

Volunteering with a Purpose

The motivation to volunteer varies greatly from one volunteer to another. Within Volunteer Resources, we consider these motivations as we work with Volunteer Supervisors to develop engaging and meaningful volunteer roles.



Christine Patten, an amazing volunteer at Toronto Rehab: University Centre since April 2019, shares her story and motivation to volunteer.

“Previously, my role was as a Director at a global law firm, focused on Business Development and Marketing, and managing a large staff. I had a very bad day that ended up turning into something very rewarding. The bad day was unexpected emergency surgery at Toronto Western due to a massive brain bleed. Good news, I survived! I spent two weeks in the ICU, a week at the hospital and then into inpatient care at Toronto Rehab Institute for another 7 weeks. While I lost everything on that bad day (vision, communication and hearing deficits), I also had the most positive experience during my time at TRI. I knew it was my turn to give back as a volunteer.”

Christine further explained that she knows how incredibly beneficial it is to talk to people while they are in rehab and may not have family or friends able to visit. Having been a patient at TRI, she has the ability to understand and talk about what it feels like in that situation. “Social interaction is the most important component; giving moral support to patients and families. I hope I can provide guidance and support by sharing my story and experience. I know how it feels when a patient and their family’s life has been turned upside down. The shift from one bad day to making a difference for others makes it all worthwhile. This is why I wanted to be involved as a volunteer at TRI.”

Prior to the pandemic, Christine was volunteering in an Inpatient Unit Support volunteer role on the Neuro ABI units at TRI UC. This goal of this volunteer role is to improve quality of life by facilitating integration of newly admitted patients onto the unit, facilitating social interaction with patients, making caregivers feel welcomed and supporting and assisting staff. As we work to rebuild the volunteer program across TRI with our amazing Volunteer Supervisors, Christine is once again returning to this very important volunteer role at TRI UC.

Christine recognizes the impacts she has on patients and staff on the Neuro ABI units but also values the benefit it has on herself. “Volunteering is a double benefit. Not only do I help guide patients and families during a traumatic event but, like being an Olympic athlete, I too am getting higher, faster and stronger with my communication disability known as aphasia. The benefits of volunteering are enormous, inspiring better physical and mental health and communication.”

Outside of her volunteer role, Christine enjoys life to the fullest. “As I am no longer able to work given my brain injury, I continue to ‘practice’ my communication at a Toastmasters program at the Aphasia Institute, a not-for-profit community-based service that focuses on support, education and research.” Christine also loves to read, try new recipes, go for her daily 7km walk and plan her family’s next trip.

Time is a precious commodity; the time that volunteers dedicate to our patients and programs is valuable, appreciated and makes a difference! Christine, thank you for the time that you spend at TRI UC each week making a difference in the lives of our patients and caregivers.