

The CCVT Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2020



CANADIAN CENTRE FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO CCVT'S:

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DECEMBER 17, 2020
6:30 PM - 8:30 PM



The Connection

A PUBLICATION BY THE VOLUNTEERS OF
**THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR
VICTIMS OF TORTURE**
SCARBOROUGH BRANCH

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALL CCVT VOLUNTEERS

JULY-DECEMBER, 2020

Volume 8

Issue 5



IN THIS ISSUE

- Message from CE Progm.....2
- Kids' Coding Program.....3
- G1 Driver's Class-Arabic.....4
- G1 Driver's Class-Eng.....5
- Citizenship Class.....6
- Citizenship Class Flyer.....7
- Mentoring & Befriending.....8
- Volunteers' Activities.....9
- CCVT Income Tax Clinic.....10
- Income Tax Flyer 2021.....11
- CCVT AGM Flyer.....12

Editors:

Jason Lawrence
Rosemary Namuyomba
Juliette Ntege

Contributors:

Luz De La Rosa
Eric Aagaard
Pitasanna Shanmugathas
Ali Aljbouri
Ethel Forester
Naziha Mahmoud
Osama Abuzour
Fadumo Duale
Diane O'Neill

Editors' Note:

The information provided in this publication is not controlled by the CCVT, and therefore may not reflect the Centre's views.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL CCVT AFFILIATES

A MESSAGE FROM THE CCVT BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF



CCVT IS A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE!

A Message from The CCVT Community Engagement Program

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our lives in profound and unprecedented ways. All of us are experiencing heightened anxiety about our health and safety and are coping with the negative emotional impacts of physical distancing. The consequences for CCVT's clients have been extreme: the death of a loved one, isolation with an abusive partner, and elevated risk of poverty and homelessness.

Our physical offices are closed to in-person services, but all our staff has been available online. CCVT's Team has been connected with its clients virtually throughout. All of us are worried about the people we love, whether it is a relative, a friend or our community as a whole.

In the face of this ubiquitous pandemic, it is natural to feel powerless. Accordingly, we have reorganized and restructured to provide services to our clients, to take care of ourselves and to support those around us.

We wish to extend our sincere appreciation to the exceptional Volunteers who have expressed the passion and commitment during this challenging time by virtually helping CCVT clients in many different ways.

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

We have set up a GoFundMe Campaign for Toys and Food for Children and Youth, and seniors. Please promote this campaign using your Social Media. Thank you!

http://fnd.us/81kAo3?ref=sh_09iEH6 (Groceries for Seniors)

http://fnd.us/31k8If?ref=sh_09iEH6 (Toys for Kids)

Thank you and Happy Holidays from the Community Engagement Team:
Huda, Ismail and Juliette!

Volunteers' Activities and Events



This service is exclusively for CCVT's Eligible Clients!

In Collaboration with CRA\CVTP & CCVT

Virtual Income Tax Returns Clinic 2021

**We use EFILE—Fast & Easy!
On Appointment**

Open from Friday, February 26, 2021
until Friday, April 30, 2021

First COME, First SERVED!

Type of Required Documents:

Refugee Claimant Document, Notice of Decision Document,

PR Card, or any other Immigration ID

Bring your Receipts for Rent and Charity Donations, if any, Proof of Income like T4, Dependents expenses, Medical Expenses, Child Care Expenses, etc.



⇒ Prepare? FREE!

⇒ E-FILE? FREE!

⇒ U-FILE? FREE!

Contact Your Counsellor at:

*CCVT Main Office
Tel: 416-363-1066*

*CCVT Scarborough Office
Tel: 416-750-3045*

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Funded by:

Financé par :

 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada / Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

 TORONTO

 THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION / LA FONDATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO

 United Way of Greater Toronto



 Ontario

CCVT INCOME TAX CLINIC

Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) at CCVT Scarborough Location

The Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) is a program developed by Canada Revenue Agency (CRA); and organizations like CCVT register their Income Tax Clinics with CVITP to help their clients with Income Tax Returns preparations during a Tax Season.

I am one of those CCVT Volunteers who registered with CVITP so I can be helping clients every year to prepare their Tax Returns and for this upcoming Tax Season, I have already renewed my EFILE account and very ready to help virtually as I did during the last Tax Season.

