



Presentation to Priorities Committee – June 18, 2019

(additional information in support of our powerpoint presentation delivered this date)

Volunteer Strathcona (formerly Information & Volunteer Centre for Strathcona County) has proudly served our community for the past 44 years. As a result of a recent re-branding that included community engagement, strategic planning, program review and realignment, we remain committed to engage openly and transparently with community organizations in support of Strathcona County's Social Framework. We also remain committed to evaluate and assess opportunities for new services and community relationships and partnerships – ensuring that they are in alignment with our mission and vision.

In addition, while we have undergone many changes over the past two years, Volunteer Strathcona remains committed to supporting Strathcona County's efforts to become Canada's most liveable community. This is a community effort; one that can only be achieved through community support and continued strong leadership from our elected representatives.

Our Vision:

Strathcona County is a vibrant community strengthened by volunteers and an effective non-profit sector.

Our Mission:

Volunteer Strathcona connects volunteers with opportunities and enables the development of local organizations to meet social needs in our community.

Our Strategic Goals:

- Volunteer Strathcona is a leader in organization engagement for the non-profit and volunteer sectors. *This will be achieved by continuing to build and maintain relationships with key community partners, by engaging openly and transparently with communications as part of the Social Framework, by linking with community organizations to establish new partnerships or collaborations and by championing positive social outcomes in the sector.*
- Volunteer Strathcona enables and develops excellence in leadership, organization competency and resilience within the non-profit and voluntary sectors. *We continually work to identify innovative and creative programs that will support sectoral advancement and training and we ensure that what we are offering out in the community is of value. We participate fully at the regional and provincial level at non-profit tables to ensure the local landscape has the benefits of trends, insights and relevant research.*

Volunteer Strathcona now uses recognized evaluation practices to ensure existing and new programming meets the needs of the community. A considerable amount of work is being done in Alberta in the area of non-profit evaluation, the demonstration of impact and the importance of working collaboratively within the Sector. Volunteer Strathcona is participating provincially with Alberta Culture, Multiculturalism and the Status of Women and Volunteer Alberta to ensure future priorities reflect and respond to common outcomes. We are also participating with FCS and other County funded organizations to ensure a series of common outcomes that make sense for our community specifically.

- Volunteer Strathcona fosters active citizenship and volunteerism. *Through our collaborative partnership with other Volunteer Centres in the province, Volunteer Connector facilitates local organizations to more effectively fill volunteer positions within their organizations. Volunteer Strathcona will also, if requested, take a more active role in opportunity promotion and assist with volunteer recruitment. This is a service that is generally accessed by smaller nonprofits without the financial ability to hire to a volunteer recruitment position within their organizations.*

We will also help groups with putting on events or meetings, including taking care of their social media, and event renting meeting room space on their behalf if they are unable to do so.

Our 2019 Strathcona County Service Agreement Outcomes:

- Enhance and align with the Social Framework
- Minimize duplication and increase efficiencies
- Building community capacity and civic engagement
- Increase accountability for results

Volunteer Strathcona Board of Directors is monitoring activities and is confident we are making good progress with meeting our Service Agreement outcomes – there is an expectation that we will easily surpass expectations.

Applicable Social Framework Outcomes:

- Connectedness and Inclusion (Direct applicability) – Citizens are connected to one another and their individual differences are valued and respected.
- Safety (As a result of Connectedness and Inclusion) – Citizens feel physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally safe.

Volunteer Connector – A Great Investment for the Voluntary Sector

Volunteer Connector is a collaboration of several volunteer centres across the province—initiated through a federal grant to Propellus (Volunteer Calgary) to develop an interactive website database that could be available to agencies and volunteers in many centres across the Province.

Non-profit agencies that are registered with a volunteer centre in the province are able to promote their volunteer opportunities on the site. Nonregistered agencies can use the site, but they will be required to pay \$50 per listing. Agencies can register through Volunteer Strathcona for free at this time.

The advantage to Volunteer Strathcona is the reporting that is associated with our Volunteer Connector relationship. We receive regular reports on traffic and we also have access to surveys and research that is conducted. A recent report "Representing Volunteers in Alberta" provided some excellent data on volunteers in the region.

For example, it is reported that visitors to our page are spending 9 minutes looking at postings in our region, compared to 6:33 on average on the rest of the site. This suggests that volunteers find the results of their searches in the County interesting and relevant to them. This is great news for us – uninteresting and non-relevant volunteer opportunities was the number one reported barrier to volunteering.

Since January we have had 103 positions posted, and viewed and total of 9567 unique times, for a total of 156,262 clicks on the Strathcona County section on Volunteer Connector.

Community Support

National Volunteer Week is celebrated widely throughout the County – with many of the sector hosting events to recognize their volunteers.

Flying the "Thank You Volunteers! Volunteer Strathcona" Flag at Volunteer Plaza.

