

CFUW AND THE COMMUNITY

*For CFUW Clubs, advocacy includes social action.
Advocacy, activism and social action = civic engagement
It is truly the power of women working together.*

One of our purposes as an organization is to work towards “the common good, locally”. To accomplish this, CFUW members act as local change agents through two methods of community service – partnerships with other community groups or agencies, or on their own endeavour.

CFUW Clubs have worked on a myriad of projects throughout the years, from supporting women’s shelters to assisting with school readiness, to public forums, supporting food banks and so many more. We have raised funds, provided volunteers and organizational help to a variety of causes that matter to members. In the 2013 CFUW survey, *New Beginnings*, showed that most of the Clubs were involved in some form of community outreach.

The *New Beginnings* survey highlighted some great examples of community involvement:

- Projects to help alleviate homelessness/poverty or hunger
 - Food banks, school meal programs, support
- Projects related to health/wellness
 - Series of speakers with local health authority, public library
- Literacy projects
 - Battle of the Books, gifts to libraries, school readiness projects, spelling bees
- Projects related to violence prevention
 - Support to women’s shelters, and to women leaving shelters
- Artistic projects
 - Music festivals, supporting artist-in-residence project
- Community services
 - Meals on Wheels, assisting teen single parents
- Community events
 - Canadian Club speaker series

Clubs actively partner with shelters for women/children, women's advisory groups or councils, libraries, and Grandmothers to Grandmothers, Breaking Bread for Afghanistan, the YW or YMCA, as well as municipal services. Clubs have over the years been involved with help to refugees, from World War II to the current Syrian refugee crisis.

Suggestions for community service normally come from members involved in the community, and the Club’s Executive Board would make the decision to become involved. If the project is major - involves budgets and expenditures - this will have to be presented and authorized by the Club membership.

Types of partnerships CFUW clubs have engaged in:

- Fundraising for local, national or international organizations
- Volunteering and providing administrative support for other organizations, municipalities, schools
- Sponsoring and supporting events
- Coalitions with other like-minded organizations for a cause

If you want to partner with other organizations to find a champion, to bring them into an advocacy campaign, to create a coalition of groups, there are a few ways you can find a partner:

- Members and friends – word-of-mouth is many times the best connection
- Community information service or the local library, which can direct you to potential partners' articles in the local community newspaper
- One of your speakers
- Given our network, many organizations might approach you

Some questions to consider before partnering:

- Are the values of the organization compatible with CFUW?
- Is the partnership long-term or for a single event?
- Will the partnership be formal or more casual?
- Who in the Club reviews and manages the partnership?
- How are the members involved?
- Is there a written contract or is it verbal?
- Are there Terms of Reference for coalitions?
- How is the partnership terminated?
- How do the representatives/volunteers report to the Board?
- Will there be newsletter articles or reports to the members?

How to publicize the partnership and educate the members about the work being done:

- Articles in newsletters and reports to the Executive Board
- Thank you notes to partners, ensuring that they remember and recognize your help
- Communicating with the media by submitting articles concerning work or event
- Using social media

If your Club wants to do its own project, some questions:

- What is the commitment of the Club? Financial, people, time both length and involvement?
- Who is creating the Terms of Reference?
- Who is responsible?
- How will the club raise the money? Who will handle the money?
- Is there a legal commitment?
- How many people are involved?
- How is the project terminated?
- Are governments and government grants involved?
- Does the project require its own Board of Directors? How will they be connected to the Club?
- Does the project need to be advertised in order to gather workers, recipients?
- What reports will go to the Club, and how often?