

The heart of wildlife rehabilitation

Volunteers make the difference when it comes to helping our furry friends

Volunteer Edmonton

As Edmonton's only urban wildlife rehabilitation centre, caring for injured and orphaned animals year-round is no easy task.

That's why Dana Brettelle, volunteer co-ordinator for the Wildlife Rehabilitation Society of Edmonton (WRSE), is quick to credit the volunteers at the society for their amazing work.

"Volunteers have a huge role here," she explains.

"We absolutely value our volunteers and the difference they make."

Brettelle notes that volunteers like Dawn Doell, Brenda Hagen and Cathie Leavins are just a few of the many volunteers who help out at the society, particularly as facilitators who help orient new volunteers.

Brettelle explains that in addition to their general duties helping out at WRSE, the women are also responsible for facilitating volunteer orientation night, where prospective volunteers are given a tour of the facility, and learn about the

animals and the different volunteer roles at the organization.

While all three volunteers have different backgrounds, they have a shared interest and passion for animals.

"I wanted to do something worthwhile," says Leavins, a stay-at-home mom. "There's a sense of pride, especially when you know that what you're doing is helping these animals get better."

Hagen, who works in a rural veterinary clinic, was often the staff member responsible for calling the WRSE to pick up an injured animal.

"I wondered what happened to them once they left my care, how successful was rehabilitation and was there a way I could help?"

For Doell, a student studying sciences at the University of Alberta, volunteering at the society is about having a link to wildlife.

"You have a chance to learn about the animals that come in and become

educated about how to help wildlife."

Unlike a humane society that cares for dogs or cats, Doell emphasizes that volunteers at the society actually have very little contact with the animals.

"Talking to them or being near them can be very stressful since they are injured and not used to having human contact," she says.

Due to the size of the facility, the WRSE mainly cares for birds and small mammals, like foxes, hares and squirrels.

"You don't need to have any experience working with animals. We have everyone from biologists to moms who help out in their spare time," says Brettelle.

For Leavins, one of the perks of volunteering is the flexibility.

"You don't have to make a huge commitment to help out. Anyone that wants to spend time here can do so because it's easy."

The women hope others like themselves who have a keen interest in

helping animals and giving back to the community will consider volunteering for this worthwhile organization.

"Being able to help an injured or sick animal is an honour and responsibility," says Hagen.

"Yes, there are sad moments, far more than we would like, but seeing that bird fly off, or releasing the fox back to the wild gives a feeling of satisfaction that far outweighs the not-so-good experiences."

To learn how you can help the Wildlife Rehabilitation Society of Edmonton, visit www.wildlife-edm.ca.

For information on volunteerism, visit www.volunteeredmonton.com.

Look to this space to see the work that the city's volunteers and non-profit organizations are carrying out. For more information or suggestions for story ideas, please contact Evelyn Pham, communications co-ordinator, at epham@volunteeredmonton.com, call 780-732-6655 or check out our website at volunteeredmonton.com.

Clarks

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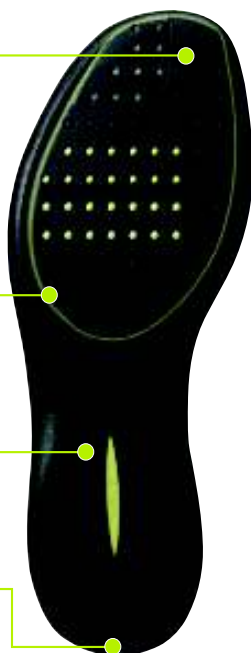
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