

Managing Volunteer Diversity



A Rainbow of Opportunities

**1990s Guide to Innovative
Volunteer Program Management**

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Volunteer Program
Management**

**Edited by Sue Vineyard & Steve McCurley
UM Systems
1992**

Acknowledgements:

A much-beloved and now-defunct publication named *Monocle* used to include the following statement on its editorial page: "*All of the opinions contained herein, no matter how contradictory, are those of the editors.*"

We're happy to provide equivalent moral support for our authors, if you'll allow both us and them latitude to change our opinions as additional facts emerge. Much of the material in this book is based purely on opinion and experience, as has always been the case throughout the development of volunteer management.

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This book is dedicated by the editors to the authors, who made it much easier than we ever imagined would be the case.

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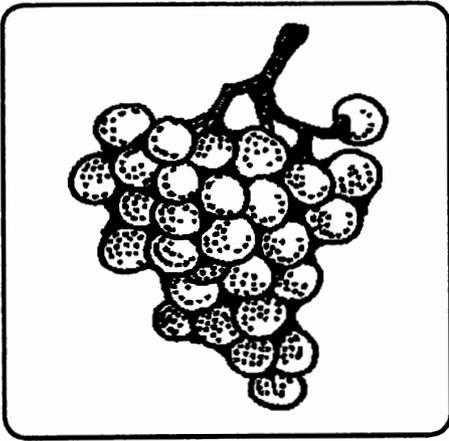
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Everyone is Culturally Diverse

by
Sue Vineyard

There is an old saying that goes:

*Everyone is out of step but me and thee,
and sometimes I worry about thee...*

The rhyme points, at once, to the *truth* and the *danger* of working on a book about 'Cultural Diversity.'

The truth is that we are all culturally diverse, not because some are out of step and some not, but because we are all individuals, unique in background, experiences, and heritage.

As an example, and using the definitions, you find in the sidebar below, I am then first from the 'Wylie-culture', born to Ralph and Kay Wylie never-you-mind years ago, and brought into their '*arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, and all other products*' of their human work and thoughts at that time.

Those arts, beliefs, customs, and etcetera included: Mom being home to raise me as their first-born, Dad 'on-the-road' as a sales representative for the Pet Milk Company all over the state of Iowa, and a close extended family visited on all holidays and frequently in-between.

Other 'products of human work' included being white, female, Methodist, the first child in my family generation, surrounded by people working in arts, music, innovation and societal contributions.

All of these circumstances of my birth and growing up years created my first culture, 'distinct in kind' and unlike any others exactly, therefore making me 'culturally diverse.'

Even if *you* were white, female, and born in the next hospital bed on the same day as I was, we would have 'cultural diversity' between us as we grew up in a different family, distinct in customs, beliefs, and structures from mine.

Thus, understanding and accepting that we are all culturally diverse allows us to broaden our definition of the entire topic of diversity.

Such a powerful truth can help us work

Definitions

Culture: *The arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thoughts created by a people or a group at a particular time.*

Diverse: *Distinct in kind, unlike; having variety in form.*

— American Heritage Dictionary

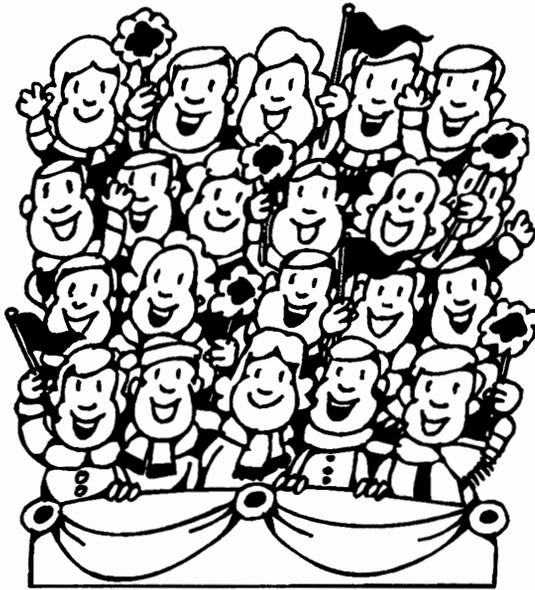
together, respecting our differences and blending our 'unlike' backgrounds and experiences to form units and communities that benefit us all.

The *danger* that lies in examining this topic is found in people coming away from it focused too narrowly on what divides us and makes us 'unlike' or different. In short, making it an issue that is 'black and white.'

Too frequently, in the pattern of narrowness, that old nemesis, *Assumption*, rears his twisted head when we speak of diversity and convinces us that the topic we are discussing is only centered on race or ethnic origin.

Not so. *Incredibly* not so!

The danger such assumptions carry into the worksite or any corner of life is a two-edged sword:



✓ On the one hand, it assumes 'diversity' refers only to the color of a person's skin or a 'foreign' accent.

✓ On the other, it assumes that people who are *not* of a different color or origin are 'just like us.'

Please beat that sword into a plowshare, or better yet, a shovel and bury it somewhere...it's so wrong, it defies description!

As unique individuals we come to any worksite, community, or effort with several cultures layered one atop the other. I, for example, have a first layer that is 'Wylie', but then I've added ones from experiences I picked up along the way.

Last time I checked my 'cultural profile' it was labeled:

Wylie, white, female, midwestern, Methodist turned Lutheran, friend, Western Illinois University and Ball State University alumni, journalist, art-teacher, Vineyard wife, mom, Project Concern Director, civic volunteer, Junior Women's Club alumni, author, editor, artist, trainer, business owner, partner, and soon to be 'mother-of-the-groom.'

Sub-categories for age, volunteer involvement, changes in family structure, and work would take up paragraphs more and bore you to death.

Limiting our definitions of diversity in others to one or two characteristics is as fool-hardy as assuming those who 'look' or 'sound' like us are 'non-diverse'.

If your response to my own labeling is, "But all those things you listed don't matter", congratulations, you just hit the jackpot of the *real* lesson written within the topic of diversity:

"If it doesn't matter...*don't let it matter!*"

When people are joined in community around an issue or project, they commit to a mission, made clear by leaders. Their goal is to accomplish that mission.

What these people each bring to that combined effort in the way of 'arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought' makes each diverse from the others.

The focus must be on what *commonalities* exist among the diverse cultures in each person that *binds* them together in common cause...and all the rest, unlike and diverse, and even 'out of step' that has no affect on the work required to accomplish the mission *does not matter!*

Too often people cause unnecessary conflict and tension by trying to change characteristics or beliefs in others when those characteristics and beliefs have nothing to do with the work to be done.

As National Director of Project Concern in the 1970's, whose mission it was to serve needy children of poverty the world over, I really did not care about what might have been different about the thousands of walkers committed to participation in our fundraiser, The Walk for Mankind. I didn't care about race, creed, national origin, age, dress, physical capabilities, religion, education, economic level, home, marital status, or bad breath.

What I did care about was that they showed up on the day of the Walk, prepared and backed by sponsors, to trek (however) as long (whatever) as possible to earn money to save the children of poverty.

I also cared that they were safe on the route, well-directed, given appropriate energy snacks, welcomed, and appreciated via a certificate at the end of the route and safely taken home.

What made us different or diverse didn't matter. That we could work together to serve children in need, did.

We are all 'culturally diverse.' When the focus shifts from what is 'unlike' between us to what *commonalities* we share, we will have added yet another culture to the long list each of us bear: *The culture of shared community and great, good sense!*





Culturally Diverse Volunteers

by
Loretta Gutierrez Nesfor

As early as 2000, cross-cultural people will be the majority in 53 of America's 100 largest cities and will comprise 29% of the workforce. That's significant for all of us as we plan the future of volunteerism.

And that is only the beginning. Given today's immigration and birth rates, *by the turn of the century, one of every three Americans will be Latino, African American, Asian / Pacific Islander, or Middle Eastern.*

In the more distant future, around 2030, people of color will make up more than half of the American population.

The task of coping with these changes will be one of the key issues for volunteer administrators in the 1990s. It will be far from complete as the new century dawns.

"White males, thought of only a generation ago as the mainstays of the economy, will comprise only 15% of the net additions to the labor force by 2000," says *Workforce 2000*, a report prepared by the Hudson Institute for the US Department of Labor. The rest will be American-born white females, immigrants, and a rich multicultural mix.

A paradigm shift

Little by little, senior executives and volunteer leaders across America are recognizing that these vast demographic changes demand a paradigm shift, *a new way* of running things – an approach often called 'managing diversity.' This means recognizing that diversity is already a fact of life, learning to understand 'culturally different' paid and volunteer staff and creating an environment in which they will flourish.

Although race and gender issues are given top priority when managing diversity, the concept of valuing diversity applies equally to issues of religious and regional differences, class, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, and lifestyle. Many also occur across educational lines, leaders

- Diversity is valuable to every paid and volunteer staff member of your organization.
- Such diversity supports other goals of the organization by exposing volunteers to new issues, ideas, information, and cultures.
- Diversity creates opportunities for character development of paid and volunteer staff by teaching tolerance and respect for other people and by encouraging concern for racial and social equity.
- A culturally diverse organization that values and nurtures people from all backgrounds is worthy of active participation.

