



The Gift of Volunteers

Responding to the Call

Since 2004, I have been privileged to coordinate the volunteers for Fontbonne Ministries. Our volunteers come from all walks of life and most demographics.

Universally, they bring their enthusiasm, desire to help and their passion for what we do. **They have enriched our ministries beyond imagining**, and report that they, too, are enriched by their experiences.

For each of the ministries, we try to build on an individual's strengths and interests, but for some, they wish to broaden their own skill set. Whatever the case, we are happy to look for a match.

The variety of tasks and talents are broad: Providing hospitality in various settings, sharing gifts of creativity, friendly visits, sorting donations, helping with our good food market, and on the list goes.

Regardless of the task, we invite each volunteer to respond to the call to welcome everyone without distinction — and most importantly to do the ordinary with extraordinary care. We are gifted in Fontbonne Ministries with a group of amazing volunteers for whom we are extremely grateful. *Merci!*

Leanne Kloppenborg
Director, Mission & Values and Volunteers

Inspiration and Creativity in Clay

At age 5, Lena attended a **Studio on the Hill** pottery class as one of her Sparks and Girl Guides activities. "I loved it. I kept coming," says Lena, who enjoyed the lessons from Sister Helen Kluge, Ministry Director and Teacher.

Lena adored sculpting gifts for her family: plates for her uncles and aunts, a honey jar for her mother, hockey pucks for her father and so much more.

"I liked how I wasn't just buying something for people — **I was giving them something creative that came from me.**"

At age 13, Lena needed community service hours for high school and began volunteering in Sister Helen's classes for children.

On Fridays, she helps set up brushes, paints, clay and other

supplies, helps retrieve any in-progress projects from storage, and then she makes pottery with and among the students.

"Sometimes, kids in the class might not know how to work with clay," explains Lena, "or they have an image in mind but don't know how to make it, so I get them started and show how even if they make a mistake, it's clay and you can fix it and take what's in your head and make it real."

"Lena's presence and enthusiasm are a gift to the children," says Sister Helen. "I can count on her for absolutely anything in the Studio. In larger classes, she helps me ensure that the students always have someone to help them — not only with supplies and technique, but also in helping them find their inspiration and creativity."

Pictured Above: Sister Helen Kluge and Lena at Studio on the Hill.

Remembering Betsy and Her Gifts

On January 13, 2020, Betsy, a beloved **Mustard Seed** volunteer, passed away.

“I have vivid memories of Betsy serving lunch at the Saturday Drop-In,” recalls Leanne Kloppenborg, Director, Mission & Values and Volunteers. “She’d be in her hairnet and gloves, she’d keep the lunch line moving — and yet, **she was never rushing, always asking each person what they’d like and how they were doing.**”

Betsy would serve, circulate, clean and clear, and Leanne fondly remembers what came next.

“There would always be a group afterwards gathered around a table with her; people would share their trials and successes and



Betsy's warmth and talent for listening are missed at the Saturday Drop-In.

Betsy made it seem like there was nothing more important than listening to each person.”

“She had a gift for being interested and interesting,” says Hanna, the Saturday Drop-In Coordinator.

She notes that Betsy was constantly absorbing new information from books, newspapers and people, a talent Betsy developed as a journalist before starting a second career and studying social work at Ryerson. During her studies, she took a placement position at Mustard Seed.

“She finished her year and kept coming on Saturdays,” says Hanna. “Sometimes, she’d have a weekend tutoring job and be away for some time, but she’d always come back and we were always grateful. She was a treasure and we all miss her.”

Music & Mission with In Good Company

Shortly after opening the door to his home, Sister Roberta Freeman’s client would begin to prepare a cup of espresso over which he related happy moments from his musical family’s past — including fond memories of his wife who had a beautifully operatic voice.

Understanding clients and their experience is a big part of successful volunteering with **In Good Company**. Sister Roberta is one of many who volunteer for this “friendly visiting” ministry.

“We are here for the clients and their needs,” she explains. “It’s important that we listen, remain flexible and follow their wishes.”



Sister Roberta Freeman, CSJ is a friendly visitor with In Good Company.

The gifts that Sister Roberta and her fellow volunteers offer to the isolated individuals with whom they are matched are diverse.

This could entail sharing common interests; helping clients solve jigsaw puzzles or listening to their stories (past and present). No matter the example, these small acts of kindness can mean the world.

But it’s not all one-sided: Volunteers often receive just as much in return, including meeting as a group once a month to network, learn and share.

“**The opportunity to get to know people and experience their courage** in their effort to live their lives is a great example to me as I move forward,” shares Sister Roberta. This melody of goodwill is a common refrain in the ministry.

Doing the ordinary... *with*

Weaving a Tight-Knit Community

Without volunteers, this ministry would not be what it is today: A vibrant community of young adults seeking connection within the Catholic faith. To this end, in 2019, **Faith Connections** volunteers contributed over 300 hours of service.