This year we introduced a new event – Self Care Sunday, dedicated to volunteers in the community. Vendors offering self-help services like hand massage, reiki, laugh therapy and tapping therapy came together in a trade show style information event. For our first event, Volunteer Strathcona is very happy with the results and the attendance.

Sector Support

Our support in this area results in more effective organizations, strengthened individual skills within those organizations and enhanced collaborative efforts. We host a variety of workshops, including an annual Funders Forum that is well attended by community organizations --- especially smaller non-profits that do not have the capacity to make fund raising their priority. In addition for the fall, we are adding time management, more social media, fundraising and the importance of evaluation to the offering.

We are seeing a significant increase in our one-on-one support and referral service. We work directly with Executive Directors or Volunteer Managers providing assistance in many areas – governance, importance of insurance, board/staff relations. If we are not in a position to help, we will find someone who can. We receive a lot of positive feedback from this service.

Leaders of Tomorrow

Our Youth Programs have been highly recognized in the County for several years. In fact, are the envy of many other volunteer centres in the province. Volunteer Strathcona is pleased to be able to continue to offer unique 'one off' volunteer opportunities specific to youth. Teen in Action offers an average of 'once a month' group volunteer opportunities; providing a wide range of experiences for a limited period of time, which some youth find appealing. Some past teen projects included a day at Basically Babies, helping out at the Elks Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre Fundraiser, delivering flyers for the Victim Services Movie night, helping out at the SAFFRON Consent Event. Groups of Teens will be helping out in a big way at the Raven Wood Experience in July.

They benefit in many ways:

- Giving back to their community
- Completing required/mandatory volunteer hours needed for educational purposes, resume builder, reference letters if needed and a chance to meet new people.

School Presentations provide an introduction to Volunteer Strathcona and our role and commitment to youth within the community. Students gain a better understanding of volunteerism and community service. In addition, they learn how to research, access, evaluate and secure volunteer opportunities. At this time, we have presented at 8 different schools. This is an ongoing effort, we expect to meet our target.

We are currently developing a youth governance program where youth will have an opportunity to participate in a board setting and work on a program.

There is considerable emphasis on getting youth involved in non-profit board governance across the province. We have been invited to the table by Alberta Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women to participate in developing a Youth Leadership Strategy.

Vulnerable Sector Support

Three programs delivered for the first time by Volunteer Strathcona. As part of our re-alignment discussions with Family & Community Services, we took on the delivery of three volunteer driven programs.

SnowBusters – was a huge success. We were able to achieve a 100% match between eligible seniors and volunteers. Fifty nine clients were served by 33 volunteers (some volunteers helped out as many as four households). This translated into a total of 449 volunteer hours.

Tax Clinics – available to low income residents. This partnership with the Library and Edmonton's E4C, allowed Volunteer Strathcona to serve 266 residents this spring with 237 volunteer hours spent. This service is especially important to the recipients of the service. Evidence shows that many people living on low-incomes can quickly boost their incomes often as much as 50 percent for families --- IF they have the tools and supports to access all of the government benefits they are entitled to.

LawnBusters – underway. Have not met our targets yet. Looking for additional landscapers to help out.

Drive Happiness – Our role in this relationship is to recruit drivers to provide low cost rides to isolated seniors in the county. Drive Happiness is so pleased with the support they are receiving from Volunteer Strathcona that they are hosting an appreciation event in July in the County.

Linking Generations Grandparent Program – Volunteer Strathcona assists Linking Generations with Volunteer Recruitment and Communication services.

Grassroots Community Support

Sometimes it is just the little things. There are many initiatives that require tackling in this community. Many wonderful non-profits that are cause focussed and whose causes tug at the heart strings of our residents. And while Volunteer Strathcona is not singularly focussed, we do believe that our contribution to this community is valuable and fills a need.

We will rarely turn down a request for help from the community – from hosting a social media campaign to collecting gently used cell phones for A Safe Place, to providing equipment, free of charge, to community groups to facilitate their events, to distributing day old bread from a COBBS bakery, we are willing to jump in and help where we can. We worked with the Race Director of SurvivorFest, providing assistance with volunteer recruitment, event promotion and even reviewed their request for Council Priority Funds.

Our We Care We Share Program saved community groups over \$19,000 last year. This year equipment bookings will likely surpass last year's. These are important dollars that community groups can use for things other than renting equipment at a significant cost.

We have many great stories, but like many non-profits in the community, have not been very good at telling our stories. Through the recent development of an internal evaluation program, we are becoming better at talking about the positive impact we are making in the community.

What Next?

Volunteer Strathcona is looking for new Board members; dedicated community members and members of the business community who can help us to continue to respond to the needs of organizations that support the social needs of our community. Please contact our Board Chair, Mr. Tim Goos by email at tim.goos@gmail.com for more information.