THIS MONOGRAPH IS ONE OF A SERIES DEVELOPED BY THE MINNESOTA OFFICE ON VOLUNTEER SERVICES AS PART OF VOLUNTEER FUR MINNESUTA: A PROJECT FOR DEVELOPING PUBLIC/PRIVATE Partnerships in Communities. The purpose of these mono-GRAPHS IS TO SURFACE ISSUES WHICH IMPACT THE VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY, IN HOPE OF INITIATING DIALOGUE WHICH WILL RESULT IN SOLUTIONS.

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- THE UNEMPLOYED PERSON IN THE VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE
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- EQUAL ACCESS TO VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION Documenting Volunteer Experience

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## **RECRUITING ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF VOLUNTEERS**

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## MINNESOTA OFFICE ON VOLUNTEER SERVICES Department of Administration

## Recruiting Alternative Sources of Volunteers MONOGRAPH

The volunteer community is vast - an estimated 91 million Americans volunteer. A 1983 Gallup Poll indicates that 55% of American adults; 53% of adult males, and 56% of adult females volunteer. In addition, 32% of adults over 65, 37% of adults with annual incomes under \$10,000 and 55% of adults employed full time volunteer.

It is difficult to know how many additional people would volunteer if stumbling blocks to volunteering were removed or if special appeals and accommodations were made. Greater public awareness of the benefits of volunteer experience could also increase the numbers of volunteers.

Just who actually does volunteer is still primarily dependent on a potential volunteer's perception of the advantages and disadvantages of accepting a particular volunteer position. In marketing a position - no matter what group or source is being approached - the duties and reasons for volunteering must be clearly spelled out from the start.

People come in all shapes, hues, and sizes and they also come with differing backgrounds, motivations and needs. In order for a voluntary organization to effectively recruit individuals from as wide and divergent a source of backgrounds as possible, it will be essential to understand the many incentives and impediments which influence a person's decision to volunteer or not to volunteer.

Voluntary organizations have a responsibility to respond to the individual needs of volunteers. To support and retain volunteers, it is necessary to treat each person as an individual and learn about his/her unique interests, skills, goals and needs. Interestingly, it is just this ability to flex and change to meet individual needs that will allow a volunteer organization to develop the adaptability to appeal to a wider section of alternative sources of volunteers. In other words, you will have learned to treat triangles as triangles and octagons as octagons, and to adjust to their needs.

5/84

The following questions help stimulate thinking about ways to mobilize new volunteers from different segments of society and develop a wider, more varied range of volunteer sources:

- \* Who makes up the volunteer community today?
- \* How can you enlist specific groups of volunteers to help meet the needs of the community?
- \* What segments of the community can be encouraged to volunteer? What are their special needs?
- \* What can be done to support and retain volunteers from diverse backgrounds and situations once they have been recruited?
- \* What responsibilities do organizations have toward the individual needs of volunteers?

In answering these questions it is advantageous to take a look at a variety of alternative sources of volunteers. Each group has unique needs and circumstances which must be addressed in order to derive maximum assistance.

**RETIRED VOLUNTEERS:** 

Older volunteers bring with them a lifetime of experience and skills which can be invaluable to voluntary organizations. In recruiting older volunteers, it is helpful to emphasize opportunities they will have to socialize and utilize their knowledge. Since many older people are on fixed-incomes any effort to defray expenses will often make it easier for them to volunteer. Placements that are close to home, require little winter driving, and few evening hours, are often most desirable. In addition, consideration might be given to seasonal scheduling, that meets the preferences of individual volunteers.

**EMPLOYED VOLUNTEERS:** 

Many people who are employed also volunteer. Organizations wanting to involve employed persons will need to be creative about scheduling. Is it possible that some volunteer opportunities which customarily take place during daytime hours could be scheduled in the evening? Are short-term positions possible for those who cannot volunteer on an on-going basis? Draw upon the specialized skills and expertise of employed persons, but also keep in mind that for many individuals volunteer work is a release from the routine of their daily work. Also, realize that volunteer experience may be

a route toward career advancement for employed people; therefore, volunteer records, verification of training and experience, and recognition are important to these volunteers.

INDIVIDUALS FROM DIVERSE ENTHNIC AND MINORITY GROUPS:

To attract people from a variety of ethnic groups it is necessary to become familiar with their backgrounds, values and cultures. Be sure that literature will be understandable and contain language which is meaningful to the particular group. Advertise through newspapers, TV and radio shows with large minority or ethnic audiences. Include equal opportunity statements on all literature. Photographs and art work should include people from a mix of racial and ethnic groups. Seek representatives from miniority populations to serve in leadership roles and assist in networking with others.