Diversity within diversity

versus worker bees, or paid versus volunteer staff.

Culture is a word that can be applied to any group. There certainly are regional, professional, class and lifestyle cultures. Women are socialized differently from the way men are. Even people with disabilities have a culture with its *do's* and *don'ts*.

However, as we discuss diversity here, it will related specifically to people from racial and ethnic groups. The terms used to designate a racial or ethnic group in this article are based on popular usage rather than terms used by the US Government in most cases. However, other terms may be more acceptable in your community. For example, 'African-American' may be preferred over 'Black,' 'Latino' over 'Hispanic,' or 'people of color' instead of 'minorities.' Some of the terms here may not be acceptable in your community and must be adapted so that they are. Furthermore, because preferences may change as populations evolve, these terms should be evaluated regularly.



Many organizations lose good people because they fail to teach them the rules. But now the rules may be changing, as different players enter the game. With the growing diversity of the American work force, organizations are beginning to reassess recruitment and management policies, and are designing approaches to accommodate cultural differences among paid and volunteer staff.

Managing diversity

Managing diversity approaches paid and volunteer staff differences not from the legal or moral standpoint, but from a practical perspective because it makes good business sense.

Valuing diversity programs often include presentations on current and projected demographic realities and their implications for labor, productivity, service delivery or profits. The shrinking volunteer pool means more competition for existing talent, and that in turn requires a greater commitment by managers and volunteer leaders to recruiting, developing, and retaining paid and volunteer staff of all kinds.

Managing diversity is much more than EEO regulations. Rather, it is part of the corporate strategic plan. We must go beyond numbers crunching and begin to value diversity.

Managing diversity can help cut costs and increase productivity by tapping and developing seriously underused human resources. Also, employee and volunteer turnover can be reduced by recruitment, hiring, and promotion policy based on merit.

Inefficient allocation of human resources in the short-run may occur when individuals are not recruited, assigned, or promoted to the position for which they are best qualified. In the long run, paid and volunteer staff may become convinced that they will not attain a desirable position, and lose hope of attaining the education or training necessary for advancement. As people quit their 'dead-end' jobs, the organization and the individual both lose when human resources are underused.

Change is painful

Changing the attitudes and assumptions that prevail within an organization is far from easy.

Many times we can only hope to change behaviors rather than deep-seated attitudes. We must continuously remind ourselves that what we are doing is new, and that it may be frightening for those who prefer the status quo, or who fear that they are not ready to face the difficult and sometimes threatening issues raised by diversity. But we know that such resistance is no excuse for avoiding change.

Non-profit organizations that deliver essential health and human services have little hope of continued success unless they mirror the diversity of their community. The message is clear.

Diversity can be a revitalizing force for carrying your organization into the twenty-first century. And you personally can be the catalyst to make that happen.



You must be the visionary who takes the first step.

To begin the process of managing for volunteer diversity:

- Have active top management and board support (not just lip service).
- Determine why you are doing this. Is there a need in the community not being met? Do the changing demographics demand it? What is the benefit to the community? To your organization?
- Be prepared for resistance – 'change is painful.'
- If you're in a city with a high percentage of a specific culturally diverse group, you are probably not alone in your endeavors. Collaborate with other agencies, community-based organizations, and universities. No need to start from scratch. But if you are the first, serve as a forum for bringing other groups together.

Policy Statements on Diversity

The first step is broadcasting a policy statement which tells the view of the organization's top leadership.

In order for policy statements to be effective, they should serve the following functions:

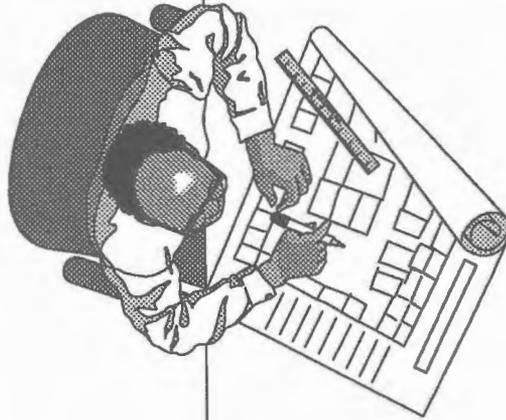
1. Express the organization's commitment to the goal of cultural diversity;
2. Reflect realistic and measurable objectives; and
3. Be communicated in a way that leaves no doubt at any level of corporate management about the organization's intentions.

As you continue diversification, follow these specific steps:

- ✓ Don't wait for the 'right' time. The time is *now!*
- ✓ Involve people of color now – they can *help* you find solutions. Their involvement will help make the issue real instead of conceptual.
- ✓ Continue the active support and involvement of board and management.
- ✓ Anticipate benefits and problems early.
- ✓ Include current paid and volunteer staff from the beginning to minimize fears and maximize commitment. You need their help for placement, training, and supervision.

Getting started

- ✓ Develop action plans and calendars of events.
- ✓ Use media sources that cater to specific ethnic groups as well as the mainstream media. Once you begin and people of color feel welcome, word of mouth travels fast. They have just been waiting for the invitation. Prepare for a positive response. Be prepared with culturally sensitive interviewers. If need be, prepare applications in appropriate languages.



- ✓ Pick some strong and dedicated leaders from your target community as early as possible to help you get things organized.
- ✓ Call a town meeting in their community (not in your building if it's not in the area you're trying to reach). Introduce your organization's services, tell them your challenge (of wanting volunteers to represent the community being served), and ask them to help you find solutions, become involved.
- ✓ Have a structure in mind for subcommittees and fill positions quickly; people will want to be involved.

- ✓ Be aware that a new program will take a lot of your time and some money (for phones, postage, and space, etc.)
- ✓ Keep management informed of the committee's progress and accomplishments.
- ✓ Develop your resources – you're going to need all the help you can get:
 - a strong core group and leader
 - bilingual paid and volunteer staff
 - representatives from other culturally diverse groups
 - others from your organization who are also committed to diversifying your paid and volunteer workforce.
- ✓ Determine what culturally relevant materials you already have. Learn what other agencies, corporations, or churches have that you can use to help your program succeed.

Taking precautions

And remember to take precautions:

- ✗ Your procedures and activities may differ from those in other people's countries. Make sure recent immigrants are properly oriented and trained early to stem misconceptions and misunderstandings.
- ✗ Be sensitive to cultural differences. 'Minorities' born in the United States may perceive things very differently from those born in other countries.
- ✗ Remain neutral. Many will come from politically volatile homelands.



X Large numbers of culturally different people suddenly descending upon once familiar territory may be extremely stressful to other paid and volunteer staff who are used to the status quo. Help them to work through this by offering cultural sensitivity training.

X Meaningful change requires support from top volunteers and management. Commitment is needed from those whom the change will affect – both the newcomer and those already working within the organization.

X Somehow, you will need to keep interest high but expectations realistic during the developmental stage.

X The new group is anxious to work and be trained, but lack of translated materials may demand that you move more slowly than these new volunteers would like.

For most people, change is threatening. It is the old and familiar that is trusted; the novel and unknown that arouses alarm. "No one discovers a new world without forsaking an old world," John Dewey once wrote. "To change is to give up familiar things, to feel uncomfortable and force to assume responsibility for a new organization or experience. The degree to which fear is aroused is usually proportional to the extent the future is placed in question." Two-way communication can help alleviate the fear of the unknown and unfamiliar.

D.C. Barlund said understanding comes when there is a willingness to become involved with other persons. It means to treat them as people, not as objects, to see them as individuals, not as numbers. It is to regard them as a value in themselves, rather than a means to some other value. It is to prize their experience and their needs. Most of all, it is to consider and explore their feelings.

Since it is the loss of self esteem that people fear most, such respect can do much to increase the

Ten Tips to Promote Cultural Diversity

1. Specifically recruit people of color to be selected to serve on the board of directors and special committees as well as grassroots volunteer work.
2. Sponsor at least one meeting each year devoted to increasing paid and volunteer staff knowledge, skill, and sensitivity about cultural and ethnic differences.
3. Contact by letter and in person local culturally diverse organizations to encourage them to refer to your organization any of their members who are interested in helping promote plurality in your organization.
4. Use your newsletter to publicize your diversity policy and to publicize your outreach success stories.
5. Increase the number of minority speakers at your organizational meetings, especially your major conferences.
6. Attend conferences, meetings, and events sponsored by culturally diverse organizations.
7. Eliminate from all printed material any discriminatory statements, pictures or references. Provide guidelines on how to avoid making discriminatory statements.
8. Write job descriptions for elected officer and key committee positions to ensure that all members are aware of the duties and qualification requirements. Distribute these descriptions to all interested people of color.
9. Put culturally diverse people and groups on your mailing list.
10. Appoint at least one person in your organization, paid or volunteer, to manage the process of increasing cultural diversity.

