

Conversations with Carefirst Volunteers

“The Dedication of a Decade”

Interviewer & Author: Fiona Chang, Youth Volunteer

Rose Maria Wong Tam’s volunteering journey began in 2009, in order to give back to those in need and for the meaningful purpose of continuing the work of her mother. She has devoted her time in the last 10 years towards helping and serving our community.

The family legacy began with Rose Maria’s mother, who was first introduced to Carefirst by receiving their help in her own recovery process. Afterwards, she wanted to aid others who were in the same situation as herself and became a very committed volunteer. She was well known for her knack for selling raffle tickets and was unofficially crowned “the Queen of Raffles”. Through her mother, Rose Maria and her son began to volunteer at Carefirst as well—all three generations joining together to serve the Carefirst community.

As a volunteer Rose Maria has taken a large part in being a Friendly Visitor, a Telephone Reassurance Volunteer, and can always be found at special events both big and small. She is also part of the Volunteer Photography Club. She loves to meet new people, hear their stories and experiences. Her interactions with seniors has allowed her to grow in tolerance and wisdom, also teaching her to not take what we have for granted. In addition, she is exposed to new areas of interest, having discovered a lasting passion for dancing and photography through volunteering. With all aspects considered, she deems her volunteering as a very rewarding cause to dedicate time towards.

Rose Maria says volunteering allows for one to see the bigger picture and plays an important role in our community. For those who are considering volunteering, Rose Maria encourages you to “go for it, do your best and do what you think is best.” Her story is a motivating one, and she sets a very admirable example of dedication.



Rose Maria chatting with our Youth Volunteer Interviewer



Rose Maria & Pauline in 2015 at our Volunteer Gathering

“Volunteering with Pauline”

Interviewers/Authors: Andre Fong, Chris Lam,; Youth Volunteers

Meet **Pauline So**, a current volunteer at Carefirst. Immigrating from Hong Kong, she started life in Canada not knowing much about the culture it had to offer. Pauline had planned to relax from her hectic work life, having just retired from a hospital job. Soon she was introduced to Carefirst through a neighbour of hers by chance. Having the volunteer aspect and the feeling of helping others instantly appeal to her—volunteering helped her immerse herself in the community.

During her 15 years of service, she had become well-acquainted with the community through attending events and volunteering. Pauline finds the job a very fulfilling one, opening up opportunities to meet new people and experience new things. She feels her past medical job allows her to be more aware of the health of others.. Volunteering helped her become happier while giving her a purpose and identity. When asked about the challenges she faces with such a responsibility, she states that the environment is welcoming and doesn’t run into issues very often - she considers commuting to be her greatest obstacle!

One thing she loves doing is working at the Wellness Leisure Corner—preparing snacks and watching minds work through games. What attracts Pauline to Carefirst is that the services mirror a community centre to prevent social isolation. She feels very comfortable meeting new people here. To date, she has achieved two appreciation awards that recognize over 300 hours of volunteer work in a single year and even encouraged her granddaughter to participate in this summer’s Youth Volunteer Leadership Training Program. In short, Pauline finds volunteering to be very fulfilling and worth a shot for everyone!



Pauline sharing wisdom with our Youth Volunteer Interviewers



Jack sharing his volunteer experience at "Golden Ten Celebration" in 2014

"Jack of All Trades"

Interviewers/Authors: Daphne Yu, Sharon Wen, Cindy Liang, Joyce Liang; Youth Volunteers

Long Service Award recipient **Jack Lam** has been volunteering with Carefirst for 20 years. He has served in various departments over the years from helping out with the Adult Day Program, participating in special fundraising events, to transporting people as a driver. He discovered volunteering for Carefirst because he saw the call for volunteers on television and newspapers, which piqued his interest.

At first, he volunteered to drive clients to the Adult Day Program and eventually stayed to help out. Later on, he became a

runner and driver for Carefirst's Meals-on-Wheels program, delivering nutritious food to clients' homes and day programs. Through Carefirst, he gained skills for grief counselling and applied them in his personal and professional life. He has also helped younger people with disabilities by escorting and engaging with them. He says he has probably volunteered in every position except for in administration. Now, he volunteers on a part-time basis to spend more time with his grandchildren.

Jack says that he feels happy to help people and he is glad that he gets the opportunity to help others through volunteering at Carefirst. He encourages others to volunteer because they will be able to learn skills and gain knowledge from clients through daily activities and shared interests. In addition, people will be able to make many friends and expand their social circles through volunteering. He says that if you have the interest and passion to volunteer, you will be able to continue volunteering for a very long time because helping others will bring joy to you.



Jack sharing a laugh with our Youth Volunteer Interviewers

"On the Phone with Alfred"

Interviewer/Author: Shannan Tong, Youth Volunteer

Alfred Lam has been a Carefirst volunteer for 15 years. His volunteer journey began through self-motivation, as he felt empathetic for socially isolated seniors. He took the initiative to search for volunteer opportunities and landed at Carefirst in 2004 – since then, he has been helping Carefirst's Community Support Services Elder Abuse Prevention & Education Program.

While Alfred has dabbled in helping with Special Events of the Wellness Department, his main passion lies with the Elder Abuse Hotline. He mentioned that as a novice volunteer he was quite confused, but after extensive training (In fact, he was amongst the first "graduating class" of the Elder Abuse Prevention Program!) and 15 years of accumulated experience, he is now quite comfortable in his role.

His role as an Elder Abuse Hotline volunteer is to speak to seniors on the phone, lending an ear to reduce social isolation, and helping to solve their problems by directing them to resources. However, Alfred does mention that there are still some conversation topics that are harder to digest. Alfred's passion for senior care and community service are an inspiration to youths and young adults! Alfred says while you have the time and energy, contribute to the community!



Alfred sharing his volunteer experience at "Golden Ten Celebration" in 2014