**UNEMPLOYED VOLUNTEERS:** 

Individuals who are unemployed, but seeking employment, can provide essential services to organizations while strengthening their own skills and developing valuable work histories. When involving unemployed persons as volunteers, it is necessary to make sure that they will have flexibility in work hours in order to assure that they can continue to "actively seek work." In addition, thoughtful placements will assist in obtaining practical experience and networking contacts for the unemployed. Reimbursement for expenses such as transportation, parking, child care, training, and materials is especially important. Inform unemployed volunteers about relevant community and self-help services for the unemployed.

STUDENTS VOLUNTEERS AND INTERNS:

The primary motivation for students and interns to volunteer is to augment their education through "real life" experiences which provide an opportunity to apply acquired knowledge. Students will benefit from volunteer positions which directly relate to their studies. Careful supervision and communication about philosophies and methods implemented within the volunteer setting, as well as opportunities to discuss and analyze their volunteer experience, is particularly helpful to attaining educational goals.

Emphasis placed on learning experiences, assessment of skills and verification of competencies will be motivating factors for students. In addition, accommodations such as flexible scheduling and defrayed expenses will make volunteering more feasible for students.

#### TRANSITIONAL VOLUNTEERS:

Transitional volunteers are individuals who are recovering from mental illness or emotional difficulties. These individuals have been encouraged to do volunteer work by mental health or other social service professionals.

The goal is to increase the transitional volunteer's knowledge about the community, help him/her to develop work and leisure skills, and assist him/her with establishing new relationships and experiences.

When doing outreach to transitional volunteers, (or professionals who might refer them), it is important to note opportunities to meet people, learn about work environments and try new tasks. Expectations and support services available to transitional volunteers should be clearly explained to help in determining whether a particular placement is appropriate. In order to retain transitional volunteers, thoughtful supervision and on-going support is required.

#### **REHABILITATION VOLUNTEERS:**

Rehabilitation volunteers are people who are recovering from a physical illness or injury. In some cases, these volunteers are seeking to maintain or build new skills prior to reentering the world of paid work. In other cases, people who will not be working for pay, would like to continue to make meaningful contributions to their community. Others may want to maintain (or to reestablish) their ability to live independently. Recovering from illness or injury can be extremely stressful, especially when adjustments in life style will be necessary. Reinforcing statements about each person's value and contribution will be a source of reassurance for volunteers going through rehabilitation. Keep in mind the unique factors surrounding each person's situation. Gradually adapt responsibilities to meet the new capabilities of individuals as they recover. Written permission, from the volunteer, to communicate with his/her medical professionals may be necessary to the success of the volunteer experience.

COMMUNITY SERVICE OR ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING VOLUNTEERS:

Community service volunteers are people who have been given a choice by the court to donate services to the community in lieu of a fine or court sentence. The number of hours a community service volunteer will donate is determined by the court and varies from situation to situation. When working with community service or alternative sentencing volunteers communicate with the referring officer or organization regarding any special considerations in determining a volunteer assignment. It is worthwhile for an organization to maintain a record of short term projects or needs which could be fulfilled by those community service volunteers who are required to make short term, intensive commitments. Since many community service volunteers also have paid positions, it is necessary to identify tasks which can be adapted to the work schedule of the volunteer. Preplanning by the organization, along with a receptivity to tailoring the volunteer position to the individual circumstances, will facilitate effective and productive placement of community service volunteers.

**DISABLED VOLUNTEERS:** 

Persons with physical or mental disabilities can be successful volunteers. In most cases people know their own capabilities and limitations. Ask each volunteer about his/her interests and goals, as well as tasks he/she can perform. Also ask about accommodations and adaptations which reasonably can be made by the organization to enable participation by the particular volunteer.

Check to be sure that consideration is given to the following:

-Reserved parking for the handicapped.

-Wheelchair accessibility.

-Restroom accessibility.

- -Access to public transit or other assistance with transporting the volunteer.
- -Adaptation of tasks, or division of responsibilities, according to the needs and capabilities of specific volunteers.
- -Development of an individual plan for volunteer involvement and supervision.

When recruiting volunteers clearly indicate that the organization will make every effort to accommodate disabled volunteers.

