



# Reflections



## Message from the Editor

Many retirees see VOLUNTEERING as a great way to replace many of the benefits of working and as a way to give back to society. In this edition, we explore this option and provide lots of practical advice about how to become a volunteer when you retire.

Jim Nininger, former CEO of the Conference Board of Canada, offers you **Lesson #2** of his Six Lessons—*Get a Life While You are Still Working*—that emerged from his study of people who have experienced retirement. If you are a workaholic and don't have a lot of outside interests, you really need to read this article.

*Nancy Conroy, Editor  
(Nancy Conroy, President of The Conroy Group Inc. is creator of LifeScape, a web-based retirement planning tool.)*

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## The Experts Speak..... Volunteering: Giving and Receiving

Erik Erikson had a theory that in later life adults have a desire to give back to society and to their community; he called it generativity. We know that some individuals behave with generosity throughout their lives. They are not strangers to the world of volunteerism. However, many mid-life workers are running flat out just trying to keep up with work and family obligations and don't have the time or energy for giving back. For these individuals, the desire to give back comes into full bloom once they retire.

So....how do you become a volunteer? How do you choose which organization to work for? What can you expect? And what are the benefits of volunteering? This article explores the answer to these questions and identifies the resources available to you to pursue your desire to become a volunteer.

### Starting the Process

Canada has approximately 161,000 incorporated nonprofit organizations and registered charities! So where do you start? Well, a little research might help. There are a couple of very good web sites that will give

you a good general idea about becoming a volunteer. Check out **Volunteer Canada's** web site ([www.volunteer.ca/index-eng.php](http://www.volunteer.ca/index-eng.php)) for an overview. It has a very helpful set of questions that will help you to identify what kind of volunteering you want to do. Being able to answer these questions will make it easier to narrow down your options.

Interested in international volunteer opportunities? The site has information on this, too. Also, this web site could be helpful to you if you plan to relocate when you retire as Volunteer Canada has many Volunteer Centres across Canada which identify specific volunteer opportunities. Unfortunately, Ottawa doesn't seem to be listed as having a centre.

### Choosing Where to Volunteer

Not to worry. Ottawa has a couple of great sources of volunteer information. Start with the **City of Ottawa's** web site ([www.ottawa.ca/city\\_services/volunteerservices/index\\_en.shtml](http://www.ottawa.ca/city_services/volunteerservices/index_en.shtml)); it's got a great section on volunteering. They list

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## Jim Nininger's Six Lessons

### Lesson #2: Get a Life While You're Working

A number of years ago I attended a course at the Centre for Creative Leadership in Colorado Springs. On our last evening, our group, all senior executives and CEOs, were each given a button marked with four quadrants. We were told we'd learn our final course lesson, from the button, in the morning.

The next day we were told that the round button could be viewed as a "circle of life". The four quadrants represented parts of our lives – our work, our family and friends, our community, ourselves. It was a reminder about keeping life in balance. And I'll never forget what happened next.

We started talking about what balance meant to us, how hard it was to get, and keep. Then one of our group, a senior American executive, a flat-out Type A workaholic, broke into tears. He told us that just before coming to the week-long course, he'd had a startling conversation with his teenaged son. The boy reminded him he was home for only one more year before heading off to college. "The other 17 years haven't been that great, Dad, so we've got one more year to make it up."

A wake up call indeed. Most of

us don't need a heartwrenching moment with a child to know we need more balance in our lives. Work-life balance has been a big issue for several years now and with good reason. One large-scale recent study showed how dramatically we've increased our time at work. In 1991 one out of ten people spent 50 or more hours a week at work. In 2001, that figure jumped to one out of four. Up to 70 percent of people working at the managerial level regularly do unpaid work at home. The toll this lifestyle takes on health and families is well understood.

In my research on retirement, I found that most senior executives felt they lacked balance. "My company owned me body and soul, 24/7. It was brutal", said one former executive, echoing a not unfamiliar sentiment.

Well, shouldn't retirement itself bring that long sought-for balance? The answer is maybe.

You can't turn around a lifetime of habits and behaviour overnight. If you've never been involved in anything outside your job, never had hobbies, never pursued personal interests, these things won't automatically materialize in your life when you leave the

workplace.

The people I've interviewed for my research on retirement transitions agree that the sooner you start practicing, the better. Get a life sooner rather than later.

Of course, this is not to say that you can't learn new skills and develop new interests later in life. But you have to be emotionally and psychologically predisposed to accepting new and various interests into your life. Hobbies and volunteer opportunities don't just pop up on cue; these things need to be nurtured through time and networking.

Here are some other suggestions that come out of the research. Try working at a different pace. Experience what's it like to ease back. For example, if your work situation allows it, why not try a four-day work week? However you do it, the point is to begin the mental adjustment before you retire.

