



VOLUNTEERS & SERVICE CLUBS

The Hands & Hearts of Every Community

By Lisa Crandall

By definition a service club is a voluntary non-profit organization where members meet regularly to perform charitable works, either by direct hands-on efforts or by raising money for other organizations. The Legion, The Rotary Club, The Kiwanis, The Lions Club (and Lionesses) are ubiquitous across the country with local chapters in small communities and often multiple chapters in larger communities.

Equally important as these larger power house organizations are the very small very local efforts created by the passions of individual community members. Right here, in our little part of the world in South Grenville, we have an eclectic mix of small groups that all have their hearts and their hands in the right place.



CUPPA

CUPPA stands for Catholic-United-Pentecostal-Presbyterian-Anglican. This is a unique collective of community churches in the Cardinal/Iroquois area that come together to create an annual free turkey dinner to anyone who wants to join in the fun of a huge family style turkey dinner outside the holiday season. The turkeys and the trimmings are donated and the food is prepared and served by local volunteers. This annual event started in 2014 and is held in Cardinal's United Church hall. It happens at the end of February or beginning of March and organizers are already looking forward to the 2020 event.

The Cardinal Youth Center

The Cardinal Youth Center is currently being spearheaded by a pair of young mothers from the Cardinal area, Julie LeBlanc and Laci Temple. As parents they became concerned about the lack of affordable activities for local youth. When the previous incarnation of the Youth Center closed down, they stepped up to run a weekly program, on Thursday evenings from 6:30 until 8PM for kids between the ages of 7 and 12 at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Cardinal. This is a new location to the group which previously operated out of the Cardinal Legion. They offer fresh food snacks and encourage gentle physical activities, and occasionally seasonal crafts. The program runs during the school year and is supported through a grant from the township, donations from local businesses, as well as donations from local individuals.

When it's possible there will be fundraising projects, such as selling hand decorated

cupcakes to help keep the program running. The program starts up again in September and extra hands would be very welcome. It is only for a few hours each week. Additional information about the program can be found on their Facebook Page at Cardinal Youth Centre. Parents are reminded they need to accompany their kids on the first visit to fill out necessary paperwork for registration.



Cardinal Youth Group volunteers taking a breather during Earth Day Clean Up 2019.
Photo © Julie LeBlanc



Carload of cats heading off to the vet.
Photo supplied by TNR

Founded by Cindy Cere in 2017, it started with rescuing a litter of kittens in Spencerville. Now she and her volunteers travel as far afield as Cornwall and Cardinal. She is working with a vet outside the immediate area who specializes in treating rescue cats and each week a carload of 10-15 cats heads off to the vet, driven by volunteers who leave in the early hours of the morning and make the return trip in the afternoon. The food, medicine and supplies are donated or paid for by donations. Foster homes are sometimes needed to house recovering cats and to help abandoned felines get re-adjusted to living with humans. Fundraising happens through Go Fund Me, direct deposit, and are taken at a range of local businesses. Adoptions are arranged online or in person at live events held at Pet Value in Kemptville. TNR helped neuter more than 550 cats in 2018 and has already treated more than 400 in 2019.



The Good Food Box

The Good Food Box has operated in Cardinal since 2014. It is based on the concept of bulk food buying and each month participants

receive fresh produce that comes directly from the wholesaler. This means they get more value for their grocery dollar. Participants pay \$15 in advance each month and in return receive a generous quantity of fresh produce that they are responsible for picking up at a pre-arranged time and location. This program operates under the umbrella of the Salvation Army and exists in communities large and small across Canada. The local chapter is run by a dedicated group of volunteers who keep track of the orders and money, accept delivery of the fresh produce and get it sorted each month, so that participants can come by the Ingredient Centre and pick up their bags of healthy food with a minimum of fuss and bother. There are parallel programs in Prescott and Brockville.



Everybody pitches in to get the produce sorted before participants start arriving to pick up their Good Food Boxes.
Photo supplied by Good Food Box Cardinal

Each of these groups has stepped up to fill important niches in the community and they need ongoing support if they are going to continue to do the work they do. Becoming a volunteer is a win-win-win situation because the organization wins, the community benefits and the volunteer gains as well. It is a great way for newcomers to make connections in a new area, and to fill time if one is recently retired, unemployed, divorced or widowed. The commitment can be just a few hours a week or per month. Learning to contribute to the community also offers young people a chance to learn or improve a wide range of skills as well. In fact, in Ontario, secondary school students must perform 40 hours of community service in order to graduate. Volunteering is good for everybody.

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TNR (Trap, Neuter, Release/Relocate) Stray Cats Project

TNR Stray Cats Project is a team of volunteers who are committing their time and energy to rescuing abandoned and feral cats in the area. The cats are live trapped and then sheltered until they can be taken to the vet to be spayed or neutered and to have any other ailments tended to. Afterwards they have to be nursed and/or fostered until they are ready to be adopted, released back into their original feral community or relocated to an approved barn home.