Dealing with change



Valuing diversity



motivation for positive interaction and success.

Non-white volunteers in a predominantly white organization need ladders with every rung in place to grow within the organization. Agencies need to work at becoming closer to multicultural communities. And these groups need to know that their participation is wanted. It is vital that the agency establish itself as a strong presence in the life of the person of color at the very young age, so that he or she becomes comfortable with the organization. To accomplish this task, activities should be conducted at grade schools, junior high schools, and community centers that are racially and ethnically diverse. If possible, volunteer recruiters for these groups should be bilingual, bicultural, and familiar with the local ethnic community, including their schools, churches, and community centers.

Another consideration related to people of color concerns the recent immigrant to the United States. He or she may expect a very different organization than the one you represent. For example, in Lebanon the Red Cross runs the ambulance service and has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for this work during the country's civil war. A Lebanese who has recently arrived in the United States may expect to volunteer as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross in his new community, or may not want to volunteer because he does not wish to be an ambulance driver. Volunteer recruiters must therefore keep in mind the different customs of the volunteers throughout the world.

Volunteer recruiters must also consider the differences within targeted multicultural communities. For example, many members of ethnic groups have been in the United States for a few generations and thus know about some American traditions. But other members may have recently arrived in this country and are therefore unfamiliar with American traditions. Another difference that must be accounted for is the immigrant's country of origin. 'Asians and Pacific Islanders' is a general category that does not define a specific culture. A person in that category may be Japanese, Japanese-American, Chinese, Chinese-American, Vietnamese, and so on. Recruiters for a multicultural population must recognize that it includes people from different countries with different traditions.

Maintaining the commitment

As people of color become more aware of your organization, you can start asking for support through volunteering. Such an appeal is easier once the organization has become more connected with the community it serves. Volunteer appeals for people of color will be strengthened if your organization:

- ✓ States publicly that having a culturally diverse work force is a top priority.
- ✓ Recruits more people of color, and places them in both paid and volunteer leadership positions.
- ✓ Ensures a welcoming spirit among current paid and volunteer staff for people of color. Special training can support this goal.



Making the message real

To successfully recruit and retain a culturally diverse work force, the organization needs to recognize three important points:

- The 'quality' of the volunteer's environment is critical to his or her success.
- The success of volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds greatly affects the ability of the organization to attract more people from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- Since white staff often control the quality of the environment for non-white volunteers, they should be sensitive to cultural differences.



Some materials utilized in this chapter are taken from *Volunteer Recruitment Strategies*, ARC 3318, American Red Cross, November 1990.

An effective way to recruit people from culturally diverse backgrounds is to represent a broad mix of cultures in your volunteer recruitment materials. However, these materials should not convey any 'tokenism' or pandering to any particular group. People from culturally diverse backgrounds need to know that the messages are not addressed exclusively to them. They need to see that other people besides themselves are concerned with building a culturally diverse organization. Furthermore, whites need to know that the institution values the contribution of people of color – that they do belong as part of the team.



Who is the American family?

Families as Volunteers

by
Betty Stallings

In the past few decades the profile of the American family has been changing dramatically. Consider these statistics:

- The 'Traditional American Family' of a working husband, a non-working wife and 2 children now represents only 4% of families.
- Of children born today, 60% can anticipate living in a single parent household.
- With the lowered birthrate and more couples choosing not to have children, it is anticipated that by the year 2000 the average household will house 2.48 people.
- Domestic partnerships and cohabitation were nearly unheard of a decade ago. Now there are over 3 million households which have cohabitants who have a stable, intimate relationship and are financially interdependent.

With changing sexual mores, soaring numbers of single parents, and an economy driving more people to share households, the definition of *family* is becoming increasingly fuzzy. The family patterns and lifestyles we took for granted from our childhoods simply aren't there anymore.

In the only major study and research done to date on family volunteering (reported in *Families Volunteer: A Workbook for Involving Families*), the focus was exclusively on intergenerational family members volunteering together – parent/child, grandparent/grandchild, etc. The current definition of family by the US Census is 'related people living together.'

Because we will be seeing a broader definition of the family in the years ahead, we volunteer managers might want to expand our definition of the family as we examine ways in which families could contribute to and benefit from volunteering in our organizations. Thus, for purposes of this chapter, we will consider a *family* to be 'groups of people living together in one household who consider themselves to be a family.' They may represent one generation such as a retired couple or they may be intergenerational in nature.

What is family volunteering?

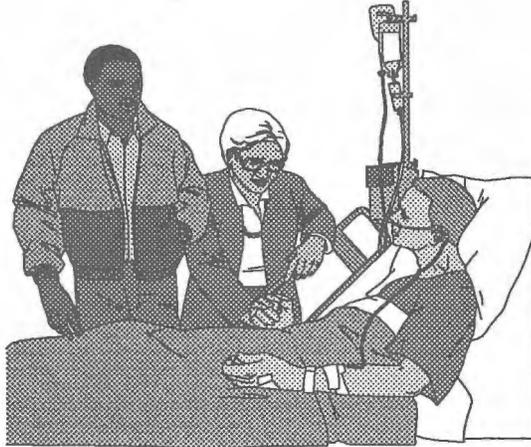
Keeping in mind this broader definition of family, one can best describe family volunteering as a *minimum of 2 family members working together in community service activities*. Family volunteering, per se, is certainly not a new phenomenon, families have quite literally volunteered together throughout all of American history. What is new is identifying families as potential target groups to recruit into volunteer organizations. Family volunteering has been accidental rather than intentional; i.e., it just happens when one member is active and he/she brings along a family member for company and/or support.

Benefits to the family

In the 1989 J.C. Penney Company survey on volunteering, it was discovered that 55% of all non-volunteers indicated that being able to involve their families in volunteer activities would be an important incentive. This is a challenge to us to put additional focus on this potential but significantly under-targeted population of volunteers.

As with all volunteer activity, for family involvement to be successful both the organization and the volunteers must benefit in the exchange.

Through extensive personal experience and observations, I would offer the following potential benefits to family members participating in family volunteering:



✓ In today's fast-paced world, the volunteer activities of a single member of a family can actually intensify the problem of finding time for shared family activities. On the other hand, family obligations are frequently the barrier mentioned as to why a person can't volunteer. So, volunteering in activities that can bring family members together in a productive, positive, and/or fun-filled way has the potential of enhancing the rare time families have for quality shared time.

✓ Family volunteering gives children an opportunity to experience activities, learn new

skills, and be exposed to diversity in ways which they might otherwise be unable to do. Because an adult is frequently involved, young people can have access to experiences (meeting people from diverse cultures and varying age groups, learning new skills such as 'selling' at a fundraising booth, etc.) which, at their age or skill level, they would not be invited to participate in on their own.

✓ Many free-time options involve competitive activities whereas volunteer experience is often built on skills in collaboration and teamwork. Volunteer work may be an excellent learning ground for families to provide a sense of shared accomplishment and to discover the value of each person's contribution.

✓ Volunteering with intergenerational family units is an excellent way to actively pass on values to the younger generation.

✓ Volunteer activities shared with any member of the family potentially extend the enthusiasm and memories of the experience well beyond the activity itself. Looking back 'together' can further enhance the benefits received from participating in the activity.

Organizations benefit from family volunteer efforts in the following ways:

✓ The most obvious benefit for the organization is the increased number of people volunteering. With many families now consisting of a high percentage of adults, the increased help may be magnified dramatically.

✓ The unique nature of the family may be a plus in some kinds of volunteer activities. For example, demonstration of how a healthy family interacts can be a model for those in crisis.

✓ Family volunteering can introduce the younger generation to volunteering. This will assure us of a future of adults who will see

Benefits to the organization

Is Family Volunteering Right for Your Organization?

Utilizing our definition of 'family' as 'groups of people living in one household who consider themselves to be a family,' answer the following questions to guide you in your response:

- Are families currently involved as volunteers in your agency?
- If so, what roles are they taking and how helpful and successful has it been?
- What benefits do (could) family volunteers bring to your organization?
- What are the possible problems and barriers to involving families in your organization?
- How would families benefit from being volunteers in your organization?
- Are there any existing volunteer jobs in your organization for which families might be a good resource?
- What jobs in your organization could take advantage of the unique characteristics of family relationships?
- Can you think of new ways to involve families in your organization?
- Have you ever attempted to target family participation in your volunteer recruitment efforts?

volunteering as a value in their lives.

✓ Family volunteering may well be the key to effectively recruiting ethnically diverse individuals into your organization, since so many cultures place a high value on the family.

✓ A frequent barrier for involving youth as volunteers in organizations is that they need close supervision. This issue can be resolved when adults in a family involve their younger family members and provide the necessary supervision for safety and compliance.

