



Currently, I am reading a book by Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice "Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing". In the introduction, it quotes a Rwandan proverb which states "To go fast, walk alone. To go far, walk together." As I ponder the quote, I realized that this quote is very beneficial for The Lighthouse. It helps me realize that to maximize how many people we help, we need to work together.

The Lighthouse relies on staff, volunteers, and donors to accomplish its work. This newsletter shows the importance of volunteers and how they

help the various programs at The Lighthouse. The staff does the planning and visioning yet they need volunteers to help implement the work. We recognize the importance volunteers play in our day to day activities, and know we would not get far without them.

Often times we don't thank our volunteers enough. With this newsletter, we want to acknowledge the importance of this role and thank everyone who has volunteered at The Lighthouse over our 44 year history. Your work was and is critical to our survival and success.

Along with our volunteers, we also acknowledge our donors – the many who give to support this ministry. We are thankful for everyone who has ever given a donation to support our work, whether large or small. Many clients thank The Lighthouse for the assistance they receive and we want to let you know the important role you have played over the years. Without you, The Lighthouse would not be what it is today a beacon of hope for many in need.

As staff, volunteers and donors, *let's go far, by walking together!* Our Creator and God continues to work through The Lighthouse in amazing and life changing ways. Thank you for being part of this.



Design by: Sann Medeiros

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# The LIGHTHOUSE

Helping People | Changing Lives

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## Celebrating Our Volunteers



Alex Chan [29 years]

#### How and when did you get started volunteering at The Lighthouse?

Rita Wong [the Chinese Counselor and Program Coordinator at The Lighthouse] and I attended the same church back in the 1980s. The Lighthouse tax clinic (which still exists today) started in 1982. In 1983, Rita invited me to help, and that

was the beginning of my 29 year journey as a volunteer there.

My early years with The Lighthouse, were good exposure to all the types of clients The Lighthouse served and it was then that I started learning about the diverse and deep needs of the community.

#### What type of volunteer work have you done for The Lighthouse?

Since 1983 Rita has asked me to help out on various occasions, programs and outreach events including. Some of these volunteer tasks have included: picnics, summer camps, Christmas celebrations, food drives, retirement home visits, The Pot Luck International Dinner (now called the Annual Dinner and Silent Auction), talks and seminars on finance and tax planning, assistance in arranging career workshops, painting the Lighthouse with my church group, and co-ordinating festival events in Chinese malls, fundraising concerts in churches, and starting tax clinics in other churches.

In 2001 I was also asked to serve on The Board of Directors. After prayerful considerations, I joined and have been there ever since. In 2008 I became the Treasurer, which I still do today.

#### What keeps you so active and passionate about this work?

As I stated earlier, the volunteering work at the Lighthouse exposed me to the needs of the clients and the communities we are serving. The more opportunities presented to me, the more chances I have to get involved, and the more I learn how to help. I consider the passion for this service and the direction I get, as blessings from our Mighty Lord.

#### What is one message you would like to share with others who are/ have been considering this type of volunteer work?

Don't wait, call The Lighthouse office, talk to the different co-ordinators, visit the programs, join us face to face, and work with us. You will feel encouraged and satisfied, as you help and walk with those in need.



Sybil De Mos [5 years]

#### Why did you start volunteering at the Lighthouse?

Well, someone asked me to help call people for the Annual Phone-a-thon Fundraiser. The Lighthouse has always been my favourite charity and they do amazing work.

Although I have been a supporter for more than 40 years, or as long as I can remember, I had

not volunteered there before. After my husband (who was once a Board member) died and I was recuperating from surgery, I was looking for something to do.

When I got the call to volunteer, I thought: "This is it, and I can do this from home!"

#### Why have you continued all these years?

At first it was just so perfect: I could call people from my own home, I could determine my own schedule, and I had something to fill my days.

Now, I'm hooked! I am more mobile and am getting out more, but this is such an easy and wonderful way to help others.

#### What has been the most rewarding part of volunteering for the Phone-a-thon Fundraiser?

We are all so blessed and have so much. I just love calling people to give them a little nudge and remind them to share some of their wealth. So often we forget that there are people all around us who are less fortunate, or we are just too busy to think about how and when to give.

My calls help people remember all the great work The Lighthouse is doing, and encourages them to be part of it. Giving feels good, and we need to do it.

Thank you so much for inviting me to be a volunteer! It has been wonderful.



### Helping People Changing Lives

Thank you for being partners with us in this ministry.



