

VOLUNTEERING

**APRIL
2024**

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

APRIL 14 - 20

**STUDENT VOICES
SHARING VOLUNTEERING
EXPERIENCES**





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ZIYANG (ZEO) LI

My volunteering journey began as a young settler to this land in 2015. With the support of the Regina Open Door Society, I realized the growing need for community services and the profound impact of non-profit organizations in our society marked those initial years.

Since then, volunteering became not just a choice, but a calling for me. Each volunteering experience taught me invaluable lessons about compassion, cultural exchange, and the unifying force of shared experiences. However, one encounter stands out among the rest—the opportunity to volunteer at a Senior Home. There, I met my first mentor, a Metis elder whose wisdom and resilience left an important mark on my perspective. Despite the traumas of the residential school system, she showed me her compassion and openness towards diverse cultures. Her stories gave me a different facet of this land, prompting a profound shift in my approach to life and work.

ZIYANG (ZEO) LI

Her spirit became my guiding light, fueling my passion to make positive contributions to the community. Inspired by her example, I co-founded the Saskatchewan Chinese Youth Association (SCYA), a non-profit dedicated to empowering Chinese youth and fostering cultural awareness.

In addition to my involvement with SCYA, I served as a Project Officer for the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network – Youth, where I volunteered to engage young people globally in sustainable solutions for our planet's challenges. My role allowed me to contribute to existing community projects and spearhead initiatives aimed at addressing local issues.

Furthermore, my participation in the Youth Advisory Council at Library and Archives Canada provided a platform to contribute fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to the management decisions of an esteemed institution. Through this experience, I collaborated with diverse youth from across Canada, enriching my understanding of our nation's documentary heritage.

ZIYANG (ZEO) LI

As a board member of organizations like Regina Food for Learning and the Regina Public Interest Research (RPIRG), I've been privileged to play a role in initiatives aimed at addressing hunger in schools and promoting community-based research and education.

In every role I've undertaken, whether as a mentor, project officer, or council member, my volunteer experiences have not only shaped my personal growth but have also reaffirmed my commitment to serving others and building a more inclusive and compassionate Society.

ESI MENSIMAH EKWAM

In February 2024, I registered to join the Ambassador program at the University of Regina and got accepted as a Junior Volunteer Ambassador. Volunteer Ambassadors represent the University at both on-campus and off-campus events. We highlight the University's initiatives and inspire students' involvement in campus life, ensuring a smooth transition for new students by providing guidance, answering inquiries, and conducting campus tours. We also partake in the organization and execution of Winter, Spring/Summer, and Fall Orientation programs, assisting with both setup and takedown tasks.

In the just ended Spring Preview, I served as a corridor monitor assisting Parents and their children locate event venues. Witnessing the joy on their faces when they finally found the places they were looking for was truly heartwarming. This simple act of kindness brought home the profound meaning of "help" and community, often overlooked in our busy lives.

My volunteer experiences as well at the Regina Open Door Society (RODS) have taught me that contributing to various initiatives can create a tangible impact within the community.

ESI MENSIMAH EKWAM

Whether organizing events or supporting new families to settle into Regina, each task has been a valuable lesson in teamwork and leadership. Beyond honing my organizational skills, this journey has instilled in me a deep sense of responsibility toward my peers and the broader community.

Buoyed by the confidence I have gained so far in these nurturing environments; I am now contesting for the role of Communications Director in the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School (JSGS) Student Association. Looking ahead, I eagerly anticipate mentoring incoming first-year students, guiding them through their initial year. Witnessing their growth and knowing that I played a part in it will undoubtedly be a profoundly satisfying experience.

Overall, my involvement as a volunteer at the University of Regina and RODS goes beyond mere extracurricular activity; they have been pivotal experiences that have not only shaped my time management skills, but also influenced my core values and goals. I have learnt the significance of service and community engagement - an opportunity I wholeheartedly embrace with gratitude.

