

Project will encourage young immigrants to volunteer

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The provincial government has given the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre \$308,000 to kick-start a project to encourage newcomer youth to volunteer in their community.

The three-year project also involves the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, the United Way, the City of Kitchener and Immigrant Youth Coalition.

The announcement was made yesterday at the centre in downtown Kitchener by MPP John Milloy.

The first phase of the project will involve an advisory group holding 10 focus groups and talking to local immigrant youth about volunteering.

The youth will range in age from 13 to 25 and also include first-generation youth.

Information on whether they volunteer and barriers they say they experience will be collected, said Lucia Harrison, executive director of the K-W Multicultural Centre.

Once the information is gathered, the work will begin with the ethnocultural groups and their youth.

Harrison said many immigrants already volunteer within their own communities but don't formally call it volunteering.

She said she was speaking to a young Sudanese man and when asked about volunteering, he said,

"I have no time to volunteer, I am way too busy helping out in my community."

Earlier this week, Citizenship and Immigration Canada gave \$1.4 million to the Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA to expand its mentorship programs for new immigrants.

The YMCA's host immigrant program, which pairs newcomers with Canadian volunteers, has been in existence for 23 years, said James Howe of the YMCA.

The new money, which will come over a three-year period, will create a newcomer professional program in which internationally trained professionals will be paired with a

Canadian counterpart. Also, the money will create a mentoring program for newcomer seniors.

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