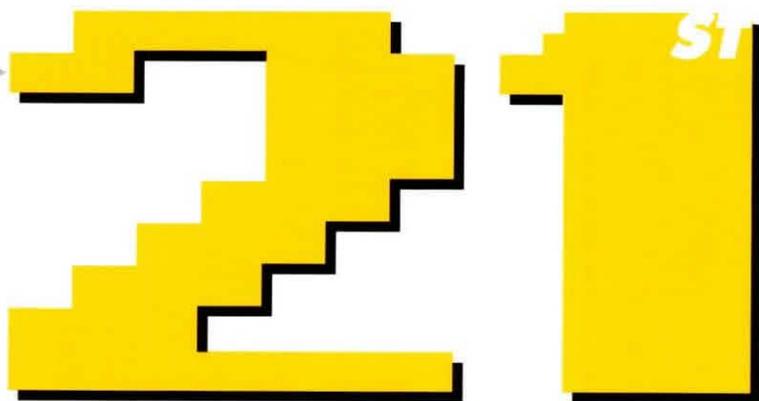


TAKING VOLUNTEERISM  
into the



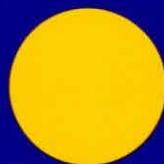
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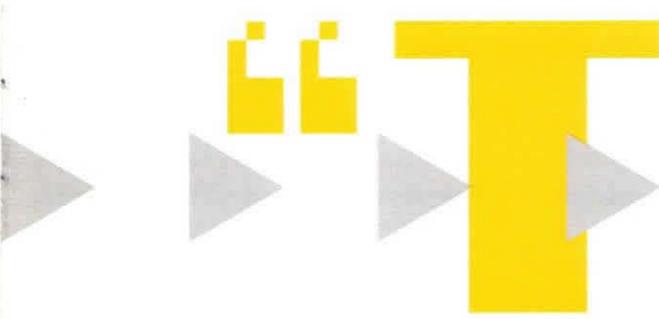


American Red Cross



This brochure presents some conclusions from the American Red Cross Volunteer 2000 Study and is based on copyrighted material by the American National Red Cross and *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*. Permission to reprint is gratefully acknowledged. Further information about the Volunteer 2000 Study may be found in the Fall 1989 edition of *The Journal of Volunteer Administration* (Boulder, Colo.), Vol. VIII, No. 1.





**he only gift is a  
portion of thyself."**

In that brief sentence Ralph Waldo Emerson captured the essence of volunteerism.

Volunteerism is a wonderful state of mind. It urges us to step outside the routine of our daily lives. It propels us to act when we perceive a need. It reminds us that even though our actions are not always selfless, there is great reward in accomplishing a worthwhile task.

Throughout American history, volunteers have helped shape our nation. Now, as we approach a new century, the needs of our society are changing—and so are the responsibilities, needs, and identity of our volunteer force.

To prepare for the twenty-first century, the American Red Cross conducted a comprehensive study of current issues in volunteerism. The results appeared in the Red Cross's three-volume Volunteer 2000 Study. This booklet summarizes some of those findings.

Maintaining a strong volunteer force is a natural concern for the Red Cross. During its first decades the Red Cross was directed and staffed entirely by volunteers. Today—more than 100 years later—the ratio of volunteers to paid staff is still 50 to 1.

More than one million volunteers work throughout the more than 2,700 chapters of the American Red Cross. They are considered central to the organization—not mere extensions of paid staff. Their jobs range from service and middle management to the highest echelons of leadership. They bring with them experience, skill, dedication, clout, passion, and an unparalleled ability to reach out to the American public.

The Volunteer 2000 Study reveals the priceless contributions volunteers have made at the Red Cross and in our society. By sharing the results of its study, the Red Cross hopes to help forge an even more influential and satisfying role for volunteers in America in the century to come.



