

MY VIEW



Founder Wayne Fortin



ON BEING THE BEST

Recently I had a long and strained conversation with someone who wanted to become a TIP volunteer, but couldn't believe the "unrealistic" commitment we ask of our volunteers. When he asked which of the training academy dates he should attend, I said *"you need to attend all of them."* He couldn't believe it.

If he hadn't hung up on me when I mentioned the mandatory continuing education meeting, I would have explained why we ask such a major commitment from our volunteers. It really comes down to this: ***"we want to give our clients the very best service we can when they are temporarily helpless and experiencing the worst day in their lives. To give them the best our volunteers need to be highly trained and knowledgeable."***

Ensuring that our volunteers are the **best** (and they are!) takes a tremendous amount of time and energy on everyone's part...the volunteers, the leaders, the trainers. I acknowledge that. But a rigorous, intense and time-consuming training program is the only way I know of guaranteeing that our volunteers are the **best** at what they do.

Another response I give to those who question the extensive training we provide our volunteers is **there is a lot to learn**. I think our volunteers would be the first to admit that they come to TIP with all the misconceptions about helping others that we all have. So there is a certain amount of "untraining" that needs to occur. In addition, to be the best helpers possible our volunteers need to learn (and relearn) how to stay safe, how to set limits, what to say/not say, how to work with respondersand the list goes on and on.

Occasionally I look at the training we offer volunteers and ask *"what can we eliminate?"* I always end up saying *"nothing."* I am acutely aware of the busy lives our volunteers have and I believe that we have an obligation not to waste their time. And we don't. The feedback I've gotten from volunteers over the years is that although our training is intense and time consuming, everything we present is necessary and enables them to stay safe and provide an excellent service in the field.

When a friend of mine decided to have surgery recently he told me he was determined to find the **best** surgeon. I think we can all relate to that. We all want the best, most competent help for

ourselves and those around us, especially when we are faced with major crisis events in our lives. And so it is with our clients. They deserve the **best support** in their time of crisis.

When I'm challenged about TIP's training requirements, I usually put the issue to the "My Family Member Test." I think of a family member and ask, *"If something tragic happened to _____ in my family and a stranger calling themselves a TIP volunteer showed up, how do I want that person to be.... "The Best" or "Just OK?"*

Of course, I want **The Best**, and so do our clients. "Just OK" is not good enough.