floor and assisting clients with

WHERE DO I BEGIN (Continued from Page 12)

their job search including: on-line applications, setting up and sending email, scanning documents, developing and updating resumes and cover letters as well as troubleshooting on the computers. Today, I couldn't be happier with how things have turned out.

It's all about taking the first important step. So why not try something different like volunteering? As you can see by my story, it can lead you to wonderful places. I'm not saying that every volunteer opportunity will lead you to employment. But just think of the new skills, valuable experience and network opportunities you will gain all while you are pursuing something you enjoy and maybe even are passionate about! Think about what you can gain and at the same time what you are giving back to your community. Now that's meaningful, inspiring and something to be proud of!

So why have I decided to share my story? Well because we see many people at the Centre who have been out of work, like I was, for some time. People in my situation are very likely to lose their confidence and feel that their skills are not as sharp as they could be. You



start to question your abilities. I know because I went through all of this. It's easy to procrastinate; we have all done that, so why not do something proactive about your state of unemployment. Many people don't even consider volunteering as a viable option but it could change their life. I know because it happened to me, and if it happened to me, it can certainly happen to you!

MY JOURNEY THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM

By Susan Reynolds

When I was first asked to write this article for the OVRC newsletter I have to admit that my first reaction was more along the lines of: "Me write an article?!!! Whatever would I say? I have nothing to say!" After thinking about it for a few minutes I realized that that was not true. Everyone has something to say. They just have to find a way to say it.

My name is Susan Reynolds and I have volunteered, off and on, at the OVRC since February of 1998. I arrived at the OVRC knowing that I could no longer go through life without having at least a working knowledge of computers so I began by taking the Fundamentals of PC

to give me the basis for my next step and then went on to do the MS Word and MS Excel. The next obvious step to practice my new skills was to volunteer. At the time, the Centre needed someone to print out job postings from the internet so that was where I started.

I was able to continue to do that twice a week for about 10 years because I had a job that enabled me to work from home and could adjust my hours to accommodate the volunteer obligations. Why did I do it for so long? There were a few reasons. At the time I started, work places were in transition with more and more companies starting to use computers and a lot of workers had

not encountered any reason to become acquainted with them or the internet. The internet, however, was becoming an important job search tool. The job binders that I maintained became a small window through which they could use it. So yes, there was a certain “feel good” rush that came from knowing that what I was doing was actually helping other people.

My twice weekly trips also kept me connected in a very human way. When working from home, it is all too easy to become isolated, or so focused on work that you become unable to do your job properly or interact effectively with others. It was always a great joy to walk into OVRC and be greeted with a smile and a cheerful comment.

I very quickly became aware that the trip to the Centre was not “wasted” time. It became the time that would clear my head, and let me think through a problem while still sitting in front of a computer screen. I have lost count of all the AHA! moments I have had while walking from downtown to OVRC. There were a lot of them.

When I eventually took a job where I did not have control over the hours I worked, I reluctantly had to give up doing the job binders. After two years of being away from volunteering at OVRC I have returned. This time with a change of duties, I have redesigned the Centre’s website. The initial work on the site was a fascinating exercise for me as it gave me a chance to put into practice some knowledge that had, until that time, just been theory for me.

During the last 12 years I have picked up a little knowledge about a lot of things concerning website design, but it is now time for me to fill in some holes by going back to school. By the time this newsletter is published I should be immersed in the Internet Systems Specialist Diploma program at the University of Winnipeg. I plan to use some of the new skills and knowledge I gain from the program to polish and expand the OVRC website in the future.



Shown here: Susan Reynolds receiving card and gifts at 2011 Volunteer Appreciation Celebration from Patti Malo, Volunteer Coordinator

Volunteering at OVRC has been many things to me over the years. It has built my confidence, given me a support system, given me opportunities to problem solve, and a place to hone my skills. I suspect that every volunteer has their own reasons for volunteering: to help, a need to be needed, to gain experience, to bring balance into their lives, to ... fill in the blank for what ever works for YOU. The point is, volunteers get out and DO something and whatever they do is important work that needs to be done. Society needs people who are willing to get out and do it without expecting a monetary reward. That is not to say there are no rewards for volunteering. There are, but they are the intangible feeling that you have done something that will enrich someone else’s life today.

