

IVAN SCHEIER MEASURES CHANGES IN THE FIELD

Ivan H. Scheier, Ph.D., 65, has been in the volunteer field for 30 years. He started out as a part-time volunteer and quickly became involved in volunteer leadership. He was executive director of the National Information Center on Volunteerism in the seventies. For the past 10 years Scheier has been a full-time volunteer and is now the director of Voluntas, The Center for Creative Community, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Scheier has a doctorate in research psychology and has published six volunteer handbooks which have been widely read by people in the field. There is a seventh now in the publishing process. He also has published articles throughout his career in the volunteer leadership field.

In August 1991, Scheier and Voluntas opened up a bed and philosophy retreat center in Madrid, New Mexico, where members of the volunteer community can meet to retreat and explore theories and methods. Scheier recently shared some thoughts on the volunteer leadership profession during a telephone interview.

VIA: What have been the most significant changes in the volunteer leadership profession in the last 15 to 20 years?

IS: I think that the general level of skill, expertise and sophistication is going up and up and up. What we used to consider a basic workshop is just something you wouldn't do anymore, and what we used to consider an advanced workshop...is a basic workshop....On the possibly problematic side, I think volunteerism is...progressively narrowing its relationship...to two major institutions...the corporate world and government....I had hoped that volunteering would evolve more into independence....Another thing...we are finally beginning to take more seriously...[is] that volunteerism is far broader than volunteer programs in agencies and that it includes what we call all-volunteer groups....Most volunteer centers refer people to agencies, they don't refer people to all volunteer groups or enable people to freelance if that seems to be more appropriate. But this is beginning to happen, and I find it very exciting.

VIA: Three years ago The Center for Creative Community had a 10 question survey for volunteer administrators about their professional functions and what the best title would be for their position. What are the results of this survey?

IS:...About half the people who spend a significant part of their time working with volunteers as a career or as a serious interest...have the word volunteer in their title, and almost all of [that half] are called directors or coordinators of volunteers or volunteer services....For the others, they



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have names of allied fields....The words community and resource were quite frequent....We also found that about two thirds of people who worked with volunteers do two or three...somewhat allied roles at the same time [like public relations and fundraising]....Two-thirds to three-quarters actually spent half of their time or less working with volunteers....

VIA: What kind of evolution do you foresee for the profession in the future?

IS:...What I think [will happen is] we will proliferate....There will arise a parallel profession that will work with these other forms of volunteerism, and they will relate

to volunteer administration but will be a little bit different....For example, I see a real possibility that there will be a lot of paid positions for people who are essentially a consultant on retainer to all volunteer groups....In other words, those groups...can't afford a paid staff person, but they can afford maybe \$1,000 or \$2,000 a year to put an expert on retainer to troubleshoot things and to help them with things like recruiting members and evaluating programs...writing the newsletter, and so on....This person would be called a volunteer consultant, a volunteer group consultant.

Volunteers have a major role in quality of life

There are going to be some changes in national resource leadership....There is a feeling that the national organization deck is being reshuffled. AVA is rethinking location and direction apparently. And the group called VOLUNTEER, The National Center is basically absorbed into Points of Light.

VIA: What effect do you think volunteer organizations have on the economy and on our society as a whole?

IS:...People are beginning to realize that the way to attract industries to a town is assure them that there is a rich educational, cultural environment. That the streets are reasonably safe. Volunteers have a major role...in quality of life in terms of education, religion, cultural life, theater, art and safe streets, you know, like neighborhood watch....All of those things are becoming increasingly important to attract corporations....They want quality of life for their employees. The quality of life count parallels the volunteer count in a community. As a matter of fact, there are a few cases of corporations asking about the volunteer life in the community, the volunteer opportunities for their employees.

N.B.K.