# TEN PRINCIPLES

**1**

*We can broaden our nation's volunteer force by removing barriers to volunteering.*

**2**

*Volunteers are not "free."*

**3**

*Volunteers contribute more than meets the eye.*

**4**

*"Volunteer" does not mean "amateur."*

**5**

*Volunteers and the organizations they serve must meet each other's expectations.*

**6**

*Volunteers must never be exploited.*

**7**

*Volunteers make excellent middle and senior managers.*

**8**

*When recruiting volunteers, it is more important to place the right person in the right job than to attract volunteers at random.*

**9**

*We can help shape government policies on volunteerism.*

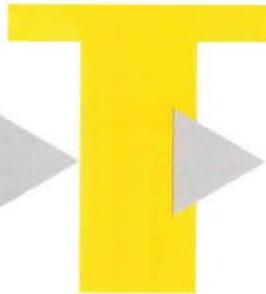
**10**

*Everyone benefits when nonprofit organizations collaborate.*

# REDEFINING VOLUNTEERISM

**Volunteers are individuals who reach out beyond the confines of their paid employment and of their normal responsibilities to contribute time and service to a not-for-profit cause in the belief that their activity is beneficial to others as well as satisfying to themselves.**

—*Volunteer 2000 Study*



The Volunteer 2000 Study presents a new definition of “volunteer.” It still contains all the traditional elements of volunteerism:

- Service to something beyond oneself;
- A willingness to contribute time and effort without pay; and
- A donation of time and effort beyond one’s normal responsibilities

But the new definition broadens the traditional concept significantly:

- It acknowledges that volunteers themselves benefit from their charitable activities—yet it does not pass judgment on their motives for volunteering.
- It includes employees who volunteer on company time if the service they provide is not part of their regular job.
- It encompasses the growing number of volunteers in government programs and in political campaigning or lobbying.
- It excludes anyone who works without pay for a nonprofit organization while being paid for that service by a third party. For instance, the “loaned executive” or the “pro bono” services of a law firm are considered in-kind donations by firms instead of volunteerism by individuals.
- It does not rule out training, stipends, vouchers, or other benefits meant to assist volunteers to overcome financial barriers.

The new definition of “volunteer” is nonjudgmental, flexible, and inclusive. It takes into account the complexities of the volunteer world and of our rapidly changing society.

Keeping this new definition in mind, the Volunteer 2000 Study explores what it developed as the fundamental principles of successful volunteerism. Ten of the most basic principles are presented in the pages that follow.



## *We Can Broaden Our Nation's Volunteer Force by Removing Barriers to Volunteering*

Although many people speak of a “shrinking volunteer pool,” just the opposite is true:

- Women who work outside the home, who were expected to drop out of the volunteer force, are volunteering at a greater rate than women who work at home (though individually they donate fewer hours than those who work at home).
- Students have shown renewed interest in volunteering.
- Retiree groups and other organizations have promoted volunteerism among senior citizens through talent banks and information networks.
- An increased interest in religion has stimulated volunteer participation in programs sponsored by religious groups.

Unfortunately, some segments of the population have not been able to increase their participation significantly. Largely underrepresented are such enormous potential resources as—

- Minorities.
- Low-income families.
- The disabled.
- The homebound.
- Those without transportation.

But before such groups can participate fully, stumbling blocks must be removed.

### **Barriers to Volunteerism**

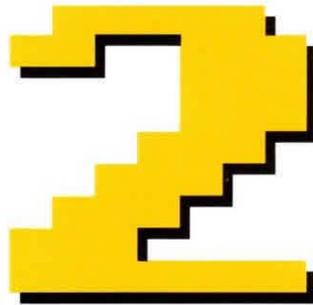
- *Language Differences*—The words associated with volunteerism sometimes don't exist or have different connotations in other languages. Also, volunteer recruitment is too rarely conducted in foreign languages.
- *Cultural Differences*—Certain aspects of volunteerism—highly structured committees, work outside the local community, intrusion into other people's private lives, to name a few— are alien to some cultures.



- *Economic Hardship*—While many people from low-income households gladly work without pay for causes they believe in, they often can't afford such expenses as transportation, child or elder care, training, lunches, or uniforms.
- *Physical Impairment*—The handicapped still have trouble accessing many work areas, and too much communication still never reaches the sight or hearing-impaired.
- *Time Constraints*—Too many volunteer opportunities are still limited to normal working hours.
- *Barriers to Togetherness*—Too few opportunities exist for couples or entire families to volunteer together.
- *Distance*—Despite strides in communications that permit a decentralized workplace, too many programs still require that volunteers work on-site at central locations, thereby excluding the homebound or those without transportation.

Fortunately, with some effort and imagination, these barriers and others can be eliminated. One of the Red Cross's most exciting success stories involves homebound volunteers who have become "command centers" for disaster relief operations.

