

## Designing a Volunteer Position

Source: The Stop Community Food Centre

*A well-defined volunteer position will benefit both the volunteers for a particular program area and the person coordinating it. This document describes the thinking that goes into designing a volunteer position; including shift length, task lists, assistance, supervision and working with other volunteers.*

Volunteer positions at The Stop are designed so that they provide:

- 2 to 4 hour shifts;
- a clearly defined task list;
- a reasonable work load and appropriately sized team to complete the tasks;
- a supervisor to provide support and direction; and,
- other volunteers to share the work experience with.

### Length of time

Most of our jobs are designed to be 4 hour shifts. Attendance is typically once a week. If a longer period of time must be covered by volunteers, break the volunteer position into two shorter shifts.

### Clear task list

Consider the following points when designing a task list:

- List all of the things that the volunteer is expected to do. If the list seems too long introduce a second volunteer job with different tasks.
- Ask yourself, is this a worthwhile job to have? Is it enough for someone to commit to and return to on a weekly basis? Where does the job satisfaction lie?

### Reasonable workload and assistance

Consider how many people you will need to complete the tasks that you have. A volunteer is discouraged by not enough work and equally by too much work. Save projects for those days when there is not enough regular work in order to keep the volunteers busy. Ease the workload on busy days by calling in extra support or reducing your expectations for that day (without impinging on the program requirements).

### A supervisor

Even experienced volunteers need to have a staff person on call in case they have a question, or simply to acknowledge their hard work. This demonstrates that we care about what they are doing. A



supervisor is appreciated more if they share in the tasks that need to be done (even if just a little). Don't just order volunteers around.

### **Other volunteers**

Some people like to work alone, but most of us gain satisfaction from the companionship of our colleagues. Much can be learnt about dealing with people who are different from ourselves and working as a team. Design volunteer positions so that the volunteer has other volunteers around (even if they are not doing the same job) so that they can enjoy these benefits. When possible, arrange for time for a shared sit-down for a snack, beverage or meal to provide for social opportunities for volunteers.