✓ Another benefit is that family members can teach one another skills needed to get a job completed. This can go in several directions: adult to child, adult to adult, or child to adult. One only needs to observe a computer literate teen patiently (or not so patiently) teaching their parents...

Approaching families as potential volunteers is essentially the same process of thinking through the involvement of any small group: thorough organizational preparation and job design; targeted recruitment; and meaningful orientation, training, supervision and recognition. This article assumes you have the general theoretical knowledge and thus will share tips specifically relevant to involving family volunteers.

How to involve families

Designing jobs for families

Characteristics of successful family volunteer jobs include:

- Flexible time, frequently one-shot or short-term jobs with potential for growing into continuing activities.
- Relevance of value for every member of the family.
- Where appropriate, taking advantage of the unique nature of family relationships.
- Opportunity to meet and work with other families.
- Specific goals and activities and good utilization of time.

Examples of potential jobs for families are:

- Planting trees, clean-up, building a trail in a park.
- Providing musical entertainment at a convalescent hospital.
- Visitation programs to shut-ins, convalescent patients (including Fido!).
- Walk-a-thons to help support an organization, done as a family.
- Selling tickets or helping in a fundraising booth.
- Serving in a soup kitchen.
- Meals-on-wheels programs (children add a real sparkle here).
- International visitor programs.
- Foster home or short-term housing.



Recruitment of families



- Short-term emergency housing for local fire, earthquake victims.
- Ushering for a local theater production.
- Adopt-a-Family (refugee resettlement, traditional holiday giving).
- Shopping for the home-bound.
- Share-a-Pet programs.

The following are some tips for targeted recruitment of families:

- ✓ As with all recruitment, the most successful method is person-to-person, or, in this case, family-to-family.
- ✓ One way to recruit families is to ask your current volunteers to involve their own families.

- ✓ To let people know that you encourage people to volunteer in family units, you can include a family in your brochure, video, slide show or in any other visual you use to stimulate volunteering with your organization.

- ✓ Train a family to do recruiting talks at clubs and organizations where many of the club members are part of families.

- ✓ Families are far more apt to respond to a one-time or short-term (episodic) volunteer job.

- ✓ Design several recruitment messages which are designed to attract and meet the needs of

adults or youth, depending on your audience.

- ✓ Because of scheduling difficulties, families will often take a longer time to respond to a volunteer recruitment plea. Thus the recruiter must allow plenty of advance time between recruiting and the job start.

- ✓ Special places to recruit families: schools, Parents without Partners, church groups, service clubs, family sports clubs, community fairs and events, any places families go for recreation or leisure time activities.

- ✓ Develop recruitment messages that include the *need* to which the family will be responding, the *volunteer job* in response to the need, and the *benefits* to the family members participating.

Look out for the following:

- X When young children are involved, parents must continue to be parents and not expect an organization to provide free babysitting unless it is established that the service is available. Job activities must be structured in such a fashion as to allow parents to work with and supervise their own children.

Example of A Family Recruitment Message:

Many elderly in our community live lonely stretches without a warm smile or embrace. Your family could volunteer to 'adopt' one of these senior residents. Your family will experience some rare quality time together while giving someone's grandma a real lift.

Potential problems, issues, & barriers

Final thoughts

- X Many problems of family volunteering stem from the complexity of working with any small group:
 - ✓ scheduling convenient work, orientation and training times around busy schedules;
 - ✓ working with members who have diverse interests, talents, and experience; and
 - ✓ dealing with the vacuum left for the agency if the members 'do not come through.'
- X Children may have idealistic expectations of their volunteer experience (i.e., expect the grandma whom they are visiting to bake them cookies).
- X If children are involved with family volunteering, it is important that you have checked out your legal responsibilities and liability protection. This includes child labor protection laws, laws on screening adults who work with children, and responsibility for obtaining written permission from parents for children to engage in activities and projects.
- X Families may bring their unrelated internal tensions into volunteer jobs and you may find yourself unwillingly pushed into the role of mediator.

Because of the unique problems and challenges of working with intergenerational family volunteers, it is not easy, and in some organizations it is not justified. With the broader definition of the family to include single-generation individuals, however, nearly all organizations can target their messages to utilize the services of several adult family members. We have previously specialized in targeting individual volunteers. We must now challenge ourselves to think more expansively and to purposefully invite families to participate.

Organizations that are creatively designing ways for family involvement are experiencing tremendous benefits while simultaneously giving families a unique opportunity to share special time together and to make a difference in their communities.





“Me, and Bob, and Alice founded this group, almost 30 years ago...”

The challenge of change

Diversity in Membership Groups

by
Steve McCurley

Volunteer membership groups are a particularly difficult problem when the issue becomes diversification. In many cases the make-up of the membership and operation of the organization is a reflection of a specific *identity* or *character* which the membership has consciously chosen or developed over the years. After all, another name for such a group is an *association*, a reflection of the fact that its fellow members are people with whom we decide to 'associate.'

Typically the membership of such a group is composed of long-term, stable volunteers, coming together with strong bonds of affiliation. In some cases these bonds of affiliation have grown to be a major reason for existence, and even occasionally replace any original 'cause-related' purpose for being. In some cases the natural processes of selecting 'those of similar thinking' has resulted in a recruitment process that more resembles *cloning* than anything else – we gravitate toward involving our friends, who tend to be those of similar backgrounds and interests. Over time the membership becomes more and more homogeneous, as it *unconsciously* excludes diversification of the membership. After all, everything that the group is doing feels 'right' to all those who currently belong. Why should there be any changes?

Unfortunately, time has caught up with volunteer membership groups, many of whom are now facing problems of crisis proportions in recruitment and operation. The health care field, for example, has witnessed a significant decline in volunteer involvement in the past ten years (from 23% of American volunteers to 12%), due mostly to aging of the hospital volunteer population and the inability of the hospital auxiliary to expand its membership base beyond a core of volunteers who became involved in the 1950's and have continued volunteering ever since, but who have become more and more inbred and exclusionary, despite an enormous commitment to health care and all the good will in the world.

Most membership groups now face challenges in retaining their membership. These challenges are caused by changes in three areas:

- ✓ *Changes in the population:* age shifts, racial changes, job demands, etc.
- ✓ *Changes in styles of volunteering:* the shift to a preference for short-term involvement in multiple organizations.
- ✓ *Changes in areas of interest:* most volunteers want to work directly on the 'problem' rather than on administrative operations like club management.

Creating corresponding changes in the operation of a membership group which will enable the group to 'compete' for volunteers in this new world is a difficult task. It is made difficult mostly by the high levels of commitment of the existing membership, for whom change is a strange and potentially

The process of change

terrifying prospect. The same high motivational levels which lead the members to join the group in the first place, and contribute large amounts of time to the maintenance of the group over the years, make it difficult to face 'losing' control to newcomers. This is exacerbated when the change involves making significant changes in the operational style of the group in order to meet the requirements of these newcomers: "We've done it this way for 30 years...! What's the matter with them?"

The most-committed volunteers within the group may be the strongest resisters to change. For some, their sense of personal identification and ego gratification is strongly entwined with their position within the group. Facing the loss of this 'power' or 'rank' can be very difficult, particularly for those who are feeling other strong senses of loss in their lives. And anyone who has worked hard to develop something for which they care deeply finds it hard to turn it over to 'strangers', who may not treat it with the same care and concern. It is one thing to 'pass the torch' on and it is quite another to feel that the recipient is likely to extinguish the flame...

Managing change in membership-based volunteer systems, whether as a staff person or a key volunteer leader, can best be accomplished if one has a sense of how change operates in organizations and how these changes are viewed by individuals.

The process of Organizational Change can be diagrammed as follows:

Processes of Change



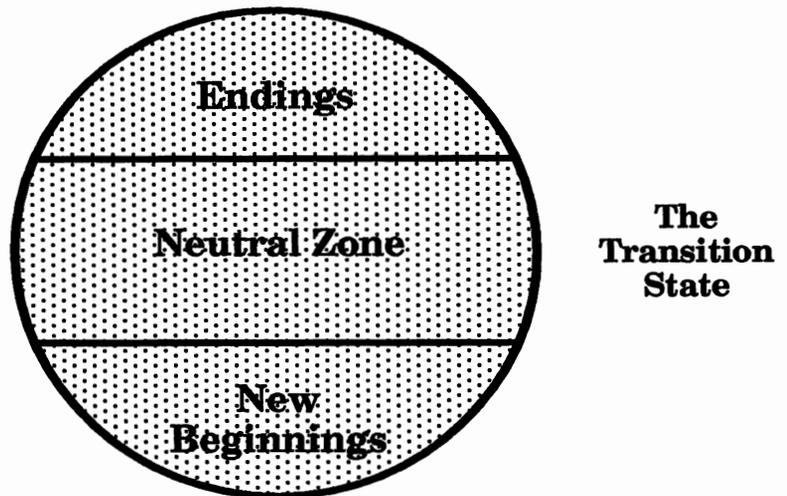
The process of change involves the 'movement' of the organization from its *Current State* to its *Desired State*. This is not, however, a direct trip. Usually the organization passes through a *Transition State*, in which those involved face a sense of loss for the passing of the old system and develop fears and hopes for the new system. An organization which attempts change without passing through this transitional state will only do so by abandoning many of those who formerly belonged, and who were not persuaded of and involved in the decision to re-create the organization.

