

Chantal Bernier: It's all about "community"

At one time, volunteering for Chantal Bernier meant looking beyond national boundaries. But this one-time volunteer for Amnesty International and the anti-apartheid movement wanted to really see the impact of her hard work. For her, this meant looking closer to home — to organizations like United Way/Centraide Ottawa.

In fact, it's this focus on "community" that attracts many federal public servants to take part in the annual Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC), the largest workplace charitable campaign in the country. Last year, the GCWCC raised more than \$33.5 million, including \$18.5 million in the National Capital Region. These funds go to support important programs and services offered through United Way/Centraide, Healthpartners and other registered Canadian charities.

For Chantal, participating in the campaign and volunteering at the local level both offer an opportunity to enrich not only her life but the life of others as well: "There is a sense of being part of improving human life; you are also able to put a human face on your donation."

An Assistant Deputy Minister, Community Safety and Partnership Branch, for Public Safety Canada, Chantal is a member of United Way/Centraide's board of directors and the major donor committee. She also served for three years on the board of the local Children's Aid Society. A regular donor through the GCWCC, she has also been a central member of the campaign, is a member of the GCWCC Campaign Cabinet and was an ADM Champion Leader in 2001. "I respect the efficiency of the GCWCC. I find it's a very effective way to be charitable."

In addition to this organizational volunteering, Chantal was a Big Sister for six years — an experience that was particularly rewarding. "I had the opportunity to watch a wonderful child grow into a wonderful woman and connect with individuals I wouldn't have met otherwise," she says.

Working full time and raising two young teenagers does not leave much time to volunteer. Yet Chantal is just one example of federal public servants making a difference in the community.

This year's GCWCC launched on September 9 and ends November 25. For more information, you can visit gcwcc.org.