Homebound volunteers' continued presence near their phones has allowed them to bolster 24-hour phone coverage and emergency communications and has made them central and involved members of their communities.



## *Volunteers Are Not "Free"*

Many people believe volunteers provide "free" services. But this popular notion is dismissed by those who recruit volunteers or administer volunteer programs.

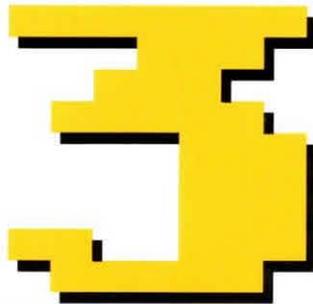
Working with volunteers entails many costs. An organization must recognize and willingly bear those costs if it is to maintain a strong, well-qualified work force.

### **Some Costs Associated With Volunteers**

- Volunteer involvement generates administrative costs. Like their paid counterparts, volunteers must be recruited, placed, trained, supervised, and tracked.
- A volunteer—like a paid employee—needs logistical support: work space, supplies, information, a telephone, staff assistance, identification, and other job necessities.
- Volunteers need a chance to develop beyond their immediate job requirements and grow in both technical and interpersonal skills.
- Recognition—acknowledging a person's contributions to an organization—must be accorded to both paid and volunteer staff. Plaques, awards, social functions, and other forms of recognition require time and money.

Recognizing the costs of volunteer involvement is the first step toward accepting those costs and budgeting for them.





## *Volunteers Contribute More Than Meets the Eye*

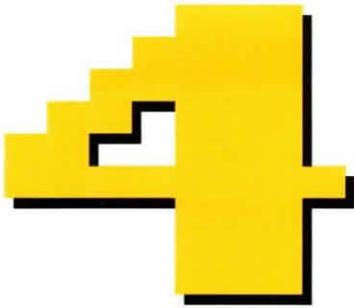
Volunteers contribute far more than merely accomplishing specific duties. Once an organization understands this, it willingly shoulders the costs of volunteer involvement.

According to comments frequently heard at the Red Cross about volunteers' true worth, a volunteer—

- Extends an organization's capacity to deliver services.
- Personifies "service" and "humanitarianism."
- Provides the image and credibility that allow an organization to ask for money and other contributions.
- Shares talents and expertise.
- Brings corporate discipline and a sense of realism to the non-profit world.
- Opens doors to particular segments of the community.
- Is particularly well-received as a fund-raiser.

- Often brings an element of passion and enthusiasm to the workplace.
- Often is an innovator or risk-taker.
- Provides continuity and memory during times of paid staff turnover.

When you consider that a volunteer makes these contributions *in addition* to performing a regular assignment, it's easy to see why organizations reap a tremendous return on their investment in volunteers.



## *“Volunteer” Does Not Mean “Amateur”*

Management expert Peter Drucker recently observed that more and more organizations are selecting, training, and managing volunteers as “unpaid staff” rather than as “well-meaning amateurs.”

There is good reason not to label volunteers as amateurs:

- Consider the electrician who spends his spare time working without pay at a project to rehabilitate inner-city housing, or the lawyer who donates her legal advice to a favorite cause. These are *professionals* volunteering in their area of expertise—they are *not* amateurs.
- Volunteers who receive training in an unfamiliar task and can perform that task competently are as professional as any paid employee with the same experience.

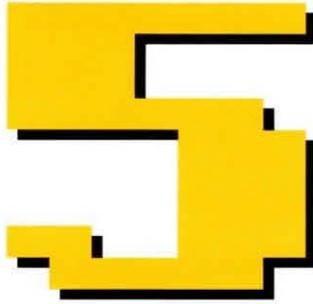
Volunteer programs that emphasize professionalism—

- Build a volunteer’s self-esteem and confidence.
- Enhance client satisfaction.
- Ensure that our society will have enough faith in nonprofit programs to continue supporting them with donations of time and money.



### **How to Encourage Professionalism in Volunteer Programs**

- Skillful recruitment and job matching will ensure that a volunteer endows an organization with a lifetime of professional experience, including well-honed talents and skills.
- When assigning volunteers a new task, ensure that they immediately receive orientation, training, supervision, hands on experience, and evaluation.
- Establish apprenticeship stages when teaching skills that take time to develop.
- Avoid wording that implies volunteers are not professional, such as the unfortunate phrase “volunteers and professional staff.”



