

Local groups collaborate on volunteer coordination to help most vulnerable through COVID-19

Volunteers identified as critical for frontline agencies to deliver food and medications, to do telephone checks, and more

Wednesday, April 8, 2020; Ottawa — Today, Volunteer Ottawa and the Champlain Community Support Network (CCSN) announced enhanced platforms to recruit and deploy volunteers in response to COVID-19 related needs. Volunteer Ottawa will recruit, screen and train volunteers to meet a diverse range of identified needs across the region while CCSN will seek volunteers to support seniors and adults with disabilities.

The social services sector, local businesses, municipalities and public health authorities have been meeting for weeks at both the United Way East Ontario-led “COVID-19 Community Response Table” and the City of Ottawa-led [Human Needs Task Force](#) to address evolving needs that unfold as a result of COVID-19 and physical distancing measures. Partners at the tables identified a need for a centralized, monitored approach to recruit, train, and deploy volunteers to support vulnerable people across the region.

In response to this need, Volunteer Ottawa is implementing a comprehensive outreach, recruitment, training and deployment strategy with the support of the City of Ottawa, the Ottawa Community Foundation and United Way East Ontario.

“Our community has shown they are ready and willing to lend their expertise and time to help people who need support during this critical time,” said Marie Eveline, Executive Director, Volunteer Ottawa. “We’re grateful to United Way East Ontario, the City of Ottawa, and the Ottawa Community Foundation for collaborating and enabling us to help strategically mobilize volunteers so we can address these needs in a consistent and safe manner.”

“Many people are isolated or have health issues and require assistance getting groceries and necessities and accessing nutritious meals. Some also need telephone check-ins to monitor their health and wellbeing,” said Nathalie Lafrenière, Executive Director of the Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre and a member of Champlain Community Support Network. “By having a central location to manage interested volunteers, we can ensure everyone is properly trained, follows public health guidelines and stays safe throughout their experience.”

“Frontline agencies have told us that, since physical distancing measures came into place, consistently sourcing and training volunteers has become more difficult – especially since many volunteers in our communities are seniors,” said Michael Allen, President and Chief Executive Officer, United Way East Ontario. “This partnership of organizations will help us better manage volunteers and deploy them to support our community’s areas of greatest need.”

"In any crisis, it's in our nature to want to help out wherever we can, to assist those most in need, said Mayor Jim Watson. "But coordinating that help is often one of the most challenging aspects, which is why we're so grateful for the incredible experience and support of not one, but two local organizations - Volunteer Ottawa and Champlain Community Support Network - to help guide the efforts of residents who are being so generous with their time and effort."

Earlier this week, the Champlain Community Support Network also launched a website where seniors can register to get help with grocery and meal delivery, telephone checks, and transportation to medical appointments. Seniors can register at <https://communitysupport.covidresponse.ca>.

In early March, in partnership with Ottawa Public Health and dozens of organizations across the community sector, United Way launched an initiative to help support the most vulnerable in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) affecting our region. This collaboration has enabled local problem solving, prioritization of needs, and collaboration. **To learn more about supporting the initiative, or if you require community service assistance, please visit unitedwayeo.ca/covid19.**

For a list of volunteer opportunities available visit Volunteer Ottawa and CCSN websites:
Volunteer Ottawa - <https://www.volunteerottawa.ca/>
Champlain Community Support Network - <https://communitysupport.covidresponse.ca/volunteer>

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Note that interviews for this initiative will be coordinated via Zoom, Skype or FaceTime to adhere to physical distancing guidelines from public health authorities.

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