

Since September, we have been sending regular bulletins to our volunteers informing them of needs in the community and requesting their support. Initially, we were afraid that by doing so we would be damaging the goodwill our volunteers have for our work. But we took that leap of faith guided by the principle that social issues are opportunities for rallying and building community. The response for short-term tutors to help Primary 6 students get through their final year examinations was overwhelming while we are still looking for volunteers to kick-start a neighbourhood cub-scout troop with some parents.

We are learning that as community workers we have to lead but more importantly we must appreciate being led and to continue 'leading by stepping back,' a phrase from the school of Asset Based Community Development. There is an abundance of resources within community and our role is to have a sense what we are looking for and to be available and welcoming when the resources come our way. Sometimes, we do not have the patience for this unpredictability and ambiguity and we rush to put in place professional helping services. Well, it's a choice and I would choose to agree with Forrest Gump when he recalled his mother telling him that "Life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get."

In our regular communication with volunteers, we also invite them for a Community Response Conference where people come together to support a member of the community who is facing serious challenges. We have had 2 conferences so far and 10 volunteers have stepped forward to assist 3 different families. After briefing the volunteers on the families' situation and answering any questions they may have, we helping professionals leave the room so as not to interfere with the community's response we seek.

This week when we returned to the room, we found a tutor for 2 brothers aged 11 and 12 years old who was being cared for by their aunt. The tutor was also confident that she will be able to persuade her friends to enroll the 2 boys in the martial arts classes that they conduct for free. Plans were also made to assist the boys' aunt with her child-minding duties and to discuss with her a school holiday schedule for her nephews. There were only 2 volunteers present at the conference but they came with the support of their family and friends behind them and we all left the conference optimistic that we could make a difference for these boys.

Life may be a box of chocolates but with some patience and belief, we will continue to discover enthusiasm, compassion, generosity and most importantly, a sense of purpose and hope just as how our volunteers have shown us. Wishing us all, much joy and purpose as we journey in a world of ambiguity and unpredictability.

Enjoy your weekend.

Gerard

*The world changed from having the determinism of a clock to having the contingency of a pinball machine. - Heinz R. Pagels*