



# DID YOU KNOW?

AN INFORMATION SHEET FOR ST. JOHN AMBULANCE MEMBERS

**DID YOU KNOW** that since 1997, the percentage of people volunteering across the country has dropped approximately 5%? However, more than one quarter of our population is still giving their time, energy and talents to charitable and nonprofit organizations?

### **Why is there a drop in Volunteerism?**

While the average annual number of hours contributed by each volunteer grew from 149 hours in 1997 to 162 hours in 2000 (a 9% increase), there remains a decrease in the total number of volunteers. Even though one in three Canadians volunteer, less than 10% do three-quarters of the work.

The largest percentage of responses in the most recent study cited “lack of time” as the main reason for not volunteering; followed by (a) unwillingness to make a year-round commitment; (b) already made their contribution to volunteering; and (c) giving money instead of time.

### **Who is Volunteering?**

The highest volunteer rates were among youth aged 15 to 24 and adults aged 35 to 54. The most noticeable decline in volunteer rates was among 35-44 year-olds. The amount of time spent volunteering tends to increase with age, from a low of 130 hours for 15-24 year-olds to a high of 269 hours among those over 65.

### **Where are the volunteers?**

Geographically research shows the largest decline in volunteers was found in Ontario and British Columbia. Saskatchewan continues to have the highest volunteer rate and Quebec the lowest.

### **What can we do to increase our volunteer base?**

The dynamics of recruiting have drastically changed thus encouraging us to concentrate on new sources such as the following:

1. Young people volunteer to gain work-related skills
2. New Canadians volunteer to develop work experience and to practice language skills
3. More persons with disabilities view volunteering as a meaningful way to participate in community life.
4. Mandatory volunteer programs through, Community Service Orders and school mandated community work programs have created a new category of volunteers. Given the lack of choice for these people, they are often referred to as being “voluntold” to participate.
5. Corporate volunteer programs are increasing in popularity
6. Family volunteering is another new growth market
7. Short-term workers – *episodic volunteering* (volunteering for a short period of time, usually not more than 3-4 months in duration or event-specific participation).

Stay tuned, upcoming Did You Know’s will expand on the future role of a nonprofit organization and how it can deal with the changing trends in volunteerism. See August 2002 “Recruiting Families” and May 2003 “Virtual Volunteering” for more related information.

Research Sources: Volunteer Canada ([www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca)), Charity Village ([www.charityvillage.com](http://www.charityvillage.com)); and e-Volunteerism ([www.e-volunteerism.com](http://www.e-volunteerism.com))