Yes, I would like to help with a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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#### Other Ways to Help (Contact us for details)

- PreAuthorized Remittance (PAR)-makes it easy for you and for us
- Monthly Visa or Mastercard Donation
- Canada Helps on-line at [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org)
- Giving through Christian Stewardship Services (CSS)
- United Way Payroll Deduction-just provide our CRA # and address
- Matched Corporate Giving-many companies match employee donations

Please mail your contribution to:  
**The Lighthouse**  
**1008 Bathurst Street**  
**Toronto, ON M5R 3G7**

Receipts will be issued in the New Year.  
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**Fred Kirchner** [1.5 years]

**Why do you volunteer for The Lighthouse?**

*I really enjoy it! I have been volunteering to restock the shelves and organizing food from Second Harvest for the Food Bank for almost 2 years now. I get things ready for Tuesday and Wednesday, when people come from the neighbourhood needing extra help with groceries.*

*The people are great, the atmosphere is very relaxed and you feel you are doing something positive. I always have a good feeling when I leave.*

**What is something you have learned as a volunteer?**

*People are basically good. If you take away financial and competitive pressure, people will pull together to help and support each other.*

**Would you recommend volunteering?**

*Absolutely! You will meet interesting people. It will make you feel good to help people who really need it. The interesting thing is you also will feel better about yourself. Anything you can contribute or do is always appreciated. It's has been a rewarding experience for me.*

**Samm Medeiros** [6 months]

The first day I stepped foot in the Lighthouse was the day I took photos for the Hispanic Community's hair and nails graduation. It was quite shocking at first because I have never seen so many incredibly dedicated people working behind desks, in kitchens, on the floor, and with technical equipment as I did that day. They all looked so happy to be doing their jobs - without even being paid! Jeanette Romkema introduced me to each volunteer and I was immediately greeted with warm smiles and sincerity, allowing me to feel right at home rather quickly.

To me, volunteering is to take a small portion of time out of your own hectic schedule to help those who need it most. The last 6 months spent designing, writing and occasionally photographing for The Lighthouse's newsletter have allowed me to realize how important it is to get involved in an organization whose main focus is not on money, but on building a community where people can feel safe and at home. The biggest reward in volunteering is to know that you helped out with something larger than yourself.

Volunteering for The Lighthouse has taught me that working doesn't always have to result in cold cash. It's the satisfaction of knowing that you did something good for others that keeps you coming back for more. I have learned that there is still hope for those who are without food and are new to Toronto. It has been a wonderful experience working with The Lighthouse.

**Patricia Rodriguez** [17 years]

**What sort of volunteering have you done over the years?**

*Oh, I have done so many things. I started working at the front desk in 1995. From there I helped with the Hispanic Family Programs, Hispanic Senior Program, and Adopt-a-Family Program [at Christmas]. I have also been a Board member a few times.*

**How did you first get involved with the Lighthouse?**

*In 1995 someone called me during the Annual Phone-a-thon. At the time I had no job or money, but said that I would be willing to volunteer. I had an interview with the Volunteer Coordinator and the rest is history. I was hooked!*

*Actually that first time I went to volunteer, the building looked strangely familiar to me. As it turns out, in 1974 when I had just immigrated to Canada from Chile, I came to The Lighthouse for a welcome dinner. Many people were there from different countries all speaking different languages and there for different reasons. It was a wonderful welcome, and one which I will never forget. The funny thing was that I hadn't been back since that time.*

**So what are you so "hooked" to this place?**

*Well, the love that is shown here and the care for individuals and families, is very special. This place offers a home and community to many who need it. The people are like family and share life with you. If I won the lottery tomorrow, I would most definitely give most of the money to The Lighthouse – this is a place that changes lives. It feels good to be here.*

*You know, the Hispanic community is made up of many different countries, cultures, and people. But when we get together at The Lighthouse, we are all equal and respected. We mean a lot to each other.*

**What have you learned in your 17 years here?**

*I have learned to accept every individual for who they are, and with love. We are all created in the image of God and no one is better than another, or more worth helping or loving.*

*I have also learned to ask myself, "What do I have that I can share/do/give?" There is always something.*



**Volunteers Needed!**

**We are looking for people to volunteer in the following way:**

- ✓ **Become a Board member**
- ✓ **Do minor building repairs**
- ✓ **Paint rooms**
- ✓ **Fill in reception (from time-to-time)**
- ✓ **Assist in the Food Bank (Tues. & Wed. afternoon)**
- ✓ **Translation work (Chinese-English, Spanish-English, Vietnamese-English)**
- ✓ **Child care (6-8 days in June-Aug.)v**
- ✓ **Spring cleaning**