Successful management of this transition state is the key factor in persuading a group to complete a change. What happens in this transitional stage will determine whether a group actually goes through 'real' change and what the results and shape of that change will be. Many groups who initiate a process of change become lost in a transitional limbo and either grope their way back to where they were or develop schismatic factions who tear the organization apart. Leadership in the change process requires carefully guiding the group through this process of transition without alienating or losing their motivational commitment to the 'new' or to the 'old' organization. This guidance is a process of communication, involvement, and visioning, which we will discuss further below.

The transitional stage is itself dividable into three parts: an *Ending*, a *Neutral Zone*, and a *New Beginning*.

Navigating the transition state

A diagram of these phases of transition would look as follows:



Ending the old system

The *Endings* portion of the transitional stage is where members have an opportunity to look back upon and bid farewell to the old system. The key leadership tasks for this phase of transition are:

- ✓ Be clear, definite, open – explain the reasons for change. People must know and understand 'why' in order to let go.
- ✓ Inform people about the process for transition and what personal impact change will have for them.
- ✓ Communicate what *is* and *is not* ending and why; avoid letting people begin to develop a sense of 'disengagement' from the organization.
- ✓ Avoid a sense of failure. The old system is not being 'rejected', just modified.
- ✓ Expect emotional reactions: *denial, anger, depression, bargaining, resistance*. The best response to these feelings is to support people in expressing them.
- ✓ Expect people to highly value past patterns of behavior and systems which they didn't like much before.
- ✓ Provide opportunities to grieve and say goodbye to the past: acknowledge feelings, provide rituals of separation, allow feelings of closure.
- ✓ Honor the results and people of the past system.

Exploring the neutral zone

Where people 'let go' of the old system during the *Endings* phase, they begin to attach themselves to the new system during the *Neutral Zone*. This is an inherently confused process, complicated by the fact that some people will go through it faster than others.

The key leadership tasks during this phase are:

- ✓ Support people in not knowing exactly how they feel; don't force premature commitments. Give them time to *feel* and *think*.
- ✓ Avoid premature everything: decisions, structures, systems, etc. In the words of the Latin proverb: *Make haste slowly*. Set up temporary systems, and clearly let people know they may be changed.

Launching a new beginning

- ✓ Keep the focus on progressing: tolerate some regression, and expect occasional chaos. Expect some disorientation, but don't let it become disintegration: *"We may be stumbling, but we're still walking, and our eyes are to the front..."*
- ✓ Create or allow opportunities for reflection, withdrawal, retreat. Allow people time and space to process their feelings. Expect some people to change their minds continually.
- ✓ Plan for a slump in productivity.
- ✓ Realize that people with a high need for structure will have an especially difficult time during this phase.
- ✓ The most common error in the *Neutral Zone* is to make premature decisions – e.g., people who marry on the rebound...

The posture of the leader during this phase is one of letting the group catch up, re-group, and prepare for the journey. Some people will take much longer than others, and it is dangerous to rush this process, since it may lead to alienation of those who are slow to change. Utilize the innovators and early adopters in your group to act as role models.

The *New Beginnings* phase marks the point at which the membership will begin to join in and shape its own future. During this phase, the key leadership tasks are:



- ✓ Create and communicate a *Vision* of the future at both the organizational and personal levels.
- ✓ Build a sense of *team* – we're all *still* in this together.
- ✓ Involve people in implementation of the vision. Practice a consensus model for development of new systems. Invoke the Noah Principle: *There are no prizes for predicting rain; prizes are only given for building arks.*
- ✓ Provide training in the new reality, its values, and its requirements. Help people learn to contribute to the new system.
- ✓ Provide rituals and symbols of the new system. Celebrate success.

- ✓ Reward any performance that leads toward the new vision.

It will be very difficult to predict what a *New Beginning* will look like. Be open for new possibilities, new structures, new anything that might emerge. *New ideas from others will indicate that they are beginning to accept the change.*

You may have noticed that some of the emotional reactions which occur during this transitional stage are created by various senses of *Loss* among the participants. In fact, those facing a significant alteration in a membership group with which they have been involved closely for a long time may react to its 'death' just as they would react to the loss of a loved one.

A variety of types of loss may be encountered:

- **Attachment:** members think they will lose personal relationships or

Dealing with loss

group identify and affiliation. They will commonly react with depression or sadness. You can alleviate this by acknowledging the loss, providing a ritualistic ending, and showing the new attachments which will be possible under the new system.

- **Turf:** some members will fear loss of their areas of responsibility or their influence within the group. They will demonstrate this through rigidity, conflict, or sabotage. You can alleviate this by negotiating new responsibilities and showing them they can still contribute and be honored under the new system.
- **Structure:** some members will fear the ending of a system which they shaped and are comfortable with. They will react by saying that things are 'Out of Control.' You can alleviate this by involving them in developing temporary structures.
- **Future:** some members will fear loss of their opportunities or security under the new system. They will react to this by becoming demotivated or even by leaving for greener pastures. You can alleviate this by providing information as the new system develops on both the new possibilities and the options for expanded involvement.
- **Meaning:** some members will lose their belief in the organization itself, fearing that changes a total alteration. They will react by challenging new directions or disseminating theories via the rumor mill. You can alleviate this by maintaining an open credibility, allowing feedback, and informing people at all steps in the process. Remember, people fear most what they don't understand; imagination is always worse than reality.
- **Control:** some members will fear a loss of control over their own lives. Those who are comfortable in the current system will resist turning it over to others, and sometimes engage in sabotage or slow-downs. You can alleviate this by informing them of the process and involving them in the planning, thus giving control back to them.



Credibility through communication

Much of the leader's ability to deal with these situations (and others) will depend upon having good communication skills, and the ability to defuse possible conflict situations. Here are some tips:

- ✓ Give as much information as possible. Repeat as often as needed. *Don't wait for people to ask, since some of them won't.*
- ✓ Tell the truth. Nobody has all the answers. It's okay to say "I don't know but I'll find out and get back to you."
- ✓ Don't argue. If you feel misunderstood, ask people to repeat what they thought you said. Remember that some arguments will only be people venting their feelings, not debating the truth.
- ✓ Accept all feelings – good and bad – as real and honest expressions of the other person. Don't tell people how they 'should' feel. It's okay to feel down. Your feelings change eventually, even if you don't do anything.
- ✓ Guard against self-fulfilling prophecies, such as "That won't work." We

Using natural metaphors of change

don't know yet what will work and what won't. We intend to explore every possible opportunity. We are good enough to learn new ways to make things work.

- ✓ Let people see you write down things that need followup. It's reassuring, especially if you do in fact follow-up.
- ✓ Follow-up all questions, rumors, or concerns. Don't let anything go by. Get the facts! What you don't know is very likely to hurt you.
- ✓ Don't do all the talking yourself. Encourage peer group conversations or bring in an outsider with credibility to talk about the need for change.

It is very important during the process of change to explain the rationale in a fashion that does not condemn the old system. Members who have participated in the old system, enjoyed its benefits and its successes, and valued its contributions to their own lives, will find it difficult to deal with any hint that the old system is at 'fault'. And it is right that they should, since, during its time, the old system was probably very successful.

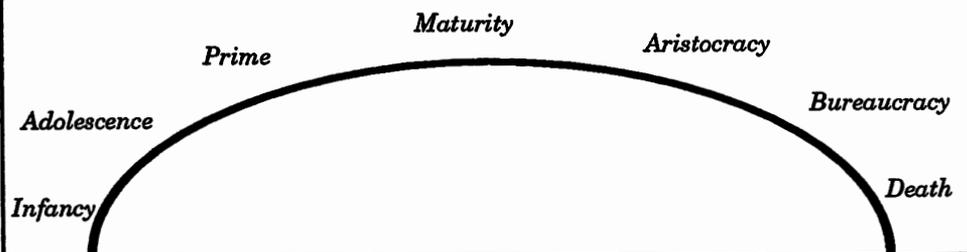
One excellent way to avoid 'blaming' the old system while at the same time persuading members that it should now change is to employ metaphors which suggest that change is a natural and expected process; that we are in fact not 'ending' the old system as much as we are simply making a natural progression to a new stage in its development.

Here are three different natural metaphors that you might choose to employ:



The Organizational Life Cycle

Organizations, like people, go through a life cycle in which they age, change in structure and ability, and eventually begin to slow down. A typical life cycle in an organization proceeds like this:



The Cycle of Organizational Development

Each of these stages of development is marked by distinct characteristics. *Infancy* is a start-up stage in which a few people initiate almost everything (and sometimes it's a 'one person show', run by The Founder), the emphasis is on results not procedures, and there are few policies or structures. Everything is loose and a new organization is created each day. *Adolescence* marks further growth, but management begins to decentralize as the organization get larger, leadership begins to be shared, more structures and rules are developed, and the rituals and ceremonies of organizational custom are created. The *Prime* is the last of the high growth stages, as the organization enjoys its success and begins to balance its original entrepreneurial spirit with balanced long-term management.