### *Volunteers and the Organizations They Serve Must Meet Each Other's Expectations*

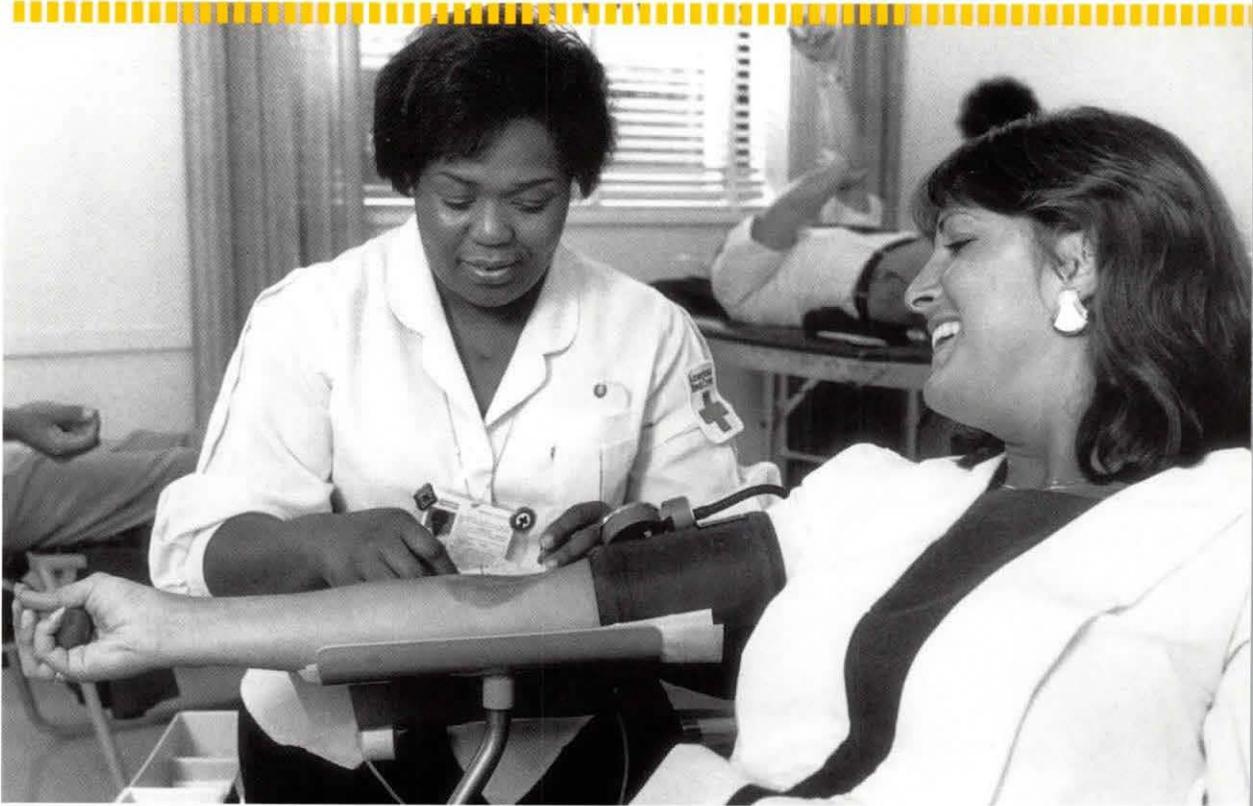
Many organizations now recognize that to recruit, develop, and retain volunteers requires special skills and knowledge. Yet they also realize that in certain areas, similar conditions must prevail when managing paid and volunteer staff.

The Red Cross has reconciled these two aspects of volunteer administration by creating a performance management system that meets the mutual expectations of volunteers and the organization. This new system formalizes the process of evaluating volunteers. It also introduces the element of negotiated goals, recognizes a volunteer's individuality, and is designed to assess the performance of leadership volunteers as well as organizational support volunteers and service providers.

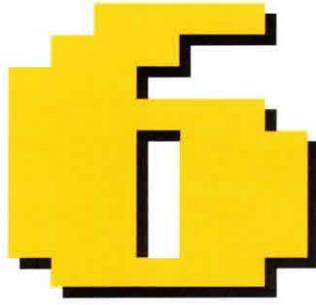
Performance appraisal at its best reviews the degree to which the mutual contract between the volunteer and the organization has been fulfilled.