LE THI THUY DUONG (ALICE)

The Mosaic Picture of Getting Involved

Volunteering for ESL and Wascana Rehab gave me such an incredible experience.

On the one hand, ESL lets me build connections with my country's people and learn about cultures worldwide. Indeed, I have made many friends while volunteering for ESL. Besides, the best benefit of volunteering for ESL is that it reminds me of the person I used to be, as I've seen many international first-year students coming every year who struggle and are resilient with the language barrier, the winter weather, the lack of emotional support and the culture shock. In a nutshell, ESL reminds me of what me of what my identity is and why I chose my path.

On the other hand, volunteering with Wascana Rehab has allowed me to connect with Canadian culture, stereotypes and people's efforts to understand other cultures. To elaborate, interacting with the long-term care residents of Wascana Rehab provided me with a realistic image of Canadian culture and how resilient people are when they cannot walk or functionally speak.

LE THI THUY DUONG (ALICE)

It breaks many stereotypes I have about Canadians and people with disability and old age. Most importantly, the rehab informed me about the Canadians' effort to make friends and have peace with different cultures and how they approach that. Whenever I interact with the residents, I feel like I'm not alone in adapting to Canada; Canadians are also trying to adapt to our cultures. It's come reciprocity!

Getting involved in both places allowed me to see the mosaic picture of culture. As a result, I have become more knowledgeable about how necessary it is to voice my voice toward the difference, unconscious prejudices and struggles. Ultimately, voluntary work made me feel brighter and better with every new experience.

SAMUEL NII-ADJEI ADJETEY

“Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?’” – Dr. Martin Luther King. These words from the legendary civil rights leader have resonated with me Samuel Nii-Adjei Adjetey, a graduate student currently studying Process Systems Engineering at the University of Regina.

At the age of thirteen, I came across these powerful words and since I have always been a part of the first group of people that John Newbern eloquently mentions – the group that makes things happen.

About a year ago, I joined the University of Regina's Ambassador Program. This journey has been one that has been especially transformative for me and has contributed immensely to the development of my empathy, communication, teamwork and leadership skills. Indeed, being on this transformative journey is one that has provided me with the opportunity to provide other students, members of staff and guests with lollipop moments.

I had my first encounter with the Ambassador program during the Winter 2023 Orientation event. I could not help but notice the selflessness with which some continuing students in bright yellow shirts helped new students during the day's event.

SAMUEL NII-ADJEI ADJETEY

At the event, these enthusiastic and relentless students were willing to assist new students like me with locating faculty-assigned seats, finding classrooms, and ensuring that orientation was memorable. It was here, amidst the flurry of orientation activities, that I truly appreciated Margaret Mead's insight: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world" and hence joined the program.

Over this period, I have had the opportunity to volunteer during orientation events, career and volunteer fairs, open house events, sports, convocations and system implementation activities. One of my most recent assignments was during the Fall Open House event where I had the opportunity to engage with prospective students and their families. While volunteering, I vividly remember my encounter with an 83-year-old grandmother and her two grandchildren. As I guided the family around campus, She mentioned how amazed she was at the degree of selflessness and joy of all the ambassadors she met assisted and led guests around campus.

SAMUEL NII-ADJEI ADJETEY

She shared that this was the third university they were visiting that month and she together with her granddaughters was certain that the University of Regina was the place where they could give back to society and learn to contribute significantly to personal growth and development. This interaction underscored the importance of human connection, a lesson I'll carry with me long after my volunteering days.

The program champions the concept of leadership as one where the leader knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way, as articulated by John C. Maxwell. Drawing on the leadership skills I've developed as an Ambassador, I led the re-branding of Growth 360 Ghana, a non-governmental organization in my home country Ghana. The organization's mission of bridging the educational gap by fostering personal development through mentorship, skills acquisition, and volunteering has reinforced the importance of proactive engagement and the profound impact of volunteering on community building and personal development. This aligns closely with the CESL office's goal through the Ambassador Program to teach students valuable soft skills alongside their academic studies.