In *Maturity* the organization begins to slow down, people become satisfied with the status quo, the climate begins to get more formalized. During *Aristocracy*, the organization begins to concentrate more on its internal concerns than external affairs; the climate becomes more formal and the institutional procedures become of paramount importance. Many membership groups do not go through the *Bureaucracy* stage unless they are of sufficient size to have a paid staff, but when they do they experience a system in which everyone is concerned with their own turf, there are tight controls from the top, and people look at involvement as 'just a job.' *Death*



may not mean actual extinction, but could imply an organization in which only a few are still actively involved, and the organization is simply marking time, doing the same things it has always done, and awaiting the fading away of the last of the Old Guard, while celebrating and re-enacting the triumphs of the past.

The interesting thing is that, unlike people, an organization may change this pattern of development. At some point during the latter stages, an organization may develop a 'new vision' and re-create itself, in essence leap-frogging into a new cycle of growth and development. In doing so, it 'sheds its skin', returns to the flexibility of youth, and begins to develop a new set of rules and programs. Successful organizations will periodically go through this process of 're-birth', adjusting to new needs, new conditions, and new opportunities.



The Changing of the Seasons

Another natural metaphor to utilize is that of the seasons. As the year progresses, we pass through the seasons in turn: *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter*. These seasons each have their own characteristics, each contributes something to the earth and the richness of life, and no season is any 'better' than another. But, as we do not stop in any one season, so we should not expect to stay in any one style of organizational operation.

One can compare the growth of the organization to that of an oak tree, which starts as a little acorn, and struggles and grows over the years. It may lose its leaves every year, but this is a means of protecting itself and preparing for the new growth that spring will allow.



The Parent and Child

One final metaphor to utilize is that of the parent and child. If the membership is unsure about passing some control of the group to the 'newcomers' then a good way to explain why this is necessary is to remind the group of their interaction with their own children.

A parent prepares children by giving them advice and information, often learned the hard way by the older generation. At the same time, the parent knows that the child will probably not behave exactly as that advice suggests, and even 'realizes' that in a way this is a good thing – the child, to mature, must test itself, learn its own way of doing things, and develop its own capacity for life. The child may, in fact, initially reject all of the parent's advice. *But, oddly enough, at some point that same child will look back and realize that its parents, and their advice, were a lot smarter than they looked at the time.*

Some group members, particularly those who helped found the group, will subconsciously think of the organization as their 'baby', and will find it very hard to conceive of giving it away to strangers. By utilizing the Parent and

Involving the new member

Child metaphor you can get these members to view themselves as adults who assist these newcomers in learning the necessary skills of 'parenting' the organization, and who can pass on their wisdom to a new generation.

Natural metaphors are very effective in erasing any hidden feeling of blame or fault, and in eliminating any sense that the current system has failed. These are crucial things to accomplish, and by positioning change as a natural, but necessary, process one can proceed on a positive note, without the resistance that would otherwise be expressed, or simply felt, by those who helped lead the old system and may feel responsible. Natural metaphors help eliminate any defensive reactions.

Finally, a large part of change in a membership group involves welcoming the new members. The key to involving those who have just joined your organization lies in bringing them into the 'family' as quickly as possible. To accomplish that, do the following:

- ✓ *Time your meetings properly.* Make sure that it is possible for the 'new' members to come to the meetings. If much of your new membership is



composed of working people, change your meetings to a time that will accommodate their needs. Pay attention as well to geography, particularly if you are attempting to involve those from different parts of the community. 'Go to them' rather than expecting them to 'come to you.' Strive for *ease of participation*, because people will become involved with the group that makes it most convenient for them to participate.

- ✓ *Go out of your way to personally ask new members to attend.* Consider having a "First Timers" meeting occasionally, aimed at all those who have never before attended a meeting. Or divide the new members among the officers

and make telephone calls extending a personal invitation to each new member. Encourage older members to "Bring a Friend" to the next meeting.

- ✓ *Establish a "Designated Host" System.* Have you ever attended a meeting in which you didn't know anyone, and you spent the evening watching this group of old friends chat away happily while you tried to blend into the wallpaper? Did you go back for a second meeting? The purpose of the Designated Host System is to make sure that anyone attending a meeting for the first has an enjoyable experience. The Designated Host(s) are stationed by the door to watch for new faces. When a new face (presumably attached to a member or prospective member) arrives, the Designated Host escorts them for the evening, introducing them to everyone, explaining what is going on, translating the acronyms and explaining the old wars. And, of course, by the end of the evening, the Designated Host knows as much as possible about the interests and background of the new member so that a suitable job can be found as quickly as possible. Past Presidents, by the way, make excellent Designated Hosts; they know all the faces and being a Designated Host will keep them out of trouble while letting them be productive.

- ✓ *Create a "Mentor System".* Mentor Systems work off the buddy principle,

in which each new member is 'teamed' with a more experienced member. The senior member is expected to get to know the new member, act as their guide, and figure out how the new member can best be involved in the group.

- ✓ *Have a special "New Member Project".* If your new members arrive as a group, then consider creating a New Member Project, which is given as a responsibility to the new membership class. The New Members are responsible for thinking of the project, planning, and implementation. The benefit of this system to the New Members is that it quickly gives them a sense of ownership and control in the activities of the organization --- they have something which is 'theirs'. The system also benefits the organization, since it quickly identifies those among the new members who are creative and able to fulfill leadership positions. If you can't have a separate project for new members, try to have one meeting or event each year that is the responsibility of the new members.

Last thoughts

This discussion of creating change in membership groups has focused on what needs to be done with the current members more than it has dealt with communicating with the new members. There are two reasons for this:

- The first is that the information in the rest of this book dealing with specific types of 'new' volunteers will provide you with a wealth of specific information on these potential new members. Read the information on recruiting and involving these new populations and make use of it in your membership recruitment efforts. It will work as well for you as it does for the more structured service volunteer programs.
- The second, and more important reason, is that it is most often these already existing systems which thwart involvement of new members than it is anything which has to do with the potential new members themselves. *Failure to achieve real change in membership groups results more often from an unwillingness or inability of the current membership to take action than it does from a rejection of that action by the newcomers.* A membership group must *want* to change in order to accomplish change.

As the leader of the group, concentrate first on getting your own house in order before you invite anyone to visit. If this is accomplished you'll be pleasantly surprised how many people want to come back again.

And always remember the gentle wisdom of Will Rogers:

*"Even if you're on the right track,
you'll get run over if you just sit there."*



Introduction

Youth as Volunteers

by
Martha Mercer & Rick Lynch

This chapter will identify aspects of youth volunteer programs that need to be addressed in order to help youth achieve their needs and responsibilities while volunteering. In most cases, what works for adults will work for youth – the differences are a matter of degree and emphasis. Youth lack the experience of how to work or 'play the game' of fitting into the adult world.

Youth are in a period of great change – physically, emotionally, and intellectually. They have needs and responsibilities to parents, family, teachers, school, peers, extra-curricular activities, jobs, and to their own self-exploration and expression. Keep in mind that the difference between a youth at age 14 and age 15 may be dramatic. The shy boy at age 14 may be quite outgoing at 15 and vice versa. Volunteering can help youth develop in positive, esteem-building ways.

Young people of all ages can be excellent volunteers. There are many successful upper elementary, middle school and high school students making meaningful contributions to community organizations. In some limited cases (trick-or-treating for UNICEF, for example) even very young children can be effective volunteers.

Upper elementary school students can be quite effective if the volunteer position is structured so they feel a sense of control and security in the work environment. This can be achieved by having the students work in small groups with an adult or high school student who is also actively involved in the project providing training and making sure the students feel empowered to take action in the group volunteer position.

Middle school students are able to work more independently, but still require a highly structured program. This would include close supervision, clearly defined responsibilities, and a defined work environment.

When we speak of youth in this chapter, we will mostly be focusing on high school age volunteer programs. High school students have reached an age where they are capable of making independent decisions and are able to assume responsibility for their actions. Their role still must be clearly defined by the program, and they need to receive positive guidance and support from their supervisors and the organization.

Cooperation with the schools is most effective if the school system has a community service elective in the school curriculum. Students in a community service class volunteer in various agencies and bring their disparate experiences back to the class. The teacher can then help them analyze and learn from their experiences and they can engage in mutual problem solving.

In varying degrees, the upper elementary, middle school, and high school

Philosophy

students need to know who to look to for direction, support, and information. These elements need to be embedded in the structure of the youth volunteer program and job descriptions.

