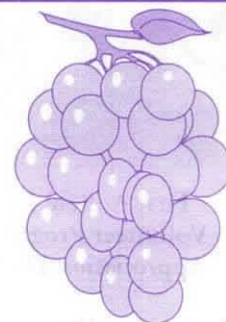


Grapevine



Vat: Sept/Oct ♦ Volunteerism's Newsletter ♦ Vintage: 1999

National Happenings

A flurry of events are happening on the national scene, both in the US and Canada.

In the US, America's Promise is coming under increasing attack in the national media. Pablo Eisenberg, in a letter to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, excoriated America's Promise for its seeming inability to make any measurable progress and suggested that all of its activities be turned over the Points of Light Foundation. His sentiment echoed the comments of many in the field that America's Promise was remarkably slow in organizing itself and making progress on working with the field.

Then, in a stunning move, the *New York Times* of October 8 carried a half-report entitled "Charity Led by Gen. Powell Comes Under Heavy Fire." Some of that fire was coming from the *New York Times* itself. The basic thrust of the article is that "Critics say...America's Promise...has inflated its results, at one point saying it had reached millions more children

than its goal, and has taken credit for corporate contributions and activities in which it had had little involvement."

In addition, America's Promise is being indicted for its ongoing management difficulties, which have led it to already announce that it will be in business far longer than originally intended, and for the secretive nature of the salaries being paid its top officials.

The attack on what progress America's Promise has made is probably most significant, since "measurable results" has been a catch-phrase of the organization. A 1999 report by Pricewaterhouse Cooper delineated massive contributions made by various corporate commitment makers, with 91 commitment makers "reporting" nearly \$300 million in contributions and activities that served more than 10 million children. Follow-up examinations by others suggest that most of these contributions are either wildly inflated or the result of activity that would have taken place even if America's

Promise never existed. Or, as Susan Ellis pointed out, an extrapolation of the results to all of the commitment makers would suggest that America's Promise has already reached more than one out of every five children in the country, a notion which is clearly untrue.

Meanwhile, the White House has announced a "White House Conference on Philanthropy: Gifts to the Future," to be held in late October. The meeting was only announced on October 7th, making it somewhat of a whirlwind experience. The intent of the meeting is to examine giving and determine how young people can be taught the giving ethic. Part of the conference will be broadcast through satellite to downlink sites.

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For further information, check out www.giftstothe future.gov.

Fortunately, there's Canada, that haven of rationality and peaceful collaboration, to show us what might be accomplished by those of vision and goodwill.

The Voluntary Sector Roundtable, a discussion group of charitable and governmental organizations, has released the results of a joint initiative to forge a more effective strategic relationship between government and the voluntary sector.

Among other things, the report calls for a "National Volunteerism Initiative: More and Better Experiences for Volunteers." The goal of the initiative is to:

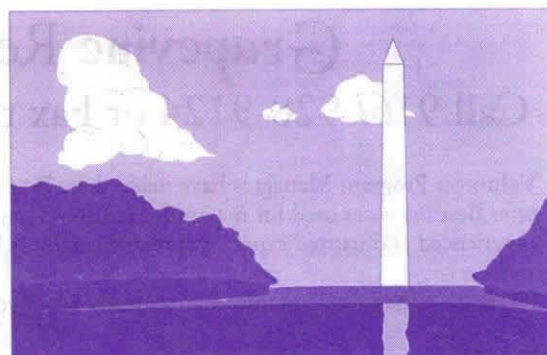
- encourage Canadians to partici-

pate in voluntary organizations;

- improve the capacity of organizations to better benefit from the contribution of volunteers.

This would be accomplished by:

- promoting volunteerism
- encouraging employee volunteerism in the government and private sectors
- enhancing organizations abilities to recruit, support, recognize and retain volunteers
- making the volunteer experience as meaningful as possible for participants



Primary work on this initiative would be accomplished over the next two years and then be ongoing after that.

You can download a copy of the report at the Voluntary Sector Roundtable, www.web.net/vsr-trsb.



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