



**Mind:** Our Seniors and Volunteering

**Body:** Taste Buds

**Spirit:** Finding Yourself

## Our Seniors and Volunteering



Nicole Nilsson  
July 26, 1944 -  
October 23, 2016

She lived a life of service—to her family, friends, and community. Over 300 members of her small town attended the Celebration of Life to recognize the love and contribution of amazing woman and dear friend Nicole Nilsson. We were all struck by the sheer range of her service and were in awe of the impact she made during her all-too-short 72 years on this earth! No wallet or chequebook was safe when Nicole came calling to fundraise for one of the many local causes she embraced.

As do other inspirational seniors, Nicole dedicated much of her time to making her community a better place to live. I am sure you can think of others who fit that profile and it may describe you, as well.

Seniors create a vital and sustaining footprint on the landscape of service. It has been suggested that our tax base would collapse under the absolute weight of societal demands if not for the involvement and commitment of those generous individuals.

Indeed, we find volunteering provides a significant economic contribution. It transforms the quality of life for our families, friends, and neighbours and returns many benefits to the giver.

### Economic Impact

- Chief Economist for the Bank of England Mr. Andy Haldane pulled together the economic, private, and social value of volunteering. Referencing the work of the Office for National Statistics, he suggests the economic output resulting from formal volunteering equals about £24 billion for Britain (equivalent to US\$30 billion and CAN\$39.2 billion at the time of this writing). The addition of informal volunteering and infrequent volunteering brings the total to around £50 billion for Britain (equivalent to US\$62.4 billion and CAN\$81.7 billion at the time of this writing.)<sup>1</sup>
- TD Economics published a report in 2012,<sup>2</sup> documenting that in 2010, more than 13.3 million people in Canada volunteered a total of 2.1 billion hours of service. In 2014, the average hourly wage was \$24, establishing a Canadian volunteer economic value of CAN\$50 billion per year!

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## Community Transformation

- Fewer doing more. Although the overall volunteer rate for seniors is lower than that of other age groups, they contribute more hours per year than any other age group.<sup>3</sup>
- In addition to offering counselling, advice, and support to health care services to individuals, seniors have an important role to play with the political and social issues that impact their communities and their efforts can do much to enhance social cohesiveness and community engagement.<sup>4</sup>

## Personal Returns

- Being "in-service" serves us well! Research confirms participating in volunteer activities improves our physical, emotional, cognitive, and brain health.<sup>5</sup>
- Through volunteer service, we can learn new skills, develop broader social support networks, and ultimately confirm our experience of inclusion, relevance, and value.

Our Nicole had the recipe for a life well-lived. Remarkable individuals like her show us the way. We need to provide opportunities for all citizens, especially seniors, to be engaged in their communities, to share their skills and knowledge to influence the direction of our futures, reap the personal rewards of service, and be celebrated for caring enough to do more.

## In Recognition

Nicole was the worthy recipient of the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers awarded by the Governor General of Canada. Her devoted husband Alex Nilsson is a Member of the Order of Canada, bestowed in recognition of his significant service.

<sup>1</sup> "The economics of volunteering, Hiding in plain sight," *The Economist*, (September 12, 2014)  
<sup>2</sup> Craig Alexander and Sonya Gulati, "An Economist's Case For Volunteering," *TD Economics*, (April 23, 2012)  
<sup>3</sup> "Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating," *Statistics Canada* (2010)  
<sup>4,5</sup> Suzanne L. Cook, PhD, and Paula Speevak Sladowski, "Volunteering and Older Adults, Final Report," *Volunteer Canada* (February 2013)

Rhonda Latreille, MBA, CPCA  
 Founder & CEO  
 Age-Friendly Business®

## Body

"Our number of taste buds decrease as we age -- reducing our ability to taste sweet and salty foods. So, instead of reaching for the salt shaker or the sugar bowl, experiment with a variety of sweet or savory herbs and spices."

Source: Age-Friendly Business®, Foundation Course.

## Spirit

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

*Mahatma Gandhi*

