

Priceless Giving

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Back in December I reflected on some of the best gifts we have given and received – gifts for our community. During the holiday season, these gifts usually take the form of financial donations to local, national or international not-for-profit and charity organizations, who are trying to make our community and our world a more livable place. Now, as spring approaches, there are even more valuable opportunities to give to worthy causes, and this time, it won't cost you a penny.

As you may have noticed the ads in the Golden Star, this is Annual General Meeting season. Annual General Meetings (AGMs) are just that, the one time each year (hence *Annual*) that many non-profit organizations present their accomplishments and reach out to the public for ideas, support and new members. Some groups can see as many as several hundred community members attend (thus *General*). Other smaller groups may not see more than ten. The attendance at these *Meetings* provides a good sense of the health and relevance of an organization's work in the community.

An AGM provides an opportunity for the community to learn about the accomplishments and challenges of local not-for-profits. This meeting is also the time when some long serving board members retire while new members are nominated and elected to take their place. This is a necessary rejuvenation process that keeps volunteer boards fresh and new ideas flowing.

Golden and Area A is a very diverse and giving community, with a high level of volunteer participation through over 100 organizations. Volunteering does not cost any money and does not have to be a daily job. There are opportunities to become part of non-profit organizations with a 1 to 3 year term commitment as a board member, a committee member or other volunteer. While some citizens are involved with many boards, others, equally able, have not taken advantage of the hundreds of opportunities outside their door. Those that are new to the community, underemployed or retired may find this is the lift that they need. Everyone brings a different perspective to the table, which is sure to enrich any organization.

For those who have experience with a strong board, look for opportunities to apply your knowledge and skills to another board in greater need. Fresh ideas, parallel experience and passion for a new cause will reinvigorate both you and the new group you're working with. Rather than leaving a hole with your departure, think of it as a chance for your organization to

engage a new member. And, if later you choose to return to your original organization, you will come back as a stronger and smarter volunteer.

While financial donations to not-for-profit organizations are easier to make in good economic times, it is the donation of one's time that will help our community flourish. And although priceless, a gift of time is a donation everyone can make.

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