

Food For Thought: Whither Volunteerism?



- \*\* Whose fault is it that volunteers are largely invisible?
- \*\* When was the last time you saw or heard mention of volunteering in either the national or local media?
- \*\* When was the last time that a fictional character in a movie or TV show happened to be a volunteer as one part of his or her free time activities? Why is this so rare?
- \*\* If the general public only hears about volunteers during a recruitment pitch, why should we be surprised that no one knows what we do the rest of the year?
- \*\* Can you think of times when being offered money is an insult? (I can.)
- \*\* In times of severe budget cutbacks for social services, the arts, etc. can we really stick to the traditional line of: "volunteers supplement; they don't supplant"?
- \*\* How often do we recruit with "forked tongue," telling a prospective volunteer how simple or quick a task will be when we know otherwise?
- \*\* Who shackled us to "hours served each year" as the main "proof" of volunteer worth?
- \*\* Who says we have to use the minimum wage as a multiplier when we equate volunteer time donated to the worth of salaried services gained? (No one.)
- \*\* Why can't social services have all the money it needs while the Navy runs cake sales to launch its battle ships?
- \*\* Are feminists right when they accuse us of jumping in to volunteer as a bandaid response to needs rather than tackling the root cause of problems or legislative priorities?
- \*\* Do we, as volunteers, develop the same "turf" problems as everyone else? How ready are we to collaborate and share resources with similar organizations?
- \*\* Have we really made every effort to involve the broadest possible base of volunteers: minorities, teens and children, the disabled, the poor, etc.?
- \*\* Does each of us, personally, talk about our volunteer work to others we meet? Or are there colleagues at work, family members or friends who would be surprised to hear what we do in our "spare" time? (Start talking today!)
- \*\* Since volunteering is something people do above and beyond their regular jobs or other life commitments—in their leisure time—why don't we try to structure volunteering as recreation, instead of "work"?
- \*\* Do we remember that "amateur" means "love of" something? And do we also remember that "professional" says more about attitude and training than about salary?
- \*\* Why do we use so many four-letter words such as "just" or "only"?
- \*\* If you and I are still volunteers, and intend to remain volunteers, isn't it possible we are not alone? (Sure it is.)