

Options helps: won't you?

Karen O'Bright

In the fall of 1978 John Vanier came to York University and spoke to a group of students. He stressed how important the surrounding community was and the need for student involvement in it. Mr. Vanier's speech was very powerful and he motivated some students into doing something.

The efforts of those students resulted in the formation of OPTIONS.

"Basically, Options is trying to break down the Ivory Tower image of York, trying to realize the inter-dependent nature of the university and the community which nowadays has been forgotten," says Norm Kunc, a very dedicated member.

Options bases their work around just that theory. The organization is working within the university, encouraging greater contact with the surrounding area.

There are four major services: volunteer placement, research programs, Options Courses and financial aid to the community.

Options is a volunteer student organization, at present in the process of recruiting new members. "We need to get some new faces, some new ideas...people that are willing to give a little time and effort in continuing to increase the work of this organization," states Karen Swartz, another Options member.

Becoming a new member only requires a small commitment; some enthusiasm and as much time or as little as you feel you can provide.

Options Volunteer Placement Centre is located in 202B, Vanier College. They have established good contacts and can place volunteers into needy organizations in the community.

"By becoming involved in Options individuals can increase learning skills by writing

proposals, helping to co-ordinate projects and learning how to interview people," says Kunc.

Another area for volunteer work are Option's research projects.

For the past two summers, a small nucleus of Options members has been conducting research studies. One of these projects was funded by the federal Ministry of Health and Welfare. By receiving a \$32,000 grant, Options was able to draft their first research study, entitled "World of the Handicapped."

Last summer, a Ministry of Employment and Immigration grant made possible a second study, entitled "New Frontiers for the Disabled."

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Kunc has been involved in these projects and says that he has benefitted from the experience. "Education," he feels, "is not purely academic. Options enables students to apply theoretical learning to the realities of everyday living."

Another example of students applying theory to practice are Options' courses.

The creation of these courses began by working directly with organizations, pinpointing areas of concern; areas where research was seriously needed. Then an undergraduate research course

was developed in which students could work on primary research in these areas. One of the goals of Options' courses was to enable students to provide the community with needed information. Upon completion of two academic terms, depending upon the success of the student, credits would be granted.

Through spending a good deal of time and effort, Options has now been able to incorporate two such courses into the calendar at York University. One course, offered through the Department of Liberal Science, is entitled "Project Studies on the Environment." The other Options course available is offered through the Department of Social Science, entitled "The Needs of the Physically Disabled".

Options' financial aid programme is no less important. The aid is given to needy families in the community. Last Christmas, Options implemented a fund raising program. Through the co-operation of all the college councils, in promoting dances and encouraging donations, five hundred dollars were collected. The money in this Christmas Fund was then used to buy turkeys for needy families in the area surrounding York.

Again this year, a similar fund raising project will be carried out.

It is not hard to see that Options can provide many rewards to students. "By getting out in the community and working with people, the student can experience a great deal of satisfaction and accomplishment," says Norm. Some Options members have also been able to line up jobs upon graduating in specialized areas. "The students of York could have some doors opened to them and opportunities can be provided that otherwise may not exist," he said.

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