### **Steps to Successful Volunteer Management**

- Design a performance management system for volunteers that parallels the system for paid employees—this helps ensure across-the-board quality control in services and leadership.
- Base the performance management system on individual performance standards that are agreed-upon goals to be achieved in a set time.
- When negotiating goals with a volunteer, take into account his or her particular circumstances—skills, interests, availability, and other relevant factors.
- Ensure that individual performance standards tie into unit performance standards and organizational goals.



- Develop individual performance standards that define not only the volunteer's responsibilities but also the unit's and the organization's responsibilities in providing support to the volunteer.
- Include leadership volunteers—board members, managers, and supervisors—in the performance management system.
- Reset goals periodically to give both the volunteer and the organization a chance to restate or refine their expectations.



## *Volunteers Must Never Be Exploited*

If volunteers are pressured to work longer hours than they anticipated, they may feel exploited. If they are led to expect resume-building opportunities but never get them, they may feel exploited.

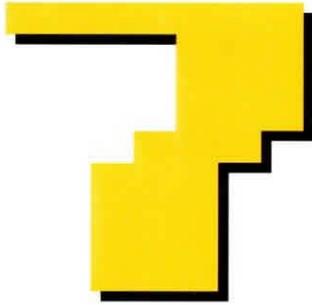
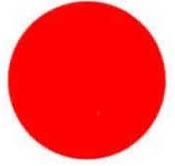
Because of their enthusiasm and deep sense of commitment, volunteers make easy prey. It is essential not to take advantage of them.

### **Elements of a Nonexploitative Volunteer Relationship**

- Faithfulness to mutual expectations
- An accurate job description
- Placement that fits a volunteer's skills, interests, and expectations
- Adequate job tools, support, and preparation



- Career development opportunities, including notification of new openings and access to training (job-related or not)
- Appropriate recognition and an easily understood awards and promotion system
- A straightforward succession plan for leadership jobs
- Responsive grievance procedures
- Accurate, complete, and accessible personnel records
- Inclusion at appropriate meetings and social events

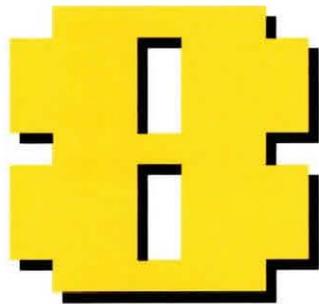


## *Volunteers Make Excellent Middle and Senior Managers*

The Red Cross has an exceptionally high degree of volunteer participation in middle and senior management. According to the Volunteer 2000 Study, paid and volunteer Red Cross staff believe overwhelmingly that volunteers can handle any job—including managerial positions—if they have the necessary time and skills. In fact, the study revealed that there is no job in the Red Cross that at some time has not been handled by a volunteer.

### **Volunteers in Management: Some of the Benefits**

- A well-matched management team of paid and volunteer staff offers broader expertise, geographic representation, management style, and perspective.
- Management positions, either solo or team, give volunteers management experience—an asset they can take into the job market.
- Management positions “empower” volunteers to design, influence, and—in some cases—control programs. Such empowerment is an important element in retaining capable, dedicated volunteers. It is also a source of great strength to a volunteer organization.
- Having volunteers with management and supervisory experience may eliminate the need to hire more paid staff every time a new program is introduced or the activity level increases.
- Volunteers in senior management and governance roles help ensure that no major initiative will move forward without volunteer input.

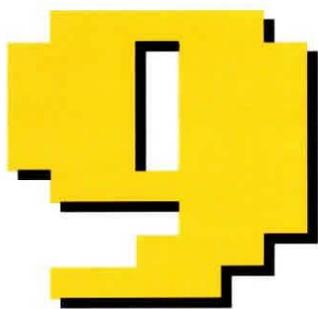


*When Recruiting Volunteers, It Is More Important to Place the Right Person in the Right Job Than to Attract Volunteers at Random*

Nowadays the heightened competition for volunteers often obscures the fact that successful volunteer recruitment should not be measured by volunteer numbers alone.