VOLUNTEERING AT WINNIPEG HARVEST

By Robb Nickel



Winnipeg Harvest would be lost without its healthy contingent of volunteers. In order for Harvest to process and distribute almost 11 million pounds of food per year, we need around 300,000 hours of volunteer time. And we get it. It is truly amazing as the number of volunteers keeps growing, year by year. At Harvest we make room for you, whatever your age or situation in life. Families volunteer, office groups work together and we have many seniors who come and spend quality time in our warehouse, at the front desk, sorting food and preparing food hampers for those who need them.

There are many unbelievable stories to tell. Let me begin with Emma. One of the highlights of the day here at Winnipeg Harvest is 11:30 AM. Why you ask? Well, it's lunch time and the kitchen beckons. There's always a lineup, because the food is so good, and to top it off, it's nutritious. The reason why we enjoy lunch time here at Harvest is because Emma is an excellent cook, using her vast cooking experience and a little motherly concern to plan a variety of menus with the food at hand. There are always lots of salads; pasta, leaf lettuce, rice, to name just a few. Along with that one can find a wonderful soup or chili, assorted sandwiches, and there's always plenty of fruit and fresh veggies.

Emma speaks fondly of her 25 years at the University of Manitoba. She learned a great deal there, from preparing pastas to pizza to gourmet sandwiches to preparing banquets. After her time at the University, Emma retired. That was six years ago. Now at 75 years young, she began here at Harvest by working in the sorting department but it wasn't long before her excellent cooking skills were brought to bear in the kitchen. Emma hasn't looked back. She loves her work and loves the people. Her cooking feeds the stomach and her smile feeds the soul.

Allow me one more story. "Snow is beautiful" said Fransisca Rumbino, "Cika", a volunteer at Winnipeg Harvest. "Back home in Indonesia, I thought snow

was little round pellets. Now I see how beautiful each snowflake is!"

Cika (pronounced Cheeka) came from Jayapura, a city in the province of Papua, Indonesia. She arrived in Winnipeg with the International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) of Mennonite Central Committee. Cika's assignment at Winnipeg Harvest included working in the sortation department and helping out with groups that visit Harvest to learn and volunteer their time.

"I love interacting with groups of school children who come here" said Cika.

Cika returned to Indonesia after one year at Harvest and is continuing her career in architecture.

Volunteering is one way of giving back to the community and we at Winnipeg Harvest appreciate every volunteer and the hours they give to our community. If you would like to volunteer at Winnipeg Harvest, please contact the volunteer department by calling 982-3663 or by checking out our website at www.winnipegharvest.org



Shown here: Cika



Shown here: Emma



IMMIGRANT CENTRE VOLUNTEER SERVICES

By Marsha Palansky

ImmigrantCentre

The Immigrant Centre is Manitoba's community leader in providing Immigrant and settlement services free of charge. It is our goal to empower newcomers to connect, integrate and fully participate in Canadian society

As a not-for-profit agency, the Immigrant Centre could not offer its extensive programming without the dedicated group of volunteers of all ages and backgrounds who give their time and skills every day to support all areas of the Centre's day-to-day activities. From one-to-one tutoring and mentorship, to EAL and computer classes, to special events, general administration and a host of other activities, a devoted group of volunteers give of their time and skills under the guidance of the Volunteer Services Department. Some volunteers work only a few hours a month and others work many hours a week, with the total time donated equivalent to several full time staff members.

Beyond the rewarding feeling, volunteering will bring you, the Volunteer Services Department also gives support with resources, workshops, and training. Volunteers can receive reports, letters of recommendations, as well as verification of hours volunteered at the Immigrant Centre for school and or work-related purposes.

Everyone who wants to volunteer at the Immigrant Centre is given an application form to assess their background, skills and interests. After a Criminal Record check and a face-to-face interview with the Manager of Volunteer Services and/or the Manager of the Access English Program, the potential volunteer is matched with one of the Immigrant Centre's programs. Getting the right program fit ensures that the volunteer will find the experience rewarding and the Centre will receive the maximum benefit from the new volunteer's skills, experience and enthusiasm. The initial sign up commitment is for three months and Volunteer Services supports the volunteer through training, on-going back-up and appreciation events.