SAMUEL NII-ADJEI ADJETEY

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Reflecting on the impact of my service, I have learnt that volunteering not only helps those in immediate need but also builds a strong foundation for a caring community. Each encounter, whether it be guiding nervous students around campus, assisting in a bake sale to contribute towards a humanitarian project or engaging in heartfelt conversations with people like the 83 year old grandmother, I can indeed attest to the fact that volunteering has not only changed the lives of those I have served, but volunteering has also changed me.

TAYLOR DZIKOWSKI

Area of study: 5th year Honours student in Biochemistry

Why I started volunteering: I started volunteering because I wanted to give back to the UofR for providing me with amazing opportunities, help others, and grow into a leader on campus.

Skills that I have developed: Leadership skills, courage to meet new people and try new activities, and learning from others by sharing experiences.

Advice for other students: Take pride in helping others, become a leader, seize every opportunity that becomes available in university, and have fun!

Five years ago when I began my journey at the University of Regina, I was really impressed with how welcoming and knowledgeable UofR Ambassadors were, so I wanted to join the Ambassador program once I felt settled with my first year classes. Unfortunately, when I joined the Ambassador volunteering program, the Covid-19 pandemic shut down everything on campus. The Covid-19 pandemic was really isolating and shut down a lot of opportunities to interact with other students and be involved on campus.

TAYLOR DZIKOWSKI

I did not know many students in my classes, which made university courses seem strange and not very memorable. Once the University of Regina started allowing students back onto campus for in-person classes, I rejoined the UofR Ambassador volunteer program to help revitalize a lot of the fun on-campus activities that were lost during the pandemic.

Volunteering for on-campus events was really important to me because I wanted to give back to the University of Regina for welcoming me and providing me with so many amazing opportunities. I really enjoy meeting new people and helping contribute to fun activities for everyone to partake in.

One of my favourite volunteering experiences on campus is orientation every year for first year students. At orientation I always try to help first-year students feel welcome, and I encourage them to be involved on campus, volunteer, and partake in as many activities as they want. I also try to inspire first-year students to partake in some of the opportunities that I was fortunate to partake in during my academic journey, such as pursuing Co-op job opportunities or pre-professional programs at Luther College

TAYLOR DZIKOWSKI

Another volunteering experience that resonates with me is first-year move-in every year. First-year move-in is always a lot of work, however it is really amazing to help guide first-years to their new homes and make them feel welcome. It is also inspiring for us Ambassadors to work alongside Residence Services to ensure that move-in is smooth and swift every year, as well as to be able to help so many first-year students in such a short amount of time.

Whether I am at a volunteering event or interacting with my classmates, I always share experiences from my university journey to help inspire others to be involved as well as inspire others to enjoy science as much as I do. I often share my experiences of being an Honours student in Biochemistry, and encourage others to go for an Honours as well. I am really passionate about finding ways to utilize science to improve standards of living and medicine for everyone. Now that my journey at the UofR is over, I hope to continue finding ways to give back to my community as I move on to a Master's in cancer research.

CLINTON OBIAKOR

Volunteering has always been a strong part of my on-campus experience since I began my study at the University of Regina. Aside giving me a meaningful way to use my free time effectively it has enabled me make certain connection that have been valuable to my overall university experience.

I started my volunteer journey as a UR Ambassador. As an ambassador, I was one of the faces of the University of Regina as such, I was the first contact of many outsiders and future students to this prestigious citadel of learning. I quickly grew in ranks to the Senior Ambassador Position. Along with it came more responsibilities but I proved that I was up to the task as shown by my recent awards and certificates at the end of the volunteer year. I did apply to become a leader Ambassador but, I didn't get in. I was a little dissapointed but I just felt that maybe, there were more noteworthy candidates than myself. As an ambassador I attended so many events, and I got the chance to put myself out there and gain lots of wonderful experiences. I also developed my public speaking skills as I gave regular on-campus tours to students. I also learnt a lot from their perspectives and it really helped shape the way I think.