Another bit of advice that crops up regularly is to take a break. Don't ignore the healthful benefits of annual vacations. How seductive it is to forego that vacation in the belief we are

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## Six Lessons

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desperately needed on the job. The truth, of course, is that the job and the organization will get along just fine when you retire. So don't cheat yourself of that important downtime now.

One strategy some people use to get themselves in balance is to work with a lifestyle coach. A good coach can help you get a perspective on yourself. And that's what my Circle of Life button does, too. It's a tool for examining your life, looking at yourself and your priorities. Where am I putting my time and energy? Do I need some adjustments? People who retire successfully say they know themselves. Taking stock is one way of achieving that. You do a regular medical and dental check-up, right? Why not a regular work/life-balance check-up? Making an effort to put balance in your life now could make a big difference in your adaptation to retirement when it comes.

Stay tuned for Lesson #3 – *Be prepared for leaving – it happens sooner than later.*

## Volunteering

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several organizations that are always looking for volunteers. For example, if you love the theatre, then volunteer to help with CentrepoinTE Theatre's productions. Love to garden but you live in a condo? Organize a group to Adopt-a-Park or Roadway. Passionate about literacy, reading, books? Then volunteer with the Ottawa Public Library. There is something for everyone.

Another great source of ideas, with access to specific opportunities, is **Volunteer Ottawa**, a well-established non-profit organization that assists individuals in finding the appropriate volunteer job. If you don't know what you want to do, their web site ([www.volunteerottawa.ca/English/Default.asp](http://www.volunteerottawa.ca/English/Default.asp)) has a super tool called Perfect Fit which you can use to both identify and find the best choices for you. If you already have a good idea of what you want to do, you can do a search on their extensive database to zero in on specific volunteer opportunities. Volunteer Ottawa even hosts a conference for volunteers, taking place in November, 2005. Stay tuned for more info on this in the next newsletter.

Your best bet is to identify what you

love to do, what you are good at, and what motivates you and then use this information to narrow your choices.

## Expectations and Reality

If you have never been a volunteer before, you may find that there are a few surprises waiting for you. Some volunteer organizations are looking for very specific types of individuals and they may feel you are not a fit. Some volunteer boards interview several individuals who are interested in the same board position; you might be interviewed and then not get the job! The volunteer environment you find yourself in may be very different than the public service environment you are used to. Your best bet is to check out your options BEFORE you retire so that you can find the organization that is your best fit.

## The Benefits

There is no question that being an active volunteer can be very rewarding. Your volunteer experience will provide many of the benefits you experienced at work such as social contact, learning, feeling productive, challenges, friendships, routine, feeling needed and many more. According to [volunteeringandgiving.ca](http://volunteeringandgiving.ca), volunteers report enhancement of their

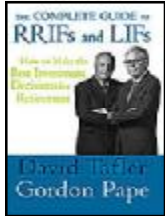
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**“Be ready when opportunity comes...  
Luck is the time when preparation  
and opportunity meet.”  
Pierre Elliott Trudeau**



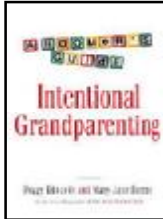
## Resources Reviewed



### The Complete Guide to RRIFs and LIFs: How to Make the Best Investment Decisions for Retirement.

2003. David Tafler & Gordon Pape.

These knowledgeable authors provide great advice on how to move from saving your money to spending it, particularly as it relates to managing Registered Retirement Income Funds (RRIFs) and Life Income Funds (LIF).



### Intentional Grandparenting: A Boomer's Guide. 2005. Peggy Edwards & Mary Jane Stern.

A brand new release, this book will help anyone who wants to have a positive relationship with their grandchildren. The advice covers the gamut from what to do with grandchildren to how to maintain a good relationship with their parents. It is full of great ideas about how you can be the best grandparent possible.

## Volunteering

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interpersonal, communication, technical and organizational skills and they gain knowledge as they participate in their chosen area of endeavour. Volunteering does involve commitment but if you decide you have made a mistake or you want a change, then you can quit and move on to another volunteer opportunity.

You have developed amazing skills working in a large organization and the volunteer sector could benefit significantly from them. Take some time before you retire to do a little research, explore your options, try a few of them out, and be well prepared to launch your volunteer career once you retire.



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### Upcoming Seminars

#### Upcoming Three Day English Seminars

2005:	Sep 7-9	Oct 5-7	Oct 19-21	Oct 26-28
	Nov 16-18	Nov 23-25	Nov 30-Dec 2	Dec 7-9
2006:	Jan 11-13	Feb 15-17	Mar 8-10	Mar 15-17

#### Upcoming Two Day English Seminars for Executives

2005:	Sep 12-13	Nov 7-8
2006:	Feb 13-14	

*Contact the Retirement Planning Institute for more information.*