**Tools to Recruit and Hold on to Volunteers**

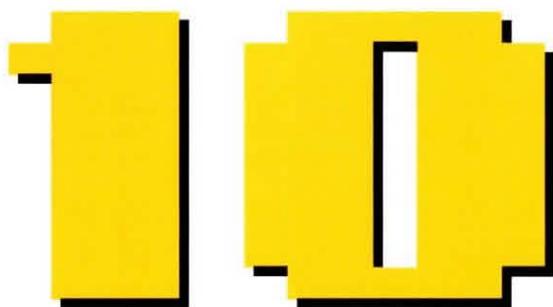
- Targeted recruitment to fill specific jobs
- Recruitment from within the organization (this produces well-rounded volunteers and less burnout)
- *Immediate* opportunities for volunteers recruited via media appeals (nothing seems to discourage volunteers more than responding to an appeal and being turned away, even if only temporarily)
- Clearly assigned responsibility for recruitment, to pinpoint accountability
- Careful job preparation, including adequate training and supervision
- Awareness of a volunteer's motivations and expectations so as to provide a satisfying volunteer experience



## *We Can Help Shape Government Policies on Volunteerism*

Government interest in volunteerism has grown in recent years. There are government-funded and government-administered volunteer programs at federal, state, and local levels. There are state and municipal commissions and councils on volunteerism and government volunteer coordinators on federal installations.

Less obviously, but more significantly, government impacts on volunteerism on a daily basis through its decisions on such matters as tax policy, labor policy, tort liability regulation, and government hiring practices, among others. Government action or inaction determines the nature of the environment in which volunteerism functions. It is up to the nonprofit sector to offer its best thinking to public officials to ensure that they create an environment that is supportive of volunteerism.



## *Everyone Benefits When Nonprofit Organizations Collaborate*

The number of organizations served by volunteers has skyrocketed. The increasing numbers are in some ways advantageous because they provide diversity, specialization, and healthy competition. The drawbacks are duplication of effort, a scattering of resources, and an overwhelming number of choices for financial contributors and volunteers.

*Collaboration among nonprofits is the key to effective volunteer management and participation in the next century.* Such collaboration already exists, for example, in the fund-raising

efforts of the United Way and Combined Federal Campaigns and in agreements like those the Red Cross has reached with disaster relief groups and AIDS-related organizations.

### **Ideas for Expanding Collaboration**

- *Volunteer Referral*—Volunteer Action Centers have sprung up in many communities, and many military installations now have volunteer referral positions. Nevertheless, volunteer agencies can do much more to place volunteers in organizations other than their own.
- *Volunteer Loans and Exchanges*—Nonprofits can promote volunteer loans and peer exchanges similar to college programs that allow a semester at other schools.
- *Shared Training*—Agencies benefit by sharing their expertise through frequent joint training ventures. National organizations already provide such opportunities at national conferences. Now it's time to create more local and regional ventures and to train more local instructors.
- *Recognition of Each Other's Strengths*—Agencies hoping to share each other's expertise must find better ways to keep abreast of what is happening in other organizations.
- *Shared Infrastructure*—The emergence of national umbrella groups like VOLUNTEER: The National Center, Campus Compact, and the National Assembly is a great leap forward for nonprofits. Agencies save money by sharing resources, while joint policy pronouncements raise the profile of the entire nonprofit sector. Similar initiatives should be explored at the local level in areas like joint child care.
- *Idea Labs*—As experts develop new ideas in volunteerism, hands-on agencies might conduct small pilot projects and make the results available to all.
- *Crosscutting Opportunities*—More organizations are creating unusual collaborative programs. In one imaginative program, museum volunteers have joined forces with volunteers helping the homeless. Together they conduct museum tours for the homeless, in the belief that hearts and minds need as much nurturing as bodies.
- *Linking Up With Other Sectors*—Nonprofits need to share their expertise with the government and corporate sectors and, in turn, learn from the creative volunteer activities evolving in those sectors. In the best of all possible worlds, each of us is a volunteer. Volunteers deserve support and infinite respect. By applying the principles of sound volunteerism, by thinking creatively, by testing new paths, and by working together, we can ensure that volunteerism will continue to flourish in the twenty-first century.



**This publication summarizes the major findings and conclusions of the American Red Cross Volunteer 2000 Study. The study is divided into three volumes:**

● *Volunteer 2000 Study: Volume I — Findings and Recommendations*  
(ARC 4704)

● *Volunteer 2000 Study: Volume II — The Resource Document*  
(ARC 4705)

● *Volunteer 2000 Study: Volume III — History of Volunteerism in the American Red Cross*  
(ARC 4706)

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