From assisting with IT/AV to greeting attendees to helping prep for special events, each person is a 'thread' and volunteers bring their talents together with their peers to create a beautiful tapestry.

"For me, it's the diversity of their skills, which they happily apply in service to the community," explains Sabrina Chiefari, Interim Program Director, of the gift of volunteers.

"They genuinely care about their peers and how they're doing



Faith Connections volunteers with Sabrina (at the center).

spiritually, emotionally, mentally and socially," adds Erika Viray, Program Coordinator. "When I think of our volunteers, I think of **a group of people motivated to care for other young adults.**"

Indeed, when asked, ministry volunteers had a variety of reasons for contributing their service.

These include:

- Connecting with God through people
- Giving back to the community and sharing a purpose
- Having the chance to meet other young adults
- Furthering the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph
- Seeing and helping to facilitate young people making connections: "Faith Connections has given me so much and I'd like to continue to give back."

The theme of this newsletter perfectly resonates here. "I think of the act of volunteering as a gift to society, community, each other and to our faith," says Sabrina. It's these actions, however small they might appear, which contribute to the creative, dynamic, spiritual ministry that is Faith Connections.

Sharing Gifts Where They're Needed

For Tina Antonini, retirement doesn't entail sitting at home and watching TV. It means, among other things, volunteering at three different organizations in Toronto — including **Village Mosaic**.

Seven years ago, at a friend's suggestion, Tina first visited Village Mosaic and felt at home right away. As is her nature, she began to help out where needed and was later asked to take on a formal volunteer role at this **ministry for seniors** in Toronto's west-end.

"Volunteering gives me an opportunity to utilize my background and skills," says Tina who worked in human resources and administration during her career.



In retirement, Tina is a dedicated volunteer.

Like all Fontbonne Ministries' volunteers, Tina shares her gifts where they are needed. At Village Mosaic, people assist with myriad tasks including: setting up tables, serving coffee, helping participants with activities, answering phones and greeting patrons at the door.

"It's up to us to **support participants and to encourage positive dialogue,**" explains Tina of her role.

She feels that inclusiveness is important and makes an effort to include new patrons and those with disabilities.

Tina enjoys lending a helping hand as well as chatting with her fellow seniors and listening to their stories. "I'm intrigued by their life histories," she explains.

She still participates in some activities at the ministry as well such as Thursday afternoon card games where she's formed some close friendships.

"I feel blessed to be here," says Tina of her overall experience.

A Truly Unique Home for Women



Roma, Fontbonne Place's former property manager.

Since 2003, Roma has been the property manager for **Fontbonne Place's 18 rent-geared-to-income apartments** for single, older women.

Retiring this year, Roma looks back at her 25 years in building management and finds Fontbonne Place truly unique.

"It's unlike most residences where people live separately and don't always know each other," she explains. "Here, it's very neighbourly: there are activities with Mustard Seed in the same building and **tenants have strong relationships with staff and each other.**"

As Roma handled finances, maintenance and upkeep, she found that the Fontbonne Place community called upon her gift

for connecting with the residents themselves.

"It was my job to collect rent, help with taxes and arrange repairs, but it also became my role to do that and visit the women, listening to them talk about family, health, happiness and challenges, and to let them know they could come to me with anything and I would be there for them."

She notes that for years, Sister Gwen Smith lived on the premises and made residents feel free to approach her for help, advice — or just a kindly voice of support. As a staff member, Roma did the same.

"The Sisters created a place of openness and trust with Fontbonne Place," she says, "and I was happy to be part of it."

Working Together

In thinking about this issue of *Springs of Hope* focusing on Fontbonne Ministries' family of volunteers & contributors and the extraordinary roles they play in all of our programs, I came across this quote from Japanese writer Ryunosaki Satoro:

**Individually, we are one drop.
Together, we are an ocean.**

The six profiles that you've read in these pages are representative of all those who give their time in the service of others. A huge thank you for all they do on our behalf of the Fontbonne Ministries family. We are truly grateful for their contributions.

With their skills, enthusiasm and presence, Fontbonne Ministries volunteers along with our staff make the delivery of our programs and the achievement of our mission possible.

In January, we were joined by our new **Development and Community Relations Officer, Cheryl Denomy**. She is looking forward to meeting many of our volunteers when we next gather to recognize their contributions over the past year.

If you haven't already, please take a minute to visit our revamped website at www.fontbonneministries.ca. We love our new look — and thanks to Vickie McNally, Tristan Smith and Brandon Rideout for leading the project.

Until next time,

Ben Vozzolo
Executive Director



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Fontbonne Ministries, Sisters of St. Joseph, Toronto, offers diverse programs that are welcoming and inclusive. The charity was founded in 2000 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, a community of women who, through their compassionate presence, respond to various needs. Fontbonne Ministries continues, with the Sisters, their mission of reflecting the love of God and neighbour.

The ministries are funded by the Sisters of St. Joseph and individual donations. Thank you for your support!