CLINTON OBIAKOR

While still carrying out my Ambassador duties, I joined the International Peer Advisor Program affiliated with University of Regina International office.

As Ambassadors were to domestic students: Peer Advisors were to International students. The advisor program gave me the opportunity to work with and engage my fellow international students at the University and truly learn to be a better version of myself. The activities of the both program were similar and sometimes overlapping, hence it was easier to manage both programs. They also both gave me the opportunity to make connections that will be valuable to my study in general.

Most of my volunteer work has been centred on campus as I also participate the URSU Leader program and I had stints at the RPIRG Garden. I am looking to expand my volunteer skills off campus. It doesn't matter where you volunteer or the number of hours you do, what really matters is putting your mind and heart in whatever you do.

JESSICA SINGH

My name is Jessica Singh, and I'm a first-year student pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer science at the University of Regina. Since arriving here as an international student in January, I've been overwhelmed by the warmth and support from both the university community and my local area. Inspired by this, my main goal was to start volunteering for various activities as soon as possible. Volunteering not only makes me feel like a better person at the end of the day but also expands my network and opens doors to potential opportunities in the future.

My first volunteering experience was at the Regina Public Library, where I assisted with administrative tasks. I applied for this role because it required proficiency in computer software, which excited me as I wanted to apply what I was learning in a real-world context. Throughout this journey, I developed several skills such as communication, patience, and adaptability. I learned how to handle hectic situations calmly and tailor my services to accommodate others' convenience.

JESSICA SINGH

Of course, Volunteering at the library also came with its share of challenges. Libraries serve a diverse community with varying needs and interests, making it challenging to cater to everyone's preferences and requirements. To overcome this, I took a personalized approach by listening to patrons and understanding their specific needs. I offered a variety of programs and services to cater to different demographics and collaborated with library staff to ensure inclusivity and accessibility. Also, balancing volunteering with other responsibilities such as work or school was also tricky at times. I struggled to find enough time to commit consistently, so now I have started setting realistic expectations and establish a schedule that works for me. Communicating my availability to library staff helps them plan accordingly.

I love gaining such valuable experiences, which is why I recently joined the University's Ambassador program. This role not only provides me with more opportunities to volunteer but also allows me to help many more students like myself feel comfortable and welcomed on campus. Whether it's gathering funds for underprivileged sections of society or simply distributing free cookies around campus, I'm always eager to contribute my part to society.

JESSICA SINGH

My advice to other students considering volunteering is to find something that aligns with your interests and passions. Whether it's tutoring, environmental conservation, or community service, choose something you're genuinely passionate about. Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and try new things. Volunteering is a great way to learn and grow both personally and professionally.

HUI XU

Volunteerism: A Personal Journey of Connection

My journey into volunteerism at the University of Regina began with an application to become an International Peer Advisor (IPA) with UR International. As a student from China experiencing the challenges of navigating a new country and educational system, I understood the importance of having someone to turn to during difficult times. Inspired by the support I received, I felt compelled to give back to the community that had welcomed me.

Becoming an IPA was a turning point for me. Before that, I took most of my courses online, did not meet with many students, and rarely went to the campus, which was a strange place for me. As an IPA, facilitating orientation events, leading campus tours, and providing support to fellow students, I was able to build meaningful connections within the university community.

In addition to my role as an IPA, I also volunteered with the Regina Public Interest Research Group (RPIRG) last summer, where I had the opportunity to work in the Green Patch Garden.

HUI XU

Engaging in physical activity, growing vegetables, and delivering produce to the community fridge provided a welcome respite from the demands of academic life. It was a therapeutic experience that offered a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction.

Reflecting on these experiences, I realize that while my initial intention was to give back to the community, I ended up gaining so much more in return. I acquired valuable skills, met diverse individuals, and formed lasting friendships. Most importantly, I felt a sense of belonging and connection to the community.

Volunteering has taught me the profound impact that individuals can have when they come together to support one another. It has not only shaped my perspective on community and connection but also helped me recognize the significance of giving back and making a positive difference in the world around us.