Some key, over-arching philosophical points on involving youth include:

✓ *The youth volunteer program should be designed as a job experience, career exploration, or apprentice program, not as a social club.*

Volunteering should give the student an opportunity to see the direct impact their volunteering has for the organization and to learn what it is like to have an engaging, rewarding, and exciting job. It should give them an opportunity to develop and experience a positive work ethic.

✓ *Youth tend to live up or down to the expectations of adults.* They are living self-fulfilling prophecies. The young volunteer must therefore see that what they offer to the organization is valued, respected and desired by every person representing the organization. If they begin to feel inferior, undervalued, overworked, or treated with disrespect the student will become dissatisfied with their connection to the organization.

✓ *Adults sometimes have low expectations of youth.* Adult staff may treat young volunteers in a condescending way, subtly hinting through their behavior and assignments that they don't have much faith in the young person. Before you start involving youth as volunteers, staff should be encouraged to regard them as responsible partners.

✓ *Basically, a youth program is the same as an adult program except that youth haven't the experience in the expectations of the professional work environment.* Youth need to be guided in a positive and supportive manner to learn the professional expectations of the organization. This guidance comes in part from an orientation session for young volunteers. It is also modeled by

the professional staff as they perform their duties and responsibilities, particularly in their interaction with the youth.

✓ *All staff must 'buy' into the idea of utilizing youth volunteers and no limits ought to be placed on their growth potential.* If youth volunteers only see themselves as greeters or cage cleaners and not able to perform work they find interesting and meaningful their self-esteem will go down and you will lose them to a paying job or have to deal with a difficult volunteer.

✓ *The basic point to remember in involving young people is that they will act responsible if you give them*

responsibility. Or they will not be able to handle it and drop out of their own accord. If a 15-year-old frequently needs supplies from a locked cupboard to do her job, for example, you treat her as responsible by giving her a set of keys. This also gives her a sense of trust and empowerment. On the other hand, if the standard procedure is "Find me when you need to get into the cabinet, and I'll unlock it", the volunteer feels distrusted.

✓ *Utilizing youth volunteers means that you are competing with their need*

Foremost, the organization must have a mission and a function in which youth volunteers will have some reason to want to be a part. Second, the organization and its staff must want the participation of youth volunteers and believe that youth volunteers will actively assist the organization in achieving its mission and function. Such commitment cannot be created simply by establishing a policy that the organization will encourage volunteering by youth.



Administrative policies and procedures

for working for money. It is important that they recognize that you are enabling them to gain experience beyond what they might receive if they were working for a fast-food restaurant.

The student volunteer program should have all the components of any other volunteer program including policies and procedures that relate to the organization's policies and procedures for all staff. Remember, students have not had the job experiences that many adult volunteers and paid staff have had and will need to have many policies and procedures explained in greater detail. Youth are not stupid, they are only inexperienced and need the volunteer administrator and staff to take the initial time to help them understand why it is necessary and important to have policies and procedures.



Be prepared for youth to challenge why your organization does things. Sometimes youth will react about the 'stupid' way you do things. Sometimes, they are right. Do not just automatically reject their challenges as youthful naivete.

Students will want to know why policies and procedures exist, and if you are unable to explain in a clear and positive manner the rationale for them, you may encounter passive resistance or outright defiance. This behavior is more from the desire to understand than disrespect, for if you can't tell them why they should or shouldn't do something youth will try to find out on their own or make up a reason. Negative rumors start this way.

For example, if a policy states that volunteers should refrain from wearing jeans and tennis shoes to work, you may encounter some difficult situations unless you explain to the students by example and with positive reasons about the 'power of dress' in a work environment.

In many programs the policies and procedures are used to develop a contract or list of items that are to be expected by the youth, the youth's parents, and the organization. A document of this type addresses the fact that youth have many demands upon their time and that it is important to share information with their parents and family about the organization and its expectations about the commitment they are planning to make.

Some specific suggestions about the content of youth volunteer policies and procedures are covered in the section which follows later on "Management".

Job design

In designing jobs for young people, follow the same principles of job design you use for adults. The job description for youth should be more detailed and contain more structure than is necessary for adults.

Many young people have high esteem needs. They are satisfied by jobs that give them a positive sense of connectedness, a sense of effectiveness, and a sense of uniqueness. In addition, they like a job that is fun. These aspects should be built into the job to the greatest extent possible. Volunteer positions for youth, especially younger members, should include some team activity. The job should contain some clear goals to be achieved so that young people see that what they are doing is effective and meaningful for the organization. Individual skills and interests should be utilized to take advantage of each person's unique talents.

Any volunteer position will no doubt contain responsibilities which are not glamorous or fun. In a sense, this prepares them for the real world because most of us enjoy parts of our jobs less than others. Try to make at least part of the job 'glamorous' or 'fun' to the young person.

Youth can feel envelope stuffing is fulfilling if they realize the purpose of the mailing. Tell them why the mailing is important and try to make it fun. Allow them to choose music to listen to while they do the mailing. Have a friendly competition for which team can stuff the most envelopes.

In some organizations the tendency is to give volunteers the 'jobs that no one else wants to do.' This is even more likely to be true of jobs for youth. In such circumstances the volunteer job starts to look a lot like doing chores at home.



In designing jobs for youth, respect the volunteer's need to "experience the experience". Make the goals clear, but allow the job to be loose enough that youth can discover the best way to do an activity by trial and error or by observation. When young people are given this freedom to grow, they retain their enthusiasm.

Generally, youth are capable of doing jobs that adult volunteers do. At Ohio's Center of Science and Industry, for example, volunteers as young as fourteen perform

demonstrations and answer questions pertaining to museum exhibits and programs. Youth are capable of performing any entry level position. Once they show they are capable of these initial responsibilities, they can be given additional training and greater responsibility. You will find it effective to have a 'stairstep' series of jobs, with different 'career paths'. Each step on the path can be accompanied by some visible recognition, like a different color badge. The environment in which all of these jobs are carried out must be one in which it is 'safe' to make mistakes.

Youth are often in the mode of exploring options. They may want to try out a job and then switch to another. This does not necessarily indicate a lack of responsibility but rather a search for who they are and for a fit with their unique talents.

Like everyone else, youth give us a portion of their scarce leisure time when they volunteer. We are in competition for their time with their social group, romantic interests, family responsibilities, school work, and paid employment. As a consequence, to recruit young volunteers we have to offer them a flexible work schedule and a volunteer experience that meets their motivational needs. Some common motivators are shown in the box to the right.

Recruitment materials should show potential volunteers how the volunteer experience will meet these needs. For example, the picture on a brochure could show volunteers working in a group. A presentation to a school assembly could stress the results produced by young volunteers and the recognition they receive.

The above applies to most youth. In addition, there are other segments of the youth population with specific needs that can be tapped. For example, any

Motivational Needs of Youth:

- A need for a feeling of belonging and acceptance from peers.
- A need to impress members of the opposite sex.
- A need to impress parents.
- A need to prove that they are capable of fulfilling adult responsibilities.
- A need to gain experience that will be helpful in gaining admission to college.
- A need to see something positive happen as a result of their efforts.
- A need to establish a positive sense of uniqueness.
- A need to be trusted and respected by adults.

Recruitment

junior high school probably contains a few smart kids who are ostracized by an 'in-group' which does not value intelligence. Volunteering can provide a place where they can find acceptance and value. Similarly, shy kids can find a place where they are accepted and can try on new roles in front of strangers who have no expectations of them.

When starting from scratch, the first recruitment question is "Where can we

School Information Packets

- Letter outlining the volunteer program and the different ways students can participate
- General information brochure about the organization, targeted to the motivational needs of youth
- Sample job descriptions
- General information on the purposes of the volunteer program and the type of positions available
- Posters
- Nomination or reference forms
- Sample public announcements or informational releases for newsletters

find potential young volunteers?" If your organization is one where young people might visit, you should look at these 'customers' as a rich source of volunteers. Staff should be encouraged to be on the look-out for such visitors and, where appropriate, talk to them about volunteering. Schools are an obvious place to look for young volunteers. Packets of information can be given to area school principals and teachers of subjects that pertain to the organization. Another way of recruiting youth from school is to invite a class to tour your facility as a field trip.

You can also recruit youth by putting out flyers or posters at recreational centers, playgrounds, malls, churches, fast food restaurants, and other locations that youth gather.

The best source of young volunteers is a cadre of satisfied young volunteers. Word of your program will spread to the peer group members of your current volunteers. If this word-of-mouth is

positive, young people will be calling to volunteer. If it is negative, however, it will take herculean efforts to get other youth involved. The on-going management of the young volunteers is thus critically connected to your success in recruiting.

Screening

While recruiting, we actually begin the screening process. We can explain the organization's needs and expectations and find out what the potential volunteer expects from the organization. Sometimes this may be unrealistic. For example, a young person may see the volunteer experience as an opportunity to 'hang out' somewhere. We would explain that volunteering is a work experience, not a social activity. While there are social needs met by volunteering, we also expect them to make a meaningful contribution to the organization.

