

*District 9 Susan Lusted, Director*

*Volunteers make our communities a better place to live*

*"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life, that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself" — **Ralph Waldo Emerson***

We see volunteers everywhere. They wrap gifts at Christmas, visit seniors, serve food at shelters. They are volunteers and each and every one of them makes our communities a better place to live. The reasons to volunteer are endless, but as Ralph Waldo Emerson states that volunteering is one of the most beautiful compensations in life, that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.

District 9's member societies contributed over 24 000 volunteer hours in 2016. We are participating in our communities. Just think what Fort Erie would be like without the support of that society who contributes its plant sale revenue to its secondary school. Dunnville works hard with its town and we have all been amused at their participation in the Great Tricycle Race. The money they raised, is serious stuff which benefits such things as the Floral Clock and the fountain. Grimsby works very hard at planting and maintaining the baskets in town and various gardens. Lincoln has the Millenium Forest, the pollinator garden at Ball's Falls. Niagara Falls supports many endeavours including the Dutch Friendship Gardens and donated monies towards trees for this. This year they are enjoying celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Niagara on the Lake supports its local schools by the sale of tulips as one example. They make floral decorations for seniors in the area, how wonderful those recipients must feel. The Legion in Fonthill and the library benefit from the Pelham Garden Club's plantings. Port Colborne maintains and has designed the beds at the Legion and the Historical and Marine Museum. Ridgeway maintains the beds at Maple Park Lodge and has planted new beds to enter Communities in Bloom. Smithville has planted new gardens at the Caistor Library. St. Catharines has planted the Salem Chapel Meditation Garden and the south garden at the British Methodist Episcopal Church a National Historic site which is the home church of Harriet Tubman. These gardens are maintained in partnership with the city of St. Catharines. Thorold maintains the gardens at the library and has erected a raised bed there. Canada 150 tulips planted there should be spectacular. Welland participated in the Niagara Regional Exhibition and their Rose show was again spectacular. Next year they look forward to their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Just think what things the people in our communities would have to go without if we didn't volunteer. We need to be thankful for all of you who give your time and energy to your communities by volunteering. Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote once every four years but each and every time you volunteer, you are voting for the kind of community you would like to live in.

This is National Volunteer Week and at this time, I as your outgoing director, would like to thank everyone who volunteers. As volunteers, you are truly the gift that keeps on giving.