

Ben Seewald, BA

Receiving the Rising Star Award from London and Region Fundraising Executives



Throughout Ben Seewald's tenure at Laurier (1997 – 2003), he obtained diverse **volunteer experiences** while balancing his studies in communications and English. For three consecutive years, Ben participated as an Orientation Week Icebreaker helping to onboard new students to their university environment. In his final year, he served as a Head Ice managing and leading dynamic groups of students, co-ordinating events, designing student-engagement activities and supporting the Shinerama fundraising initiative. Ben's university volunteering did not stop once classes began. He also committed one day per week assisting developmentally challenged high school students through the Student Development Program and served three years as a Member and one year as President with the Laurier Student Alumni Association (LSA) where he liaised with a team to design and implement a variety of events to help forge relationships between current Laurier students and alumni.

Currently, Ben is the Special Events Manager with the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada (since 2003) and he continues to allocate his personal time to volunteering as both a board member with the London & Region Fundraising Executive and as an Alumni Advisor to the London Central Student Cabinet where he offers students guidance and advice on event planning logistics and operations.

The diverse volunteer roles Ben participated in had a huge **impact on his career development**. More specifically, volunteering solidified for him a realization that he loved working primarily with young adults (especially university/college students) and needed to secure a job that would allow him to entertain and engage this demographic in some way. In addition, it became apparent to Ben through his volunteering that he desired a work environment that would be congruent with his own morals, ethics and commitment to a humanitarian or philanthropic effort. He acknowledges that these moments of "career clarity" could not have been achieved exclusively by sitting in a lecture hall.

Although Ben's volunteer initiatives allowed him to cultivate new connections, it was the **skills he sharpened** through volunteering that helped him land his current role with the Brain Tumour Foundation as he was able to leverage his volunteer experiences both on his résumé and in an interview context. More specifically, Ben's various volunteer roles lent him first-hand exposure to logistics, planning and volunteer management and helped him to hone time-management, professionalism, diplomacy, public speaking and computer skills. Therefore, when Ben entered the job search process following graduation, he had a number of experiences and skills to practically and tangibly apply to the jobs he was pursuing. For instance, when he was asked in an interview: "tell me about a time you had to work in a team" - instead of relying on examples from his summer

jobs as a busboy, host or general labourer, he could more impressively respond to employer questions with examples of his leadership roles with the LSA and highlight his ability to manage volunteer commitments amidst a rigorous schedule of studying.

Ben was recently honoured with the Rising Star Award and was named the Laurier Student Alumni of the Year in 2003 for his duties as president of the LSA. However, Ben claims that the **greatest personal rewards** he has received from volunteering stem from having the opportunity to grow more confident in his skills and meeting many great people who offered wisdom and advice. Despite the innumerable personal benefits obtained from volunteering, Ben believes that your motives for volunteering should come from a place of wanting to improve the world around you and **contribute to your community**. As President of the LSA, Ben had the opportunity to help students get more out of their university experience. As an assistant with the Student Development Program, he was able to assist challenged high school students develop important life-skills. As a Head Icebreaker, Ben experienced the first-hand excitement that goes along with breaking an existing record for the most funds raised for Cystic Fibrosis research.

Ralph Waldo Emerson defined success as “knowing that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived”. This quote highlights Ben’s own belief that there is no greater advantage or benefit than being connected to your community and seeing first hand how even two hours of volunteering per week can make a huge difference in both your own and someone else’s life.

