



Over 850 young Canadians connect with healthy, independent living through volunteer service

Katimavik, Canada's premier national youth service program contributes to the fight against obesity and toward the adoption of healthy living standards.

Montreal, January 10, 2011 – As Canadians try to stick to their New Year's resolution to get active and eat well, the first cohort of Katimavik volunteers in 2011 have set out on a six-month journey to make a difference in communities across the country and by the same token make a difference in their very own lives.

With the start of 2011, Canadian municipalities from coast-to-coast-to-coast will begin to sense the presence of 300 youth between the ages of 17 and 21 that, on January 5, left the familiar grounds of home to serve in communities across Canada. The remaining volunteers will depart in July 2011.

These youth will be adopting a healthy lifestyle; out with chips, frozen meals and soda drinks. Even the household rations of bread are homemade by the volunteers themselves and meal preparation is based on the recommendations found in Canada's food guide. The volunteers include physical activity in their routines. Since all Katimavik houses are television-free zones, youth are inclined to diversify their leisure activities and are encouraged to get outside and get active.

Being immersed in such an environment can lead to remarkably positive change as is evidenced by our volunteers. "Searching for answers about my future, I chose Katimavik. Some of the hardest life lessons awaited me there, but some of the best times were also brought about because of Katimavik. In a group setting, I lived with ten other volunteers for an incredible six months. Complete strangers at first, we learnt, lived and cooked together. We put into practice the precepts of healthy living and to top it off I got to work at a not-for-profit bicycle repair shop in Calgary where I got bitten by the biking bug and obtained great hands-on experience. I have been on the healthy living trail since," stated Fiija Derro a 2010 alumna from Northern Ontario who is now living in Ottawa.

According to the recent CBC News poll, conducted by Leger Marketing, Canadians say obesity is the country's number one health issue and as such Katimavik's focus on planning and preparation of nutritious meals and taking part in daily physical activities will certainly contribute to fostering and maintaining the healthy weight of the volunteers.

"Not only do our programs make a huge difference for our not-for-profit partners who see the quality and quantity of the vital community services they provide increase, they have a huge impact on the volunteers themselves," stated Daniel Lapointe, Katimavik CEO. "While sedentary lifestyles and poor food choices play a factor in the obesity epidemic that is top of mind with Canadians, we believe the key to staying fit is maintaining a healthy lifestyle. All our six-month programs have a healthy living element that is sure to contribute to developing active living, good eating habits but more importantly an everlasting healthy lifestyle which may well, upon our volunteers' return to their home communities, trickle down to those they had left behind," concluded Lapointe.

Katimavik's mandate is two-fold: service-learning implies reciprocity. Hundreds of Canadian not-for-profits count on Katimavik volunteers in order to deliver essential services to vulnerable and marginalized populations. "If it

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weren't for the Katimavik volunteers, we wouldn't be where we are today," said Kelly Girard, Assistant manager and supervisor at the Ontario, Cochrane Food Bank.

About Katimavik

Katimavik promotes civic engagement and fosters sustainable communities through challenging national youth service programs. Since 1977, Katimavik has enabled more than 30,000 Canadians to be involved in more than 2,000 communities throughout Canada. Volunteers between the ages of 17 and 21 live with 10 other youth from across the country in one or two communities. They commit to volunteering in the context of a six-month program where they will provide work 28 to 35 hours a week for a variety of not-for-profit organizations. Youth also benefit from Katimavik's structured learning program that focuses on the development of lifelong personal, professional and social competencies in the areas of civic engagement, healthy lifestyle, cultural discovery, official languages, communication, environmental stewardship and project coordination.

For further information please visit www.katimavik.org or visit our blog at www.gokatimavik.com

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