For those who would like to participate as Volunteers, the following explains the process:

- Knowledge of the Tax Code or previous accounting experience are not needed.
- A Training by a CRA Officer is given to all registered Income Tax Volunteers at CCVT before the Tax Season begins.
- In addition, there is online Training that you can use to firm up your knowledge.
- At the beginning, it is natural to be a little nervous. As you work with the Tax software, you realize that it gives you lots of hints and highlights corrections you need to make. In a very short time, you become very comfortable with the process.
- In addition, there is a special CVITP Help-line to call if you have any questions or concerns, all this information will be provided during the In-House Training in February 2021 and the date will be announced.
- A completed Tax Return is a requirement to get various government financial supports such as the Child Tax Credit, Quarterly GST payments etc. Therefore, as a CVITP Volunteer, you are doing work that really helps CCVT clients who need it most.

I have really enjoyed my experience as a CVITP Volunteer at the CCVT Income Tax Clinic. I love the interactions with different people from all over the world. It is heartwarming and touching how grateful the clients express after receiving my help of filing their Tax Returns. I find it both a gratifying and an interesting learning experience. Thank you CCVT for giving me such a rewarding opportunity!

*By: Diane O'Neill,
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*

Virtual Volunteer Activities and Events CODING Workshops for Kids in November 2020



My name is Luz De La Rosa. I'm from the Dominican Republic, but I've been living in Canada since Summer 2018. I'm a language Teacher turned into a Web Developer. Moving to a new country is challenging on many levels, but being part of a community makes the transition so much easier.

After a month of arriving in Canada, I decided that it was time for me to give back to society, and there was no better way than Volunteering.

I started researching about different Volunteering programs, and I came across a post from CCVT. I went to their website, and I was amazed to learn about all the programs that they offer to people in need. I sent my application to volunteer with them, and shortly after, **Juliette Ntege**, the CCVT Scarborough Branch, Volunteer Coordinator, reached out to me. Juliette was kind and insightful during this process.

In September 2018, I started to volunteer at CCVT as a **Spanish\English Interpreter**; and as a **Front Desk Receptionist**. Being part of this organization has changed my life in many aspects. It has helped me grow personally and professionally. It is surprising how much we can help someone by just volunteering an hour per week of our time, but I could write a whole article about all the positive things that you can obtain by volunteering.

Making Decisions

After a year of living in Canada, I decided to transition my career to Web Development. I started learning how to Code, and I fell in love with the idea of building Websites and Web Applications that could improve someone's life.

I was referred to the Kids and Youth Program, Mental Health Counsellor, **Nadia Umadat**, who wanted a Facilitator for a Coding with Kids Program; and I was very thrilled to get such an opportunity. There is nothing better than to be able to combine your passions (Coding and Teaching) in one single project.

Coding With Kids is a Program to teach Kids and Youth how to code. **Coding** is telling a Computer what you want it to do via Writing Code. Coding could be creating Websites, Apps, or Games.

Learning how to Code is useful on many levels. Nowadays, technology is everywhere from day-to-day activities, like shopping for groceries (buying online), connecting with families and friends (via Zoom) to study (getting a Degree from home), and now in times of COVID there is even more. Getting Coding skills will make a kid more prepared for future job opportunities, will help them develop a mindset of solving problems, and open their curiosity for learning about science.

Volunteering Virtually

Even though there is a Pandemic, people still need our help. For this reason, we have opted to volunteer virtually. It has its challenges and advantages. Volunteering online helps us to reach more people as we do not have to gather physically in a specific space. Being able to help others from the comfort of your house is priceless. There are some challenges that we have to overcome, like a bad internet connection and external noises; but the most important of all, is to lose physical contact with people. Volunteering is about aiding and showing empathy to others, but doing it via the internet makes it hard to build a human connection which is very important mostly to the clients of CCVT who desperately need to break isolation in the process of integration into the Canadian society.

I am grateful to see all the people coming together to help those in need. Even though the difficult times that we are living in; we are still here innovating and finding the most suitable ways to help individuals in need.

Thank you so much CCVT for allowing me to be part of this amazing cause that you stand for!

*By: Luz De La Rosa,
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*

Virtual Volunteer Activities and Events

Facilitating the G1 Driver's Test Class in the Arabic Language & The English Group Conversation Circle



In the past 11 months, a lot of things have changed in all areas of life in the whole world due to the Corona Virus pandemic.

Despite these very difficult circumstances, the needs in our communities remained the

same and even may have increased further. As a result, this brought many changes on our life styles; like the way we serve the community; and on how we communicate with our families and with all other contacts in our lives. The COVID-19 restrictions around our lives also put lots of effects on how to live; and yet, we have to abide the Government's restrictions by law; and most importantly, it's the only way we can stay safe.

It is amazing to know that in spite of the circumstances, all employees of the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) and a good number of Volunteers, do their utmost virtually, to meet the needs of the Centre's clients in all areas as they arise.

