



For immediate release — Monday, April 8, 2019

U of L recognizes volunteer contributions for National Volunteer Week

Raising the National Volunteer Week flag gives the University of Lethbridge the opportunity to thank the students, staff and alumni who volunteer their time not only to ensure the success of many U of L events and programs, but also to help organizations in the broader community.

Since 2013, the U of L has partnered with Volunteer Lethbridge to encourage volunteerism on campus. UVolunteer, which is administered by the School of Liberal Education, employs a cooperative education student each year to inform students and engage them with volunteer opportunities in the community.

“One of the four pillars of liberal education is community and civic engagement. We encourage students to be involved in their communities as volunteers, participants and changemakers,” says Dr. Shelly Wismath, dean of the School of Liberal Education.

Students are picking up on that message. From the start of the semester last September until the end of February, UVolunteer had more than 300 new student registrations and those students contributed nearly 2,200 hours of their time. Their contributions were worth more than \$50,000 to the local economy. They were matched with diverse organizations ranging from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lethbridge to the United Way.

This year’s UVolunteer program coordinator is Paige Hutchinson, a fourth-year anthropology student.

“Every year our numbers for the UVolunteer program are growing; more students are signing up and they’re recording more hours,” says Hutchinson. “In my opinion, students are volunteering so much more than what’s being recorded. Often, students don’t know what they’re doing is volunteering. They’re just doing it because they enjoy it or want to help out.”

The benefits of volunteering extend to both the organization and the volunteer, Hutchinson says. Local non-profit organizations are behind a host of services that benefit the citizens of Lethbridge and they couldn’t do their work without volunteers. Volunteers get the chance to make a difference, gain experience, build connections and maybe even find full-time work

opportunities. Typically, they volunteer because they want to, not because they want acknowledgement.

“A lot of volunteers go unrecognized. Their efforts aren’t always noticed by the general public,” says Hutchinson. “I think it’s awesome there is National Volunteer Week and that so many people participate.”

Alumni also play an active role in volunteering; in 2018, 650 alumni gave their time to the U of L through special events and programs, creating connections with the University and the larger community. Their involvement highlights the U of L’s Be a Bright Light campaign, which is part of the larger Shine campaign to increase engagement opportunities for alumni and community members and raise \$100 million to propel the entire region forward.

As part of National Volunteer Week, Volunteer Lethbridge will unveil the winners of the Volunteer Excellence and Volunteer Recognition awards on Wednesday, April 10 at the Leaders of Tomorrow Award Gala.

This news release can be found online at [National Volunteer Week](#).

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