

ASCEND TALKS: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Monthly Inspiration:

"We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own. - Cesar Chavez, American Civil Rights Activist

While it's easy to simply plan our own paths and ignore what's happening around us, a necessary part of a community is giving back. Community engagement stems from creating an initiative and partnering with the community from the beginning to tackle community issues. Community engagement increases community cohesion and allows for the community to have ownership over the outcomes that will ultimately impact them.

Useful Resources to Getting Involved in Your Community

- Volunteer Canada- "Volunteer Canada is a registered charity, providing national leadership and expertise on volunteerism to increase the participation, equality and diversity of volunteer experiences"
- Apply for a government grant to start a personalized initiative for something you believe in
- Become a Youth Peer Mentor at Volunteer Toronto's Youth Assisting Youth program. The charity is dedicated to aiding at-risk newcomer children and youth by pairing them with youth mentors.
- "Canada Service Corps gives young Canadians the chance to participate in meaningful volunteer service projects that have positive impacts in communities across Canada. Not-for-profit organizations across Canada offer service projects in different communities, and based on different themes, like climate and environment, or building democracy."



iAscend Member Spotlight

Valerie Lau - Grade 12 Student at the Cardinal Carter Academy for the Arts

A little bit about the writer!

Hi everyone! My name is Valerie Lau and I am a grade 12 student at the Cardinal Carter Academy for the Arts. Throughout high school, I actively participated in volunteer activities such as performing for charity events, assisting at my local hospital, and peer tutoring students. I am very passionate about nutrition and health as well as dance, which are both fields I would like to pursue in post-secondary.

Community engagement heavily relies on in-person activities, however, with COVID-19 and the lack of social events, getting involved might look different now. How did you adapt to the changing times especially with starting your own fundraising campaign?

During the pandemic, I decided to revive an old hobby of hand-making bracelets. Initially, I made them with the intention of selling them to my friends. However, as time went on, I realized that the pandemic had an adverse impact to our community. I was determined and assertive to help out the people who are less fortunate during these unprecedented times. I then decided to establish a campaign where I sell my handmade bracelets to raise funds towards Sunnybrook Hospital's COVID-19 research, treatment, and vaccines.

What motivated you to become involved in your community? Were there any inequalities or disparities that you saw first handed in your community that needed to be addressed?

When I was really young, I started volunteering and performing for charity organizations, cultural/religious galas, and other events. Looking back, there were never really any inequalities or disparities that I encountered when volunteering in my community. In fact, I found that these organizations brought cultures and people of different backgrounds together. Participating in these performances allowed me to take pride in my heritage and share my culture through performing arts such as Cantonese Opera and Chinese dance.



What are your goals for attaining extracurricular opportunities in the near future? Are there any specific areas that you would like to get involved with?

In my opinion, having a balance between academics and extracurriculars is crucial. I would like to continue to take part in dance during university, whether it be on campus or outside of it. As a dancer, it is crucial to fuel your body properly, and most of us are cautious about what we consume. I have developed an interest in analyzing the nutrition of food, the diets of various cultures, and promoting healthy lifestyles. I enjoy experimenting with recipes that are delicious and beneficial for our health.

**Thanks for writing in Valerie.
Do you have any parting words
for our readers?**

Feel free to DM me on Instagram @v.dancerxl_ (personal), or @the_valued if you are interested in donating to my campaign! You can also email me at valerielau0507@hotmail.com if you would like to stay in touch with me!



Virtual volunteering opportunities due to the pandemic are in demand now more than ever. Here is a website that is a platform for all COVID-19 initiatives in Canada.

Interested in becoming a writer for AscendTalks? It's a great opportunity to have your work published on our website and newsletter.

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