



Spotlight on ACL Female Volunteer & Former Cadet



Julie Gagnon: more than twenty years of commitment to serving young people

For more than two decades, Julie Gagnon has embodied volunteerism within the Air Cadet Movement in Quebec. Originally from Val-d'Or, she now works as the Abitibi-Hautes-Laurentides regional coordinator, after having held several key roles, including treasurer and president of Squadron 884 in Malartic.

Her journey began in 2001, almost by chance. At the time, her partner was an officer—and later commander—with Squadron 884. Simply wanting to spend more time with him, Julie got involved... without realizing that she had just stepped into a world that would fascinate her for more than 23 years. Little by little, her involvement grew, until in 2017 she was offered the position of regional coordinator, a role she still holds with dedication.

Julie has remained a volunteer all these years primarily because of the cadet program itself and the people who bring it to life. She speaks emotionally about her contact with young people, volunteers, officers, and partners, emphasizing that the cadets' recognition and development are the greatest reward: "The young people give us so much in return... that's our reward as volunteers."

Volunteering is an integral part of her identity. She humorously describes herself as having "fallen into the volunteer pot" at a young age, following her parents in their community commitments. Giving back, breaking out of the daily routine and sometimes even stepping outside her comfort zone: that's what continues to motivate her.

She volunteers an average of four to five hours per week, sometimes more depending on activities, training sessions, meetings, and regional committees. Despite this variable schedule, Julie emphasizes that every moment invested is worth it.



Marie Christine Lalonde (QOVPC Chair) & Julie Gagnon



Among her fondest memories, she particularly recalls the human encounters: exchanges with young people, volunteers, officers, regional and provincial teams, as well as regional activities where collaboration and team spirit between units take on their full meaning. She also proudly recalls certain memorable encounters, notably three meetings with Mr. Welley Gérard Cyr.

Volunteering has profoundly enriched her life. Julie remembers situations where she was able to make a real difference, supporting young people in difficulty, collaborating with schools and parents, and contributing to the development of squadrons, some of which were very small in number. These experiences also helped her forge lasting ties with the local community—schools, municipalities, business people—and opened the door to many projects and collaborations.

In recognition of her outstanding commitment, Julie has received several awards, including the 20-year service medal and the King Charles III Coronation Medal.

To those considering becoming volunteers, her message is simple and sincere: "You have to try it to adopt it." She stresses the importance of presenting the program transparently, without hiding the challenges, while recognizing that today's pace of life makes recruitment more difficult. Despite everything, she remains convinced that volunteering is a deeply rewarding experience, both on a human and personal level.

**'You have to
try it to adopt
it.'**