

Aggressive Recruitment of Volunteers Urged for Basic Social Services

By MERIN WEXLER

DENVER

Non-profit organizations must develop aggressive new strategies to recruit volunteers if they are to meet growing demands for services, participants in the annual meeting of the Association of Volunteer Administrators said here.

Mayor Henry Cisneros of San Antonio told the volunteer managers that within the next decade, volunteers would probably have to provide many of the basic social services that were previously performed by government, or the country could face an economic disaster.

"We'll need more people to do the work, and we can't pay all of them," said Mayor Cisneros. "The days when we can just give people programs and deliver services is past. They have to participate."

Citing demographic changes in the nation's age and ethnic composition, as well as the federal deficit, Mr. Cisneros said states and cities need to work on ways to expand the number of people who volunteer.

Those efforts should focus mainly on groups that have not traditionally volunteered in large numbers, such as people who are members of minority groups, single, older than age 50, or handicapped, said Mayor Cisneros and several experts on volunteering.

Many Not Asked to Serve

Their suggestions were consistent with a survey on volunteerism released last week by Independent Sector showing that many potential volunteers had not been asked to serve:

► Three-fourths of those who responded to the poll believed they should volunteer to help others, but half had not done so in the past year.

► In addition, three-fourths said that while they had not refused to volunteer when asked, only 45 per cent said they had volunteered.

► The study also found that single people, young people, and members of minority groups were underrepresented in the volunteer work force.

"There are many more volunteers than we've ever envisioned, if we are creative," said Charlotte J. Lunsford, national chairman of volunteers for the American Red Cross and co-chairman of a group that has been studying the role of volunteers in the year 2000. "We haven't been looking properly. We can't look for the leisure women any more. We need a more diverse volunteer corps."

Experts on demographic trends and volunteer efforts said that non-profit organizations should keep the following items in mind as they shape new recruitment efforts:

► By 2000, the population of people over age 50 will be twice as large as it is now. More of those people will be retired, because more and more businesses will be offering early-retirement packages so they can reduce their staffing costs. Such individuals could be especially useful as volunteers, but administrators cautioned that some non-profit managers might feel threatened by an influx of people

with substantial managerial experience.

► Baby boomers—people now between 25 and 41—tend to demand active leadership roles and want to participate in decision making. They may also prefer to use their management experience rather than getting involved in the delivery of direct services, and they often expect to be treated as professionals and evaluated by their supervisors.

► Handicapped people may be more inclined to volunteer if free transportation is provided. People who must stay home because of lengthy illnesses can help non-profit groups by doing certain

kinds of work on personal computers.

► Efforts to attract minority volunteers should be developed with an awareness of cultural and language differences. For example, Hispanics often want to volunteer with other members of their families, rather than volunteering alone, said Alicia Cuadon, who is on the board of the Denver Red Cross.

► Welfare recipients, including those who are required to work part time, are more likely to volunteer if organizations provide child-care facilities and reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses such as transportation and meals.

► Computers can help match volunteers to appropriate jobs. For example, the American Association of Retired Persons has a computerized data base that contains the names of 40,000 people who want to volunteer.

'Corporate Volunteerism' Thrives

Volunteer experts said that businesses had become increasingly involved in efforts to encourage their workers to volunteer.

"Corporate volunteerism is really coming out, and mostly in these last few years. Our effort is to encourage it," said Jeanne Bradner, director of the Governor's Office for Voluntary Action in Illinois.

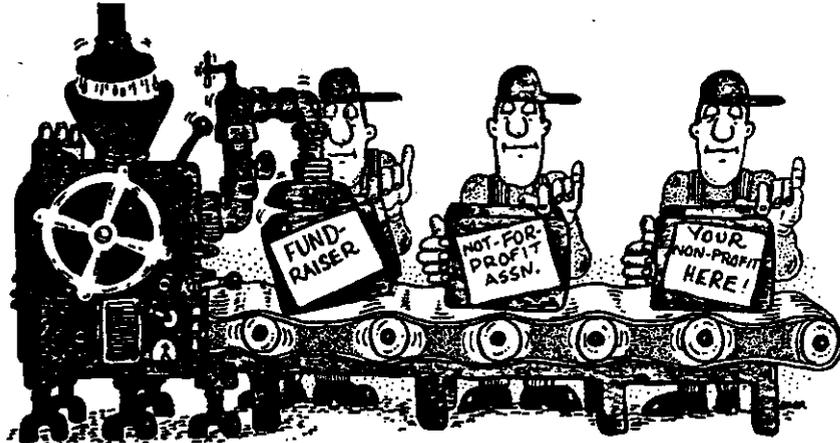
"With all the corporate mergers and acquisitions, they need to find a unifying spirit of working together," she said.

"Also, corporations are so often hit up for money, they're realizing that instead they can make it easy for workers to volunteer. It's part of the corporate family image that I think corporations like to work on."

Volunteer administrators said reaching out to new volunteers could be costly.

Efforts such as providing child care, high technology, and reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses would probably require some form of financial support from state governments, they said, since non-profit groups often cannot afford such steps on their own.

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