HOMEBOUND AND RESIDENTIAL FACILITY VOLUNTEERS:

Some people find that due to mobility problems, family responsibilities or other reasons, it is difficult or impossible to leave their homes to volunteer. Frequently, these individuals would happily volunteer on the condition that tasks could be performed from their residence. Residential facilities for the elderly or disabled often provide organized, supervised activities for residents. Preparing large mailings, collating materials, knitting or sewing clothes and repairing or making equipment, are examples of the many and varied tasks which can be successfully carried out by homebound persons. Organizations might seek homebound individuals as appropriate needs arise, offering to deliver and pick up materials necessary to perform a specific task. Detailed instructions need to be given for each project. It is advisable to check on progress periodically during the course of the volunteer project.

HOMEMAKER VOLUNTEERS:

Homemakers often find additional fulfillment through volunteer activities. In many instances, homemakers prefer to volunteer during school day hours so they may spend after school hours with their families. Other homemakers, who have very young children, may be willing to volunteer if child care is available; however, keep in mind the nap schedules of young children. Organizations can help parents volunteer by providing child care or reimbursing child care costs.

In feasible situations, parent volunteers may want to bring their children with them to the volunteer site. This is particularly rewarding when children can significantly contribute to the volunteer experience. A good example would be when families visit the elderly at health care facilities.

Many homemakers view volunteerism as an avenue for maintaining, cultivating, and documenting skills during child rearing years. They may look upon volunteer work as a transitional experience while preparing for paid work which they will seek in future years. Training opportunities are particularly meaningful for people who desire personal growth experiences which will help them to be effective volunteers and also assist in their personal lives.

### RELIGIOUS/SERVICE AND SOCIAL ACTION GROUPS:

Members of religious, service and social action groups usually have a common belief system or set of values which members hope to act upon in their daily living. Volunteerism is one way to express ideas and practice beliefs. To draw upon the services of these groups, organizations will appeal to the interests and priorities of each group. Individual volunteers or groups of volunteers can be recruited to help with on-going or short-term projects.

Recognizing and crediting the contributions of these groups will strengthen the likelihood of their on-going or future commitments. Since groups often have an annual plan, it is necessary to anticipate needs and make requests far in advance. On the other hand, the cause orientation of religious, service and social action groups may stimulate their members to come forward on shorter notice during times of crisis.

YOUTH GROUPS:

Youth organizations frequently encourage their participants to provide community service. These groups intend to build the philosophy of volunteersim, introduce youth to new experiences and teach skills. When working with youth volunteers it is necessary to consider their busy schedules. Short-term or time limited positions work out best.

Usually young people like to volunteer in pairs or groups, as this is a time in life when friendships are particularly important. Also, because younger volunteers do not have cars, transportation arrangements such as car pools need to be set up in advance. Close supervision and continuous communication will help young people to be successful in their first volunteer activities.

SELF-HELP GROUPS:

Self-help groups are based on the premise that people want to take control of their own destiny and help others in like situations. Members of self-help groups share a common need or concern and provide mutual assistance. Members who have overcome difficulties or achieved success, often provide role models or serve as mentors for others who aspire to do the same. While the primary focus of self-help groups is to support and assist one-another, representatives of these organizations will respond to the needs of other programs concerned with the same issues. For example, mem-

bers of chemical dependency self-help groups might be interested in community drug prevention projects or willing to work as counselors for youth who are having family difficulties.

Again, the primary concern of the voluntary organization is to treat each volunteer as an individual. Caution should be taken not to stereotype volunteers by the group from which they are recruited. Do not invade someone's privacy by probing too far into his/her personal life. Rather, be alert to needs of volunteers on-the-job and communicate frequently on an individual basis. Take advantage of opportunities to participate in training sessions about cultural differences and the needs of specific populations.

Effective volunteer programs and organizations will establish an array of support services which will accommodate volunteers from diverse situations, thereby making it possible for more people to volunteer. It is everyone's responsibility to work toward equal access to volunteer opportunities for all Americans and help to build a strong and viable volunteer community

Many people will volunteer simply because someone has invited them and expressed confidence in their ability to make a worthwhile contribution. Others need to be drawn out, slightly coaxed and slowly guided along, while others need a challenge and a sense of competing (at least against themselves or a task). Understanding that there are many types of people and types of motivations is the key to recruiting alternative sources of volunteers.

# Traditional and Nontraditional Volunteers How To Tap All Of Your Resources

Paula J. Beugen. Consultant on Volunteerism Minnesota Office on Volunteer Services.

