



# Volunteering is valuable and enriching

*Re: Volunteer work no help in job search, Dec. 14*

I am compelled to respond to the Soundoff article by Tony Amar in which he claims that “volunteer experience counts for nothing in the world of careers.”

In 2004 alone, British Columbians contributed 314 million volunteer hours, an amount equal to 160,000 full-time jobs. The number of volunteers in this province and the country overall has been steadily on the increase over the past 20 years. B.C.'s volunteers mirror the diversity of our province and include a great number of youth, senior citizens and new Canadians, representing a broad range of age groups, income levels and other demographics. It is estimated that at least a quarter of British Columbians are volunteers. These figures make it evident that volunteering is an important part of the lives of many residents.

Volunteer experience can provide valuable skills helpful in build-

By MICHAEL MCCOY

ing experience for paid work. Many employers look for a balance of volunteer experience and community service, paid work and education on a resume; at least some volunteer experience is expected for admittance to many post-secondary educational institutions, and is mandatory for entrance to study law or medicine. For many people, volunteering offers the opportunity to explore different career paths, and opens doors for exciting and rewarding work opportunities. The non-profit sector, which depends to a great extent on the donated work hours of volunteers, is a rapidly growing part of the Canadian economy.

More importantly, volunteer work enriches our personal lives by shaping our understanding of the world and instilling in us a sense of solidarity and giving. Supporting a culture of volunteerism transforms

our society, improving quality of life for both the giver and the receiver, changing attitudes, challenging stereotypes and building a better British Columbia. Volunteerism is an integral part of the fabric of our communities and a fundamental part of the Canadian identity.

Amar has evidently made a significant contribution to this identity in the many years he has given to international volunteer work — a contribution he should be proud of.

Volunteer centres in communities throughout the province can help potential volunteers meet both their personal and career objectives by matching an individual with an appropriate volunteer opportunity in a broad range of sectors and organizations. For information on volunteering or to find volunteer opportunities in your community, please visit [www.volunteerbc.bc.ca](http://www.volunteerbc.bc.ca)

*Michael McCoy is president of Volunteer BC.*

## TUESDAY IN ISSUES & IDEAS

It's Tax Season: Get hold of the calculator, the shoebox, the accountant — and the Aspirin, columnist **Dianne Rinehart** suggests.