I have been a Volunteer with (CCVT) since May 2018, serving in different areas of the Volunteer Program. I serve as Arabic language Interpreter who used to escort clients to Doctors, Lawyers, Social Workers' appointments and I am still offering this help virtually. Before the office closure, I served as a Teaching Assistant in the ESL Class which is run by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB); a Facilitator for the English Group Conversation Circle and also a Tutor in the Computer Basic Skills Class. I facilitated the in the Citizenship Class where CCVT Permanent Resident clients are prepared to be ready for

their Citizenship Written Test once they get their appointment dates.

Due to the epidemic, these days I'm only a Facilitator for the G1 Driver's Test Class in the Arabic Language and also facilitate the English Group Conversation Circle.

I am so happy that I am already seeing the results of these lessons whereby 3 of the students\clients who took the G1 Driver's Test in Arabic language; successfully passed their Test! Also, the students in the English Group Conversation Circle have gradually improved their spoken English language.

In conclusion, I'm proud of being involved with CCVT, a Centre which provides services to survivors of torture, war, genocide and crimes against humanity to overcome the lasting effects of torture and war; especially during this challenging Pandemic time where we are all transformed to communicating and providing services electronically, by Zoom, FaceTime, Skype, WhatsApp, etc.

When I see the clients of CCVT achieve what they want during these difficult circumstances, that gives me pride and happiness in what I do!

These accomplished successes and continued moral support that I get from CCVT Staff; give me the motivation to continue providing assistance in any other areas where support is required.

If you are out there and looking for an organization where to provide volunteer services, please contact CCVT Community Engagement Program at 416-363-1066 at the CCVT Main Office or at 416-750-3045 at the CCVT Scarborough Branch.

**By: Ali Aljbouri, PhD. BA
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch**

Virtual Volunteer Activities and Events

Volunteering During COVID-19



The COVID-19 crisis has fundamentally changed many things. The impact of the pandemic and the restrictions imposed a lot on the economy and the society. There is no doubt that the novel CORONAVIRUS has rapidly affected our everyday life, in terms of health, social, economy and volunteerism as well.

As a CCVT Volunteer, and prior to the pandemic used to meet CCVT's clients face-to-face, hangout, escorting them to places to support them with interpreting services; places like hospitals, law offices, government offices, etc.; but during the pandemic, some of these services are no longer occurring and most of them are taking place virtually online.

One of the challenges facing us Volunteers, as well as clients, during the pandemic is: all of us are also vulnerable to COVID-19. So, everyone is cautious for their health and safety. With the spike in cases of deceased people, there are no more natural breaks, like getting up to make a cup of tea. You can't smile to lift the mood, nor to demonstrate understanding or

sympathy, or read the other person's expression to spot when they need more help or a change of pace.

As lockdown stretched out, more serious challenges emerged. We faced difficulties in sustaining conversations when people hadn't left the house for months, for them the long period of isolation has been extremely difficult. Sometimes conversations could become negative, and Volunteers found this challenging and stressful, especially if they didn't feel that they were able to offer any additional support. One of the client's said: **"I want to feel free again, I missed my old routines, my old way of living"!**

Nevertheless, thanks to the technology we have nowadays. We're able to communicate with clients via phone and other social media channels to help and support them, so we can together overcome this crisis. Let's be always optimistic. We have heard about the good news of the vaccination.

**There is always
"LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL"**

**By: Osama Abuzour,
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch**

The COVID-19 Pandemic Challenge

Volunteering with clients during the COVID-19 pandemic has been very challenging. It is difficult to maintain relationships with clients without seeing them in person. Many programs have moved online which has caused us to lose our connection with clients whom we used to see in the office and now are struggling to use technology or accessing the internet. This describes how the pandemic has created many barriers for clients and also for us Volunteers.

As a volunteer, it is important to continue reaching out to clients and maintain a connection with them, even if it is done virtually or over the phone.

We have had to adapt and learn new ways to provide support to clients. Although the internet can be a barrier for clients, it has also created a great opportunity for us to continue to support and maintain connections with clients through virtual meetings and programming on websites such as Zoom. We should not give up to commitment, together we shall overcome this worldwide challenge of life!

**By: Fadumo Duale,
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch**

Virtual Volunteer Activities and Events

Mentoring and Befriending CCVT Clients



My name is Naziha and I am a Youth Mentor at CCVT.

Most of us thought that luxury was driving an expensive car, or wearing jewelry. But the reality is that, luxury is to be able to speak with each other, play in the park, walk together, love each other, and breath fresh air. And all of this is of no cost, but has a huge impact on our lives.