Paula Beugen is the Consultant on Volunteerism for the Minnesota Office on Volunteer Services. She is a Board Member and Issues Committee Chair for the Minnesota Association of Volunteer Directors. Ms. Beugen was the program supervisor for a clearinghouse for volunteers for eight years, where she developed many volunteerism-related resource materials. She has actively participated in strategic planning for a range of public and private voluntary organizations.

There is no magic. Anyone who has tried to recruit volunteers for any period of time realizes the complexity of the task. More often than not one's commitment, persistence and creativity are key indicators as to who will be successful as a recruiter of volunteers. Those who have experienced success understand that the end result is well worth the effort.

Of course there are always those very fortunate organizations which seem to have "instant success" and consistently attract many more volunteers than can possibly be placed. These organizations are exceptions to the rule. Most organizations with strong volunteer recruitment programs have accomplished their goals through a carefully thought-out, step-by-step, recruitment strategy. Usually their representatives have worked long and hard to develop one or more loyal constituency (continuing source of volunteers and support).

Strategic planning for recruitment means:

- Acquiring an understanding of the basic principles of volunteer recruitment.
- Creating a detailed task, cost, and time-oriented recruitment action plan.
- Involving significant "others" in working toward recruitment objectives.
- Targeting and responding to the unique needs of recruitment sources.
- Developing constituencies by nurturing and supporting volunteers from their first contact with the organization through their final day of volunteer services.

When preparing for a recruitment campaign keep these facts in mind. It will be necessary to saturate the community with a variety of recruitment appeals. Do not rely on only one or two recruitment methods. People will become educated about needs and opportunities with **repeated** exposure over a period of time. They are most likely to respond to a personal, one-to-one, approach which follows a highly visible general promotional campaign. **Many individuals willingly donate their services once someone has noticed and expressed confidence in their skills and capabilities.** There may be both incentives and impediments which influence a person's desire or ability to volunteer. Addressing these areas from the outset will influence initial and continued response.

It is wise to start with a general promotional campaign which is then narrowed down to specific audiences. The

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general promotional campaign consists of marketing the overall organization, as well as presenting specific volunteer needs to the general public. While general promotions may be intensified during certain months of the year, according to each organization's program cycles, these efforts also must be on-going.

First the public needs to know that an organization exists, its purpose, and that it is reputable. The image of an organization will affect whether or not an individual will want to be identified with it as a volunteer. Public knowledge and perceptions can be built through news releases, feature stories, flyers, presentations, reports and so forth, which describe the organization's activities and achievements. To have a greater impact, this information might be broken down into digestable segments and disseminated at regular and timely intervals through a variety of approaches and media. Beyond this, word-of-mouth testimonials about the needs and professionalism within an organization, along with comments about satisfactions and rewards experienced by its volunteers, members and/or clientele, will enhance public sentiment toward the organization and ultimately receptivity to volunteering.

Part of the general promotional campaign is to emphasize the idea that not only does the organization have a volunteer program, but its needs are pressing and its volunteers are really wanted. Appeals which are specific, and are designed so that potential volunteers can assess whether or not they would be interested, strong candidates, tend to be most successful and efficient for the organization and the individual.

While there is a rationale for establishing volunteer recruitment around a "skills bank" model, a convincing case can be made for the "recruit upon request" model. A skills bank is a way of organizing a volunteer program so that the

"There is no magic. Anyone who has tried to recruit volunteers... realizes the complexity of the task."

skills and interests of potential volunteers are on record. Individuals are then recruited from the skills bank at a later time, as needs arise within an organization. "Recruit upon request" implies that someone has identified a specific need and initial recruitment appeals are tailored to the exact specifications of the particular position. The latter requires consistent pre-planning and commitment on the part of the organization for each volunteer position, facilitates appropriate matching of volunteers to requests and reduces instances where volunteers are enlisted but not called upon for services.

Consider these six questions prior to establishing a recruitment strategy and action-plan.

What types of volunteers does the organization need in

- From where are current volunteers coming? Consider demographics including age, sex, income, and ethnic background. Also, examine factors such as proximity to the organization, motivations, values and philosophies.
- From where aren't volunteers coming and why? Weigh costs to the volunteer, travel distance, time limitations as well as personal and volunteer position-related support services which are or are not available through the organization.
- What's "in it" for the volunteer and the community? Examine whether or not the organization's message is really getting across. Competition for volunteer time is keen. Ask why someone would come to this organization rather than volunteer someplace else, or elect to use free time in other ways.
- How creative and flexible is the organization willing to be in order to fulfill its mission, and what investments is it willing to make? Examine financial, time, staff and volunteer commitments.
- From where could volunteers be recruited? Evaluate answers to previous questions, assessing new resources which could be tapped or existing resources which could be expanded under the proper conditions.

