

Neighbours step up to create the county we want

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Editor

Our small community accomplishes much thanks to the hundreds of volunteers who give time, money and expertise to making the Haliburton Highlands a better place.

In celebration of annual Volunteer Week, we've asked organizers of some of the area's many charities and community groups to weigh in on how volunteers make a difference.

Volunteer Dental Outreach Clinic

Six dentists, four hygienists, two dental assistants, three front desk workers and

nine board members volunteer to provide free services to people in Haliburton County who need dental work.

VDO founder and board member Lisa Kerr says without this relatively small crew of dedicated volunteers, the VDO would not exist.

"The Volunteer Dental Outreach clinical model would not be financially sustainable without volunteers," she says. Most of the staffing is volunteer based and the board fundraises for the other clinic expenses. Two dental assistants are paid for their work to ensure the clinic has stability.

Kerr says being able to help those who otherwise would go without dental care fuels volunteers. This often means those

who come to the clinic have major issues to be addressed, as many haven't seen a dentist in many years.

"The challenge of restoring someone's teeth who is in desperate need can be quite motivating to the volunteer dental professionals. Almost every case involves someone who arrived quite apprehensive leaving with a bright smile, which is always gratifying for our volunteers," she says.

One of the VDO's volunteers, Dr. John Purc was nominated this year for the Community Service Award from the Ontario Dental Association recognizing his work at VDO. Additionally, the Coalition of Haliburton Lake Associations chose VDO as charity of the year, helping the organization raise awareness and recruit dentists and dental hygienists. Kerr says the wait list continues to increase despite the many volunteers "because the need is so great in our community."