As a Youth Mentor at CCVT, I had the opportunity to work with many families from many different ethnic backgrounds and ages.

I mentored students, collaborated, intercepted, facilitated, and advised them on how to navigate the system. Including school projects, job searches, housing, clothing, etc. and mainly encouraged and supported them through difficult and challenging times and alleviated their anxiety and stress. The experience was enlightening, to see how these individuals' lives change from hopeless to hopeful individuals and successful individuals. I was very lucky to be able to connect with them easily, and understand their struggles and tackled their problems.

I am currently mentoring a student who is making amazing progress. Unfortunately due to COVID-19 restrictions, I

haven't been able to meet in person, however we have met through Zoom. Nevertheless, COVID-19 was not all bad, COVID-19 made us realize and appreciate the freedom and the health we lived in and the things we took for granted. COVID-19 stopped us from being lost in our business, and helped us spend time with our families. Thank you COVID-19 for making us understand that we are all connected, thank you for the unity between all of us, and thank you for giving us the chance to re-evaluate our lives.

Please be patient as we go through this challenging time. Business will boom again, the sun will shine again, and life will be back to normal soon!

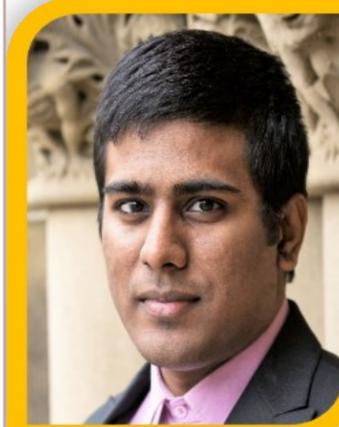
I give my heartfelt condolences to those who have lost loved ones, they will always be remembered. Thank you to the healthcare providers who provided the best treatment everyone deserved. And last but not the least thank you for our Prime Minister, Premier, and Mayor who worked tirelessly day in and day out through weekends to make sure Canadians are supported, fed, and protected.

I am proud of Canada!

*By: Naziha Mahmoud,
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*

Virtual Volunteer Activities and Events

Facilitating the G1 Driver's Test Class in the English Language & The English Group Conversation Circle



My name is Pitasanna Shanmugathas. I have been volunteering with CCVT since 2014, working with both adults and youth, in a variety of capacities.

Volunteering with CCVT during the Coronavirus pandemic has been a unique and at the same time, exciting experience.

During the pandemic, I facilitated the G1 Driver's Test Classes in the English

language to all clients who were interested. I shared with them the G1Driver's Test practice websites and practice online textbooks in order to help them excel on the G1Driver's Test. In addition, I shared resources with fellow Volunteers who were willing to help in this area, so they can successfully teach G1 Driver's Classes to clients in a virtual capacity.

As a result of my teaching, 2 clients successfully took and excelled the G1 Driver's Test; and the Volunteers that observed my Classes as their orientation in this area; are now helping clients to do well on their G1Driver's Test.

During this time, I befriended one adult client. I virtually helped him to edit his resume, and successfully helped him to acquire a job. I also taught him how to use his new laptop that he got from RCT with the help of his Counsellor at CCVT. I am currently making plans to provide one-on-one lessons to help him pass the G1 Driver's Test as it's one of his goals.

Prior to the pandemic, I have also been a Mentor to other clients, and we would almost always meet face-to-face. However, as a result of this pandemic, to meet my Mentee face-to-face was understandably not recommended by CCVT. The clients do express a willingness to want to meet their Mentors in person and, prior to the pandemic, meeting my Mentees in person was always an enjoyable experience. I feel that meeting clients in person helps them in being able to better integrate into society and helps them to build positive relationships with people.

During that time, the clients would ask me to show them around the city; in one instance, we walked around the University that I currently attend, which is home to one of the biggest libraries in North America. In the library, we sat

down together at a computer and explored career options which interested him, and what college programs he would need to take in order to get a job in his career field of interest. I could physically see the joy and wonderment in my Mentee's face as he saw some of the attractions and benefits that Toronto had to offer him. During the pandemic, as a Mentor, I do not have that same experience with a client as our meetings are online. To engage with clients online can be fun and engaging, however, to meet them in-person, I believe, provides them with a greater level of comfort to engage, laugh, and divulge their thoughts and challenges.

During the pandemic period of time, I also facilitated weekly English Group Conversation Circles and helped clients improve their English-speaking skills.

Most recently, I have volunteered to be a Mentor for 2 Youth brothers. The older brother is in high school, and the younger brother is in middle school. The older brother has requested for help in finding a job and finding a volunteer position in order to fulfill his 40-hour volunteer requirement for high school. The younger brother has requested for homework help, in addition, he also expressed a desire to have a job to earn some money before going to high school next year.

