

## The 'priceless' joy of volunteering

*Federal government employee a devoted community volunteer for 25 years*

*By Corinne Wilson*

**Sept. 7, 2006 – Burlington, ON** – A tireless volunteer in Burlington, Ontario for the past 25 years, Brian Phoenix embodies the spirit of selfless giving. But he could only imagine the joy he brought to those he helped.

That was until one Christmas, when he donned the famous red suit passed on to him by a retiring 'Santa Claus.'

"I remember panicking at the time. Me, a single guy, cringing at the thought of caring for kids," he recalled. "I've since seen the joy in the children's eyes when they look at Santa, and that is priceless."

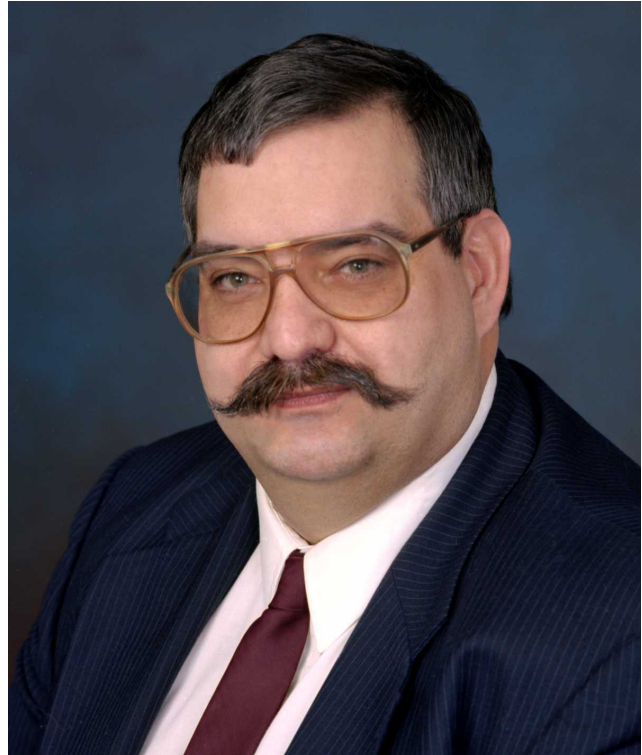
Mr. Phoenix, a Coast Guard employee at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, is a member of the Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada Association (ANAVETS).

As an ANAVET volunteer, Mr. Phoenix has helped repair veterans' homes, operated Christmas parties for local children, and provided accounting services for his local unit. He has risen to become president of his unit, which takes an additional 20 hours a week of his time.

Yet as with overjoyed children at Christmas, Mr. Phoenix cherishes the rewards of volunteering for Canada's veterans.

"It is much more than owing veterans our thanks and respect. The human experience goes very deep. I've known a Korean War veteran in (my) unit since I was eight. He would say that without volunteers like me, he would not have a place to go to."

Mr. Phoenix is one example of Government of Canada employees making a difference in their communities. Along with their regular volunteering, thousands of public servants participate in the annual Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC), the largest workplace charitable project in Canada. In 2005, federal public servants contributed more than \$29.5 million to GCWCC in 113 communities nation-wide. GCWCC 2006 kicks off on September 7 and will run until November 22.



*An unexpected opportunity to play Santa Claus showed Brian Phoenix the true meaning of volunteering.*

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