The programs are supportive of clients' needs and they are constantly changing as the clients' needs change. These programs strive to enhance the skill-set of newcomers and help them overcome the barriers they experience. The programs include:

- EAL Conversation through the Access English Centre and one-to-one EAL tutoring, which helps immigrants gain increased confidence, and provides opportunities for social interaction, networking as well as enhancement of their language skills.
- Computer workshops and one-to-one computer sessions that enable newcomers to communicate with friends and family through e-mail, and provides instruction on Internet usage, as a job-finding tool.
- Driver's Education that helps clients understand the Driver's Handbook so they can take their written test and then begin driver training.
- Administrative Assistance which helps Centre employees complete daily tasks. This program also allows the volunteer to gain Canadian work experience. Volunteer Services will also help newcomers look at volunteer opportunities at other agencies. This is done in conjunction with Volunteer Manitoba and Spark, to give newcomers valuable Canadian job experience in their specific field of employment.

Volunteers also play an important role in other Centre programs: the Nutrition Program, Language Bank Interpreters and helping with the Centre's special events.

Volunteer Services success is achieved through the skill, compassion and commitment of our volunteers who dedicate their time, energy, and talent.

Volunteers continue to prove their value to the programs by the work they do at the Centre and with clients.

MY NAME IS BETTY, AND I AM A COMPULSIVE VOLUNTEER...

By Betty Punkert

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My first serious volunteer gig was in 1995 with Journey's Adult Education Centre, and my job was mostly to explain the oddness of the English language to GED students.

"I think I learned more than I ever taught; about prejudice, about determination, and about how little being smart has to do with being wise."

I then spent ten years with Winnipeg Harvest at a satellite food bank, doing everything from setting up tables and making coffee to handing out Kraft Dinner and helping people load their cars, in every imaginable kind of weather (and a few we couldn't have imagined). I found myself constantly reminded that being in need doesn't mean being without resources, and that everyone has a right to maintain their sense of dignity, no matter what their circumstances.

I presently volunteer with three organizations: the Osborne Village Resource Centre (OVRC), National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), and Spirit's Call Choir.

Spirit's Call Choir is a non-audition community choir of between 120 and 180 members, where the philosophy is that anyone can sing if you can find where your voice belongs. Singing with such a large group has taught me a lot about discipline, learning to ask for what you want, and about how finding and claiming your voice is not limited to music.

I started doing NaNoWriMo and the OVRC at the same time, in the fall of 2003.

NaNoWriMo is an international writing challenge that happens each November. The goal is to write a fifty thousand word novel in November (thirty days). During November, I co-coordinate (with the other Municipal Liaison) a launch party, an after-party, weekly writing sessions, weekly support e-mails and a forum. I also



Shown here: Keith Robinson, Employment Facilitator/Computer Instructor congratulating volunteer Betty at 2011 Volunteer Appreciation Celebration

write my own novel at the same time! It's taught me a lot about event organization, conflict management, time management, creativity, focus, and general life coaching.

Here at OVRC, I help with the Monday evening computer classes I completely rewrote the Excel class manuals with Keith's input to be more step-by-step and illustrative. It's always such a joy to see that moment when a student makes the transition from being terrified of the computer to feeling empowered by it. Because so many of the people we are teaching are in transition, I find that many of the same lessons about personal worth, dignity, prejudices, wisdom and perseverance from my early volunteer experiences apply to my students as well.

In 2006, I was nominated by the Osborne Village Resource Centre for the *Anita Neville Volunteer Recognition Award* for the work I was doing with the Centre and with Winnipeg Harvest. The plaque which hangs in my kitchen is very pretty, but it's not why I do it.

I volunteer, and I always have, because of the people. Many career coaches will tell you to volunteer to beef up your resume. Make certain it's something you're passionate about, because I can tell you from experience that the novelty will wear off and there will be days where it's utterly thankless and frustrating. If you can't make a connection to the people you serve, if you can't get past the work to find the worth, you may be volunteering for the wrong reasons, or the wrong group.

Like any aspect of your career, your volunteer work will change over time as your interests and your other commitments change. That's okay, and when you're ready to move on to another challenge, you'll know. Be honest with yourself and with the organizations you're involved with about your level of involvement and find joy in whatever you choose to do.

THANK YOU OVRC VOLUNTEERS!