**As a group, couple, or individually, your skills are needed.**



**Alvina Lee** [5 years]

**How many years have you volunteered at the Lighthouse?**

*It is my 5<sup>th</sup> year volunteering for the income tax clinic at the Lighthouse. Initially, I was brought to the Lighthouse through my former employer. I guess after so many years there is a sense of connection between the people at the Lighthouse - through those being helped and the helpers themselves. Now, I look forward to volunteering every year!*

**Why do you volunteer your time at the Lighthouse?**

*I find myself coming here year after year because it feels great to be working with such wonderful people. We have developed a family-like bond, seeing each other on Monday nights during the tax season and even during the year. I have come to miss them outside of this work.*

*I particularly miss the taxpayers themselves. They have so much respect for the volunteers and address us like friends. Larger charitable organizations often don't provide this sense of belonging and may not have the "personal touch" that the Lighthouse does. Here we know we are making a difference in people's lives. That's why I have volunteered for so long, and plan on continuing.*

**What is one thing that you have learned in your time volunteering at the Lighthouse?**

*When helping the elderly or vulnerable to complete their tax returns, I continually learn how special they are and how many stories they have to share.*

**Luisa** [New volunteer]

**How long have you been volunteering?**

*Actually, I just started! This is my second month, and I love it already.*

**What is your role in the Hispanic Senior's Program?**

*I teach the Spanish-speaking Seniors an English class - about 16-20 of them. It is a 1-hour class and after I am finished they have a Bible lesson and hot lunch.*

*I get the seniors to tell me what lessons are most helpful for them – I don't work with textbooks. Right now they most want to learn conversational English. We spend a lot of time practicing phrases like: "Hi, how are you?," "Can you speak slower please" and "Excuse me please, can you help me." They need basic English to get through the day.*

*The seniors also told me they want to spend time during each class to deal with their "most pressing issues". Some they have already named are: finding phone numbers for building repairs, knowing where to go to get their taxes completed, and how to make a doctor's appointment. These seem like easy things, but they are new to Canada and don't know the system or the language well.*

**Why are you involved in this program?**

*Well, I teach English at Toronto City Mission and wanted to do more. I heard about The Lighthouse from a colleague, who had*

*Many times people would sit down and seem grumpy or confused about their tax returns. Once you start talking to them, you would realize all they really needed was somebody to talk to. Whether we talk about the weather, their lifestyle, former schooling in different parts of the world, or war stories, they are thankful for the interest shown and help offered.*

*Elders need to be treated with a form of respect because they have so much life experiences. Through my experience volunteering in the tax clinic, I have learned that even though somebody may not smile at first, once you start opening up and listening to them, the smile will come.*

**Any moments, people or stories that stand out for you?**

*There was one year where a man hadn't filed his tax returns for 5 consecutive years in a row. I sat with him for the night and helped him file all his tax returns. It turned out that he was not aware of the rules of filing taxes, so that brought us talking about his past life experiences.*

*This man was a musician, singer, and traveler. At the end of the night, he handed me a CD of his songs. There were songs sung in many different languages and pictures of him around the world. I was so happy to have met him and know he appreciated The Lighthouse for their services.*

**Would you recommend volunteering to other community members?**

*Definitely! I would persuade anyone to come assist those in need in anyways possible. It's always a great feeling: for the giver and the receiver. It connects people from different ethnic groups, communities, and life experiences, and we can learn so much from each other.*

*I always consider it a privilege to be in a position to give back.*

*volunteered here 20 years ago. She spoke very highly about this place and the experience. She said I should call.*

*Actually I just finished a program at George Brown College in Social Services. I love this type of work but feel especially passionate about working in my community, with Hispanic people. The Lighthouse Hispanic Program is a perfect fit.*

**What have you already noticed about The Lighthouse and the Hispanic Program?**

*It's like a family here. There is so much love and care and appreciation for everybody. It just makes my day to be here and know we all belong – no matter who we are or what we do. I get emotional just talking about it.*

**What would you say to those interested in volunteering here or elsewhere?**

*Do it! There is so much need in the world and you can learn so much. This type of work is 2-way: you give but receive sooo much more. No money can buy the rewards I feel through my volunteer work. I feel blessed to be able to do it.*

