

# News to Use

## First Annual International Volunteer Program Managers Appreciation Day to be Held

On Sunday, December 5, 1999, all of you who lead volunteer programs can sit back, relax and bask in the spotlight of the first-ever annual recognition day devoted to your critical corner of global volunteerism!

Thanks to the inspiration and leadership of Nan Hawthorne and her trusty band of steering committee members, December 5th will now and forever henceforth be proclaimed as a day to observe "International Volunteer Program Manager Appreciation Day."

Its purpose is to offer a focal point for giving volunteer program managers a pat on the back for all they do with suggested press releases etc. geared to helping our communities

understand the role of the volunteer manager and their importance to our society.

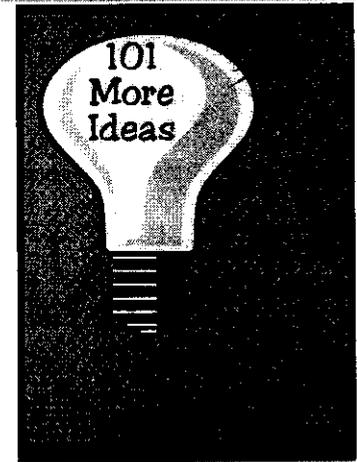
The day will be promoted internationally and will help people understand the responsibilities that rest on the shoulders of the professionals that recruit, motivate, organize, train and direct the energies of volunteers in every nook and cranny of our globe.

Through the years we have all taken pains to recognize volunteers, board members, supportive CEOs and executives who offer their time and talents to making miracles happen in our communities. Never before, however, has there been an attempt to also recognize the hard work of the folks who nurture and lead the programs in which these volunteers work.

As with many new ideas, the inspiration for IVPM day came about serendipitously. A few years ago, Nan Hawthorne, who offers a CyberVPM online discussion group out of her home state of Washington, decided to play an April Fools joke on her subscribers.

She posted a fake news story about the establishment of an annual volunteer program manager recognition day in the U.S. complete with an interview of its champion, Rep. John E. Apfelseid of Washington State. (A play, of course, on Johnny Appleseed.)

In spite of the "April Fool" line at the bottom of the fake news story, she was surprised to find, on the date of the bogus VPM day, that a



subscriber posted congratulations to all his colleagues! The response triggered a "hey, why not?" response in Nan who in turn began to cultivate others from the field who might join her in first exploring, then implementing and promoting a REAL VPM day.

With the help of AVA, the Points of Light Foundation, Volunteer Today, The Thanks Company, Energize, a prominent DOVIA, Mary Merrill & Associates, VMSystems and others, the day began to take shape. A Web site was established and the word began to spread internationally with kindred spirits across the oceans joining in on the celebration.

What the day can become is up to those within the circle of volunteer management, as they find ways to draw attention to the recognition day and educate their communities to the people who are to be recognized.

If you would like to know more, find sample press releases, share or gather great ideas for promotion, etc., *Grapevine* urges you to check

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into Nan's web site: [www.nonprofitspace.org/vpm-day/](http://www.nonprofitspace.org/vpm-day/). You can contact Nan directly with ideas or questions by tapping into her e-mail: [hawthorne@cybervpm.com](mailto:hawthorne@cybervpm.com).

Also, look for more information at the AVA annual conference to be held in Chicago this October.

And a tip of the hat to all of you who manage volunteer programs...on December 5th and every other day of the year!

### **Work/Life Benefits in Corporate America.... Warning Sign Posted!**

Offering work/life benefits to employees is nothing new, but it has grown in popularity by offering workers perks such as day care for children, flex-time or flex-space, tuition assistance, paid time off for education and community service, etc.

A recent study by the American Compensation Association in Phoenix showed that rather than offering all employees such perks, however, more and more companies are using them as a reward that is limited to outstanding performance.

Carol Kleinman, a columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*, commented on this finding and voiced her concern regarding the granting of such rewards: "Though I am pleased that work/life benefits are becoming so mainstream that they're being used as incentives, I also am concerned about the elitism of using them as rewards rather than across the board entitlements for all employees."

Kathie Lingle, national work/life director for KPMG, an accounting and consulting firm based in

Montvale, N.J. agreed with Kleinman... "I don't agree with it as a wholesale approach to work/life...that you don't give these benefits unless they're 'earned'..it defeats the purpose of what work/life is about."

Lingle defines work/life benefits as programs "used by employers to increase productivity and commitment by removing certain barriers that make it hard for people to strike a balance between their work and personal lives."

She pointed out that "some people are low performers precisely because of a lack of this balance, so if you only give these 'rewards' to existing high performers, you're cutting people off who could, with some support, be high performers."

Lingle went on to warn employers that they might be shooting themselves in the foot if they see work/life as a reward rather than a way of getting work done. In such a competitive job market, where the "extras" attract and retain high performers, offering work/life rewards over and above salaries may be on the rise....but with a build-in warning system.

The learning translation for our field of volunteer management is obvious: we must look at ways to enhance the volunteer experience and remove barriers to good folks who wish to work in our programs. To do so, we too must resist the temptation to only reward people for outstanding achievement after the fact and instead, offer options that allow volunteers to become involved and stay as long as possible.

As in any effort to persuade, we need to focus on what we can do to remove the obstacles that prevent

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people from volunteering by creating work/life features that allow them to come into our programs and stay for as long as possible: flex-time, flex-space, child care, liability protection, education, expense reimbursement, job-sharing, or meals/uniforms/transportation for specific assignments, etc. Whatever might enhance their experience and your recruitment efforts.

It may be interesting to watch the evolution of the work/life revolution in business to pick up clues as to how we might incorporate the best practices in our work. And of course, we might also be prepared to answer questions FROM the business community on the same topic when they realize that we have been offering such "added value" for years in the volunteer sector! (*Chicago Tribune* article, Sept. 21, 1999)

### **Need a Pick-Me-Up? Want a Reminder of Why We Do What We Do?**

A recent story in the *Chicago Tribune* (Sept. 19, 1999) reminded these editors of why we believe in volunteerism so much. Tuck this in a drawer at work and glance at it on truly frustrating days...it may offer