By Keith Robinson and Patti Malo

Over the last eight years teaching computer classes at Osborne Village Resource Centre I have had the privilege of working closely with volunteers who assist in making our classes successful and enjoyable to our students. Without these amazing individuals providing their time, energy and passion our computer classes would not have developed into becoming an excellent learning environment that our students appreciate.

Betty Punkert has volunteered on Monday nights since 2003 which is right around the time that I started teaching our computer classes. We have grown together as a unit and she has been instrumental in how our courses are delivered and have developed into what they are today. Betty's knowledge, patience and passion have earned my respect. She is an amazing individual that pushes me to be a better instructor.

Shauna Carmichael volunteered on Tuesday nights for two years. Her warm and humorous personality was appreciated by the students and me. She always kept me in line and kept our classes running smoothly. The students loved her so much that we always had goodies the students would bring to feed us during our coffee break. I have missed having her energy and passion since she left to care for her baby girl.

Ning (Alex) Zhou started volunteering on Tuesday nights in September 2010. He is a wonderful young man who assists our students in a respectful and patient manner. I always look forward to seeing Alex and his contribution to our classroom environment is outstanding.

Gursharn (Gary) Wander also started volunteering on Tuesday nights in September 2010 and I quickly saw that he was a perfect fit for computer classes because of his warmth and passion for teaching computer classes. When a full time position became available as an Assistant Computer Instructor and Employment Facilitator Gursharn was hired for the position and is now a highly respected member of our team.

Florencia (Lorna) Castillo started volunteering on Monday nights in September 2010 and quickly became an asset to our computer classes. Her personality was a perfect fit because she easily calms students that are having difficulties learning computer skills and builds their confidence which results in a positive learning environment for our students. Lorna now provides one-on-one tutoring here at the centre because she quickly understood our course material and how we deliver it to our students.

(Continued on Page 19)



Betty



Shauna



Gursharn



Lorna

THANK YOU OVRC VOLUNTEERS! (Continued from Page 18)

We have had many other volunteers over my past eight years assisting in our computer classes such as **Li (Lee) Qi**, **Peter Lam**, **Weiqun (Wendy) Xu** and **Ruben Yakhyaev**. As you can see many of our volunteers are new Canadians that are developing their English skills and experiencing working in a Canadian work environment. I consider it an honour to be part of their skill development and appreciate how they give back to their new country. Remember when you see a new Canadian they are a positive and productive influence that all Canadians should admire and respect for their courage of selecting and coming to our country to improve their lives.

Finally a big thank you to all the volunteers I have worked with over the past eight years. You have all made me a better teacher. In addition, I have learned a lot about different cultures through the experiences of our volunteers. I have to say I have grown as a man and become more understanding and passionate regarding all cultures.

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You have already heard wonderful things about the computer class volunteers, now I would like to tell you about the rest of our volunteers! I will begin with **Susan Reynolds** who started volunteering in 1998 when she was updating our job binders every week and for many years. Susan has recently redesigned our website! The staff is extremely happy with the finished product; everyone agrees she did a fabulous job!

Kristin McPherson is employed as a graphic artist and has been volunteering at OVRC since 2007. Kristin has lent her creative talents by giving our newsletter a whole new look. The newsletter goes out twice a year! The Centre has received some very encouraging and positive feedback on the newsletters thanks to Kristin's continuing efforts.

Melanie Kowal volunteered with us in 2010 and assisted clients on the floor and in one-on-one appointments for resumes and cover letters. Melanie was very good at putting clients at ease in order to better assist them with their job search. She did a superb job for us and has recently found a new paid position!

Ranjeet Bains is our IT extraordinaire who started with us in 2001! Due to Ranjeet's creativity and expertise over the years, the Centre has ended up saving both financially and in terms of staff time! We owe him much gratitude. Ranjeet is an integral part of the OVRC team!

And last but not least we have our full time Work Placement person, **John Perry** who was at the Centre for most of 2010. He played a big role during his time at the Centre from manning the front desk, assisting clients on the floor, putting up our job board every Monday morning, and taking appointments for resumes. The staff really enjoyed having such a positive and energetic person to share our days with.

These are just some of the wonderful and talented people we have had volunteering at the Centre over the years. The staff at OVRC is forever grateful to them for all their time and dedication which has made a world of difference to our clients throughout their job search.



