

## 2023 VOLUNTEER SATISFACTION AND FEEDBACK SURVEY: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

*Prepared by: Chris Brew, Brenda Beatty, Beth Houston, Linda Harrison & Barbara McNeice-Stallard*

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### INTRODUCTION

Gravenhurst Against Poverty (G.A.P.) is an inclusive, open, and transparent grassroots organization, with the goal of reducing poverty within the greater Gravenhurst, Ontario community. Our volunteers are key to us being able to successfully help those who need our assistance.

In order to improve our services, we asked our volunteers how satisfied they were with their volunteer experience and how G.A.P. could improve. The **2023 G.A.P. Volunteer Satisfaction and Feedback Survey** included questions derived from the current leadership team, other volunteer surveys, our professional backgrounds, as well as other G.A.P. volunteers. The survey was released on October 24, 2023, and closed on November 14, 2023.

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

G.A.P.'s 160 volunteers were asked to take part and 68 participated. This is a 43% response rate (slightly more than 4 out of 10) which is considered reasonable for this group. These volunteers also provide almost three-quarters (74%) of the total hours donated to G.A.P.

We wish to thank the G.A.P. volunteers for taking their precious time to share their thoughts. Their continued support of G.A.P. is appreciated and evident in this summary. For the large majority of volunteers, G.A.P. plays an important role in their own lives; it gives them a sense of belonging to a caring community, they feel useful and enjoy the camaraderie. In our experience, it is clear that G.A.P. volunteers also have a huge impact on those who use our services.

The remainder of this summary of key findings will focus on the five areas of the survey:

1. **Their Level of Involvement in G.A.P.** (4 items),
2. **Their Experience with Volunteering at G.A.P.** (18 items),
3. **Their Aims and Motivations as a G.A.P. Volunteer** (11 items),
4. **G.A.P. and the Wider Community** (6 items), and
5. **Looking to the Future** (8 items).

## THEIR LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT IN G.A.P.

- What was their level of involvement in G.A.P.?
  - Almost two out of three participated in the Food Pillar only (61%).
  - When we looked at cross-over program volunteering, a total of 79% of volunteers (almost 8 out of 10) were involved in the Food Pillar as well as other programs.
  - Some 84% (more than 8 out of 10) donated up to 25 hours of their time a month and some 55% (more than half) have been donating hours to G.A.P. for more than two years.

## THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH VOLUNTEERING AT G.A.P.

- What was their experience with volunteering at G.A.P? Nine out of ten volunteers (90%) felt that their volunteer work was personally satisfying and that they were appreciated as a volunteer.
- To enjoy their volunteering more, they would like to:
  - Understand the roles and responsibilities of the leads and Board members.
  - Have better communications between the pillars, have more support for the Wellness Pillar, and understand how they are helping to improve the lives of our neighbours.
  - Have a buddy system for new volunteers.
  - Encourage team leads to keep giving direction and support and to keep being available should there be concerns.
  - Encourage continued innovation and provide more scheduled opportunities to share ideas with team leads.
  - Learn more about G.A.P.'s organizational structure, attend Bridges Out of Poverty sessions, and share their specific skills and knowledge with our volunteers and neighbours (e.g., database management, cooking nutritious food, conflict resolution).
  - Have a person who can discuss unresolved conflicts and unsafe situations that arise (e.g., building stairs, delivering food).
- A few volunteering stories include:
  - *When a neighbour calls or comes into the office to say that they are doing better and that they no longer need GAP services. Usually, it's because they have found employment. They often tell us how G.A.P. 'saved' them and how appreciative they are to have been helped by G.A.P.. Comments such as, 'We don't know what we would have done without your help'.*
  - *One time I was able to share some insight to things that needed to change. I was nervous about doing so as there was some pushback. When I did share, I received multiple affirmations that what I said was valid and that it was very needed to hear. I felt very honored to be able to share my voice.*

## THEIR AIMS AND MOTIVATIONS AS A G.A.P. VOLUNTEER

- What were their aims and motivations as a G.A.P. volunteer?
  - When asked, "What prompted them to become volunteers?", they said...
    - A sense of civic duty, giving back (33 volunteers)

- Being tapped/nudged by other volunteers (18 volunteers)
  - Wanting to share skills and knowledge (5 volunteers)
  - Wanting to meet new people and get out of the house (5 volunteers)
- Almost three out of four (74%) were content with their volunteer hours given to G.A.P..
  - Just over three out of four (77%) will continue volunteering for two or more years with just over one in three (34%) indicating no cut-off time.
  - There was an interest from almost one out of two (47%) to try other volunteer roles within G.A.P. and almost one out of five (16%) were interested in job shadowing in a lead role to be a backup team lead.

## G.A.P. AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

- How do they keep up-to-date on G.A.P. happenings and engage the wider community?
  - Most keep up-to-date on what is new at G.A.P. by reading newsletters, browsing the G.A.P. website, and/or social media postings.
  - About half would like to socialize more with their fellow volunteers.
  - While they feel that G.A.P. is well regarded in the community, they also believe that many people associate G.A.P. with food provision and not so much with the Wellness and Transport Pillars.
  - When they socialise outside of G.A.P. the majority talk about G.A.P. and how it is more than just providing food. They also recruit others to join G.A.P.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- What do they think should be G.A.P.'s top priorities?
  - Almost three out of four volunteers (73%) proposed an expansion of the current programs drawing on an expanded volunteer base (e.g., Food Pillar and Education). The comments focused on developing satellite G.A.P. hubs in outlying communities, expanding G.A.P. gardens, and expanding meal services to be offered every day.
  - Just over one in ten volunteers (12%) proposed strengthening existing programs such as the Wellness and Transportation Pillars as well as training program leads in volunteer management and providing volunteers and neighbours with more professional development.
  - Less than one in ten volunteers (9%) proposed a reduction in G.A.P. services which would mean that other programs and services, across the District of Muskoka, would need to fill the gap.
  - A bit more than one in twenty volunteers (6%) proposed maintaining the status quo.
- When asked what G.A.P. should do to have an impact on poverty, our volunteers said the following (in order of magnitude):
  - Advocating and Collaborating: Work with those who create policy. Advocate for G.A.P.'s neighbours by working together with local and government agencies.
  - Accommodation: Explore ways to address the housing crisis.
  - Funding: Continue to find funding sources with a focus on long-term funding
  - Listening: Listen to our neighbours', volunteers', and community needs. Encourage interpersonal relationships to improve connections.

- Educating: Create ways for neighbours, volunteers, and the community to learn new skills (e.g., improve self-confidence and self-reliance) and to learn more about how G.A.P. is doing its work.
- When asked, “If G.A.P. was a person, how would you describe this person to someone else?”, our volunteers said the following:
  - Open-hearted. Willing to listen. Willing to learn. Willing to help. Well-liked.
  - Thoughtful, flexible, organized, kind, dedicated, accepting, and inclusive.
  - Like a nurturing Mom who wants the best for me, who offers unconditional love and support and hugs on those bad days.

## CONCLUSION

Our volunteers want the best for G.A.P. and its neighbours and take great pride in volunteering. They are generous with the number of their volunteer hours, and they are generous with time and effort for each other and for those who use the G.A.P.'s services. They have a strong sense of belonging at G.A.P. and a strong sense of community.

Our volunteers had excellent ideas on how we could improve and G.A.P.'s leadership team has already implemented improvements including using the results to inform G.A.P.'s first Strategic Plan.

Thank you, volunteers, you are all amazing!

*Note:* If you wish to see a more detailed review of the results, please see the recorded **presentation on the G.A.P. website**.