

Scouting is... Service

Service as Part of the Adventure

by G. J. Gore

As leaders we know the importance of service — this is what we do every week in the Scout hall. Service to the community is an integral part of the Scouting program. “To do a good turn every day” is not just a Motto, but the foundation for a lifestyle. Time management is

a juggling act at best and prioritising service without reward can be a challenge and sometimes a tough “sell” to Scouts. Yet Canadian society could not function as we know it without its volunteers and there is no better training ground than the Scouting Movement.

Years ago, as the newbie leader in the troop and easily six inches shorter than my comrades, I found most program plans were literally discussed over my head.

By Christmas, in search of something to offer, the light bulb went on (for that matter, a whole string of them). Van Dusen Botanical Gardens, of which I have been a long time member, contacted me for volunteers to escort musicians on and off the stage and serve them cocoa at the end of their performances at the annual “*Festival of Lights*”. “We can do that,” I said with confidence. All evening, the Scouts, in full uniform, worked from stage to entrance and back and to the guest lounge with a couple of trips around the garden to enjoy the lights — often at high speed. This was fun.

By spring, the Gardens needed volunteers to “camp” with the plants being set out for the giant annual Van Dusen Plant Sale. “No problem,” I

said. For two nights, the kids were dropped off at 7 pm and picked up at 8 am the next morning. As the Scouts trudged out bleary-eyed and in rumpled uniforms, the plant sale volunteers were coming in and, spotting the uniforms, offered bounteous gratitude. The Scouts were sheepish but delighted in accepting thanks for their contribution to the plant sale. It mattered not that they had spent the night tracking coyotes, rolling wagons down the hill and exploring the maze in the dark. No one could mistake that there had been a presence in the Garden those nights.

This was a lot of fun.

A little notoriety was brought on as well, by the Van Dusen Guard Camp. One year, the Scouts’ activity was featured on the local evening news; last year they were interviewed by Tamara Taggart during the weather forecast on CTV.

After a couple of years, volunteering had become such a habit, hands would

go up for the Variety Club Telethon, counsellors for summer Cub camp, pulling ivy on Jericho Beach, programming for area camp and cleaning blow down debris after the great wind storms of ‘06. Word got around that these kids could be counted on, so the calls would come in for really interesting adventures like TV programs, flag bearers for conference opening ceremonies and carrying the Canadian flag in the Grey Cup Parade. Tamara Taggart put it succinctly, “Who better to do it than Scouts?”

Goal achieved — volunteering for these Scouts had become an accepted part of their lives. ✕

— *Gwendolyn Gore knows all about service, having spent 12 years in Scouting; 9 of them as a troop Scouter of the 150th St. Stephens Scouts. She’s currently Deputy Commissioner of Groups in the Pacific Spirit area, BC, and a long time volunteer with the BC Master Gardeners Association.*

Tired after a hard night at the Van Dusen Guard Camp, these Scouts were happy to assist with the weather forecast.



◀ *Willing hands help clean up the immense wind storm damage.*

TIPS

1. Focus on fun over work or the common good. Moral high ground doesn't always win votes.
2. As a leader, look for opportunities for volunteerism in your life outside of Scouting. Examples: the staff picnic, service clubs or special interest groups.
3. Make it easy on yourself. For the Van Dusen Guard Camp we order in pizza at 10 pm. The group committee is happy to pay.
4. Full uniform brings in the praise. Recognition is a strong motivator and the Scout uniform lets others know you are not just wandering around. You are there for a purpose. The public exposure doesn't hurt either.