Go for it! Create a detailed recruitment action-plan. Decide who will do what, where, by what means, for what reasons. Determine who could be most effective in presenting the recruitment appeal in a meaningful way for each recruitment audience. In each instance, would this person be an official, top administrator, particular staff member, a peer of the potential new volunteer, community leader, or someone who has received and benefited from similar volunteer services?

Explore possible sources of volunteers, both traditional and non-traditional, such as: retired persons, employed persons, students, interns, career motivated persons, individuals from diverse ethnic groups, homemakers, unemployed persons seeking job re-entry, self-help groups, peers of the organization's clientele, transitional volunteers (individuals who are recovering from mental illness), rehabilitation volunteers (individuals who are recovering from a physical illness), community service volunteers (individuals who have been asked by the court and have agreed to donate services to the community in lieu of a fine or court sentence), residential facility volunteers (individuals who reside in a long term care facility and might be willing to help by working individually or as a group at the long term care facility site), homebound persons who prefer or need to work from home, religious or social action groups, disabled persons, youth groups, special interest groups, and service clubs. Examine the volunteer needs of the organization, selecting target recruitment audiences which are appropriate for specific volunteer positions.

List all of the possible means of recruitment and choose the methods which will be carried out immediately, as well as those which will be pursued on a long-range basis. Pace activities in order to continuously maintain a high profile in the community. Include a time-line for each activity. Implement a variety of the following simultaneously: radio and TV public service announcements, newspaper articles, organizational newsletter articles, church/synagogue bulletins, speaking engagements, personal letters to specific individuals, billboards (perhaps collectively with similar organizations), personal phone calls, promotion of volunteers who are already in the ranks, displays, community special events, networking by current volunteers and staff

Minnesota Office on Volunteer Services

500 Rice Street, St. Paul, MN 55155

members, posters, brochures, coffee parties, cable TV, door knocking and so forth. Consider the cost in relationship to the organization's budget when deciding which methods of recruitment will be utilized. Also, evaluate whether or not costs can be brought down by securing donations and direct volunteer assistance in implementing the recruitment plan. Try to identify what methods of recruitment would have the greatest appeal and impact for each target recruitment audience.

Now that the audiences have been narrowed down, ask what can be done to emphasize the incentives and eliminate or minimize the barriers to volunteering for each population of volunteers. For example, is it possible to arrange for college or continuing education credit for volunteer training or experience, offer child care, document experience and provide employment references, defray expenses, arrange for car pools, provide for advancement in volunteer opportunities, be more flexible about the time of day during which people volunteer, and so forth. If the answer to these possibilities are yes, or if other possibilities have been agreed upon, make sure people know about available support services during the recruitment campaign. Then, once people have been recruited, all promises must be kept.

Examine each recruitment appeal. Check to see that it is clear and understandable. Make sure that it takes into consideration the background, culture, and educational experiences of particular audiences. To be sure of clarity and appeal, ask a few people to review and comment honestly about each appeal.

Recruitment is a continuous process. An essential part of recruitment is retention of volunteers once they have expressed interest or have made a volunteer commitment. To increase retention, it is necessary to respond immediately

"Go for it! Create a detailed recruitment action plan. Decide who will do what, where, by what means and for what reason."

to expressions of interest in volunteering and to ensure that volunteers receive appropriate training, encouragement and supervision throughout the course of their volunteer experience. Of course, every volunteer will want to know he/ she has truly made a difference to someone as result of his/ her volunteer contribution.

In order to tap into the full range of available resources, an organization will carefully follow a detailed plan. Every volunteer recruitment appeal will be designed and redesigned to match the specific audience. Individuals with diverse backgrounds and from all levels of the organization will support and actively participate in the volunteer recruitment process. Members of the recruitment team will understand that with patience, practice and persistence volunteers will come forward; and depending upon an organization's creativity, commitment and concern, volunteers will become dedicated assistants and loyal advocates.

March-April 1984

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IOTE :	This is a partial listing of N.O.V.S. Resource Library material pertaining to alternative Sources of Volunteers. Additional materials will be added to the library on an on-oping or other basis. To borrow these materials for a three week time period, write to Minnesota Office on Volunteer Services 500 Rice Street St. Paul, Minnesota 55155; or,	
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