As a Mentor, the needs expressed by Mentees are the same as they were before the pandemic, however, these same needs are more challenging to overcome due to the restrictions posed by the pandemic. For instance, the brothers want a job, however, due to the pandemic, the job market is not very receptive with many stores and companies operating in a limited and even remote capacity. However, I do like taking on challenges, and I feel that with a high degree of determination, this challenge can be overcome, and I can virtually help the Mentees in fulfilling their expressed goals.

It has been a thrilling, exciting, and challenging experience volunteering with CCVT during the pandemic. As always, I am fortunate to have been able to contribute my time and knowledge to the clients of CCVT at their time of need.

*By: Pitasanna Shanmugathas
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*

Virtual Volunteer Activities and Events

Facilitating the CCVT Citizenship Class

Volunteer Covid-19 Blues



The greatest pleasure I derive from preparing CCVT clients to take their Citizenship Test is getting to know them. I love the personal interaction and I delight in helping these men and women, some with very low formal education, as they struggle to learn about their new country sufficiently enough to become Canadian citizens.

There is irony that most of them come from countries where recorded history measures many thousands of years, while Canada's is a brief few hundred years. I develop favorites in the Class, usually the Keeners, and tend to teach to them.

For some reason, I feel important when my students respectfully call me "Teacher" and I no longer correct them that I am just a Vol-

unteer. I savour the occasional gift of food that comes with the job and I'm not above hinting that I love curries and hummus. I love to travel and when I can gently pry some information from these clients about life in their home country pre-catastrophe, it's like taking a short vacation.

Alas, none of this happens on a Zoom session! After the initial predictable technical issues (audio on!) and people straggling into the session, I try to engage with a screen full of faces, or just as often black squares with a name on the bottom. Babies cry, phones ring and people walk in and out of vision. Everyone looks bored when these happen but nobody asks questions!

I can't wait until we can get back to normal and I can do things the old-timey way and get to know my students closely again!

*By: Eric Aagard,
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*

Facilitating The English Group Conversation Circle



When the pandemic shut down all my usual volunteer opportunities earlier this year, I was upset. The organizations I volunteered with were not able to work virtually.

I was so happy when I re-connected with Huda Bukhari in November, in this second wave, and she told me that

CCVT had a great need for Volunteers and many activities were being offered virtually.

I was immediately assigned to assist with the English Group Conversational Circle, with a promise for more opportunities after the December holidays and I am excitedly looking forward to that.

My interests are, trying to cook dishes of different

regions of the world, sewing, travel and reading.

I am always happy to be able to help where I can use my skills and experiences. Over the past fifty years, I have worked in many interesting jobs, both in and out of Toronto, but mainly, my profession was teaching. I interrupted my teaching career to work at all three levels of government over different times.

I came to Canada in 1968 and made a commitment to learn as much as I could about my adopted country. I have visited all of Canada's 10 provinces and 3 territories. Canada is such a vast land with a very diverse geography from coast to coast. I encourage all new Canadians to explore and travel in Canada, meet wonderful people and experience local culture.

*By: Ethel Forester
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*

Virtual Volunteer Activities and Events



VIRTUAL

Are you applying for Canadian Citizenship Status?

Do you need help learning the materials for the Citizenship Test?

CCVT is conducting Virtual Classes to prepare Clients for the Citizenship Test!

WHEN: Every Saturday from 11:00am-12.00pm

For Registration

Please Call your CCVT Counsellor to Register:

Main Office at Jarvis: 416-363-1066

Scarborough Office: 416-750-3045

☐ LEAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOUR COUNSELLOR TO CALL YOU BACK!

Main 194 Jarvis St, 2nd Fl., Toronto, ON, Canada M5B 2B7 T: 416.363.1066 F: 416.363.2122 E: mabei@ccvt.org Toll Free: 1.877.292.2288
Scarborough 2401 Eglinton Ave. E., 3rd Fl., Unit 310, Scarborough, ON, Canada M1K 2N8 T: 416.750.3045 F: 416.750.4990
The Hub 1527 Victoria Park Avenue 2nd Fl., Toronto, ON, Canada M1L 2T3 T: 416.750.9600 F: 416.750.9200
Mississauga Office 130 Dundas St. East, #204, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada L5A 3V8 T: 905-277-2288 F: 905-277-8083
20 Palace Road Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5A 1G4 T: 416-364-3184

Accredited to the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims

www.ccvt.org Charity No: 133327908 RR0001