Susan



Kristin



Ranjeet



John

2011 OVRC VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION CELEBRATION



OVRC volunteers

Left to right:
Lorna, Betty, Kristin, Susan, Alex

OVRC Staff and Volunteers

Back row:
Betty, Keith, Marg, Conrad, Gursharn,
Middle row:
Lorna, Kristin, Susan, Patti, Jacqueline,
Front row:
Sandy, Jude



Call the Osborne Village Resource Centre at 989-6503 and make an appointment!

Ace That Interview! Workshop

Monday and Tuesday 9 am – 3 pm
May 16 & 17, 2011 / June 20 & 21, 2011

Join us for this workshop and learn how to be confident and prepared for your next interview. We will cover the following topics:

- How to make a good first impression
- Identifying questions employers will ask
- Confidently responding to the 3 different types of interview questions
- How to turn a negative situation into a positive outcome

You will have the opportunity to put these skills into practice by rehearsing your responses in mock interviews and getting feedback from workshop participants. Join us for this fun, practical and informative workshop!



Career Exploration Workshop

Thursday 8:45 am – 3:30 pm | June 09, 2011

Are you still wondering if you want to be a doctor, lawyer, cowboy or ballerina?

This workshop gives you the tools to:

1. Do a self assessment which includes:
 - a. Values, skills, attributes/strengths, and interests/hobbies
2. Do a work assessment which includes:
 - a. Your last three jobs (if applicable), and the work activities you enjoy
 - b. Work preference, work activities, occupational interests, work/volunteer experience
3. Learn your personality type and the ten things that are going to give your personality career satisfaction
4. Research careers with Career Cruising and Manitoba Job Futures
5. Assess the suitability of a career
6. Develop a strategic action plan



PRE-EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOPS AND COMPUTER CLASSES!

Call the Osborne Village Resource Centre at 989-6503 and make an appointment!

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Targeted Cover Letters Workshop

Thursday 8:45 am – 3:30 pm

May 12, 2011

Don't be one of the many people who work hard at getting a great resume, and then mistakenly take very little effort in composing a cover letter.

In this workshop you will get tips from employers, as well as learn how to:

- Examine the job ad and identify the employer's needs
 - Research the company to identify the employer's goals and values
 - Connect your skills and experience with the employer's needs
 - Put it all together in a cover letter that will get you an interview
-



Fundamentals of Personal Computing

Monday – five week class: 5 pm – 7:30 pm / \$70.00

Two streams:

Mondays on May 16, 30, 06, 13 and 20, 2011

Tuesdays on May 17, 31, 07, 14, and 21, 2011

Learn the components of a computer

Learn how to use application/software

Learn basic word processing and formatting

Learn how to surf the World Wide Web

Set up and learn how to use a free email account ...
and much more!

NO CLASSES JULY AND AUGUST – START UP AGAIN IN SEPTEMBER 2011

ABOUT OVRC

Free Services

Do you need help preparing a resume or getting ready for a job interview?

Do you need help preparing a cover letter?

Do you want to consult a Career Counsellor?

Contact us at:

PH: 204.989.6503 FAX: 204.477.0903

For further information visit our web site: www.ovrc.ca

If you have any comments, questions or concerns about our services,
contact the Centre Coordinator Marg Law at marlaw@wtc.mb.ca

In Partnership With



ABOUT OVRC'S NEWSLETTER

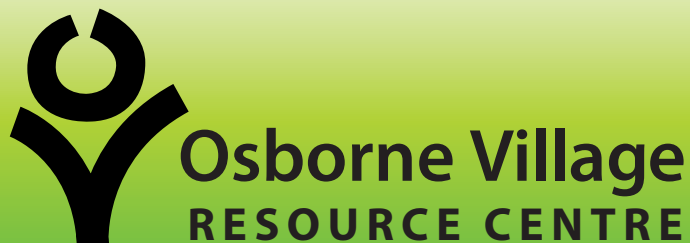
In our upcoming newsletter we will be looking at

Job Search!

If you have an idea for an article you would like to see, or contribute to the newsletter,
or have any comments or suggestions, please contact

Patti Malo, Newsletter Editor at 204.989.6503 or patmal@wtc.mb.ca

Newsletter design and layout by our volunteer Kristin McPherson



1-107 OSBORNE ST. WINNIPEG, MB R3L 1Y4

PH: 204.989.6503 FAX: 204.477.0903