Youth will self-screen themselves if given enough information about the organization's expectations. This process begins when the student first inquires about the program and usually ends after the orientation or first training. Send interested students a packet of information including a letter thanking them for their interest and explaining what the program is about; application form; reference forms (to be completed by two unrelated adults, such as a scout leader, teacher, or neighbor they do work for); minimum standards (age, grade completed, minimum grade average); a short list of the program policies, and a list of volunteer positions.

Emphasize that it is a work experience but there are expectations that it will also enable them to learn, accept responsibility, gain valuable communication skills, serve others, and have fun.

This self-screening process will empower the student to decide if this is a commitment they can make before you put a lot of time in the interview and orientation process.

Orientation and training

Provide an agency orientation for the prospective volunteer. This is the opportunity to teach the student about the organization, the volunteer program, and for the youth to select a volunteer position. Depending upon the size and nature of your organization you might want to perform a group orientation/interview session or you may want to meet with each student individually to decide if they are appropriate for your organization.

It is important that youth volunteer training have direct relevance to the volunteer position. If the youth volunteer has signed up to provide direct contact with the public don't expect them to sit through 60 hours of instruction before the first opportunity to get in touch with the public. Structure the training so that they get some hands-on experience while the training is occurring. Pair them with a more experienced volunteer for a couple of hours for each four hours of training. This addresses their needs for immediate accomplishment and social interaction, and gives them an opportunity to see what the job really is like. It can also serve as a self-screening device.

Training should not occur only at the beginning but throughout the program as young people prepare for new responsibilities. Remember that young people are highly energetic and have a short attention span for sitting. Include physical activity in your orientation and training. For example, if you want hospital volunteers to be familiar with the building, you could do this by having a 'scavenger hunt' in which volunteers find certain rooms and determine the shortest routes between areas.

Here are some suggestions for management policies and procedures for youth volunteers:

- **Probation Period**

We recommend letting the student know that both of you will be 'trying each other on for size' during the initial probation period, and if it does not

appear to be a good fit for one or both of you that the volunteer administrator will work with the student to find a suitable position in another agency.

- **Scheduling**

Policies on scheduling should include consideration of appropriate notice of not being able to work a given time and the responsibility of the volunteer to find someone to cover his or her 'shift.' Policies should also identify the maximum and minimum number of hours to be 'active' in the program.

Consider putting a limit on maximum hours of involvement. Kids burn out just like adults. If they can't be there all the time their heart will be in it when they are there to work. Just like adults, if youth put in too much overtime even the most rewarding job begins to pale. Also, if the volunteer job is available only a few hours a week, they will tend to value it and look forward to it.

- **Transportation**

Remember not all youth can drive or have a vehicle available for them to get to the establishment. Make it easy on them by identifying bus routes. If your organization is not near public transportation, figure out ways to get kids there. Discuss with the youth how they will be travelling to and from the



Management and supervision

organization. Discuss what they are to do if they arrive before the organization opens. Have a staff policy on who will be responsible for students who are early or depart late.

- **Dress**

Remember youth are learning how to behave in an adult world. Give them the standards you expect. It helps if there is some sort of uniform or badge that distinguishes the volunteer (and staff) from the public. Keep in mind that many young people are on a limited income. To make it possible for some low-income youth to meet your dress requirement you may want to offer financial assistance.

Parental Support

Parents and families of youth are also volunteering by providing a supportive environment for youth by:

- ✓ Providing transportation
- ✓ Providing clothing
- ✓ Re-arranging family time commitments
- ✓ Scheduling family activities around the child's commitment to the agency
- ✓ Monetary support for lunch, snacks, volunteer-related activities
- ✓ Praise

- **Primary Supervisor**

Youth should be assigned a primary supervisor to communicate with on daily activities. Younger people might have a high school student as a supervisor. Youth should also be encouraged to talk with other staff, especially the volunteer administrator, if they feel uncomfortable about communicating with their immediate supervisor on some issues.

We recommend that youth not volunteer in areas where they would be supervised by a parent or relative or in an area where their supervisor is supervised by a parent or relative.

- **Evaluation**

Help students learn that an evaluation is a positive tool which enables both the volunteer and the staff to know how each is doing and creates a list of goals for both to achieve.

- **Records**

Keep records of the volunteer's services, including a reference for future employment or education. Keep track not only of the period of time they worked and the duties they performed, but of the outstanding achievements they made along the way.

- **Job Re-Assignment**

Determine the minimum length of time a volunteer must commit to a specific job. Allow the volunteer to change assignments as appropriate for both the volunteer and the organization.

- **Responsibility Statement**

Develop a straight-forward statement outlining that by accepting a volunteer position with the organization the student is agreeing to maintain high standards of conduct in their relationships with clients, visitors, staff, and fellow volunteers. Indicate that failure to live up to the program standards will result in poor evaluations, probation, and/or dismissal from the program. Note that the volunteer program is a work experience and that all scheduling, evaluation, and in most cases, disciplinary action, will be handled between the organization and the volunteer.

- **Disciplinary Action**

If disciplinary action is necessary a process similar to what is employed with adult volunteers and paid staff should be used: verbal warning; written warning (contract for change, time limit, and consequences for non-compliance); and exit interview and firing.

If the infractions necessitate the involvement of their parents, first inform the youth. This will help maintain their trust in you and in the organization's policy that this is a job experience for *them*.

Like all volunteers, youth only volunteer because they want to. When the job

Retention

doesn't meet the young person's needs, they will not want to do so for long. With all volunteers, but especially for youth, retention goes up if the job experience builds the volunteer's self-esteem. In particular, the volunteer experience should enhance the self-esteem needs of connectedness, uniqueness, and effectiveness. Below are some suggestions under each category:

- **Connectedness**

- ✓ Implement youth's suggestions for improving the way you do things. Nothing you do builds more sense of identification, pride, and importance. Believe that it is possible that a fourteen year old can have good ideas. This can be a real challenge for many organizations who might not even respect and value the ideas and advice from their adult janitors or even professional staff.
- ✓ Call people by name. The greatest need of people is to be connected, and the most important single connector is knowing the person's name.
- ✓ Corrections and suggestions should focus on behavior not on subjective judgements of motives, attitudes, or personal qualities. Supervisors should avoid saying things like "you're irresponsible." Young people are particularly sensitive to attacks or criticism on the grounds of inadequate personal qualities. It makes them feel separate and can create a communication block.
- ✓ Create a non-critical environment. Criticism is the most destructive thing you can do to another person. Promote values that stress mutual support. Arrange for training of youth and staff in good communication skills.

- **Uniqueness**

- ✓ Be specific and abundant in validating your people. Tell them what you admire about them. Complement them on their positive personal qualities. Find the good and praise it. Turn difficulties and failures into positive educational events.
- ✓ Listen. Being heard and acknowledged makes youth feel important and bolsters self-esteem.
- ✓ Show young people that they matter. Say hello to them when you see them. Find something interesting and unique in each person and show your interest. All this sets the tone that people care about each other in your agency.
- ✓ Keep young volunteers informed of proposed changes and proposed initiatives. Being 'in the know' contributes to a sense of being special.
- ✓ Set high standards for selection. Holding a job that is hard to get also creates a sense of being special.



- **Effectiveness**

- ✓ Set the same performance expectations for youth as you do for adult volunteers. Meeting expectations that 'anyone can do' does little for a person's self-esteem.
- ✓ Provide training to advance the skills and knowledge level of your people. Stress constant improvement of each person. This builds feelings of increased effectiveness.

According to Bernadette Chi, Points of Light Foundation youth program coordinator in California, the biggest frustrations of youth involved in volunteer activities are:

- * not being taken seriously by adult staff and volunteers
- * not being given sufficient guidance (being told what to do but not how to do it)
- * not being prepared properly
- * not being able to discuss the experience adequately with adults because no time is scheduled for doing so
 - feeling patronized

Final comments

- ✓ Provide feedback to youth on the outcome of their efforts so they can see the effect of their daily work.
- ✓ Help the young person see how their experience with your organization relates to their outside and career interests.

As mentioned above, one of the most powerful single things you can do to promote a youth's self-esteem is to ask for and implement their ideas. It promotes a sense of uniqueness, because their ideas are being sought. It also promotes a sense of power because their idea has been used to alter the way we do things. And it builds connectedness because the organization has been shaped by them. They therefore identify with it more closely.

In listening, you may find that a young person's ideas may be half-baked and ill-considered, and formed in ignorance of the full reality of the situation. In such a case, try to keep from telling the young person all that is wrong with an idea or rejecting it out of hand. Instead, express your concerns about the idea and encourage the youth to develop a solution that takes into account the additional information.

If an environment welcoming and supporting youth involvement is to work it is necessary that all staff in the organization respect and listen to volunteers. Upper management and the volunteer program should actively and publicly provide reinforcement and recognition to positive and supportive behavior.

Young people frequently have many time demands, especially during the school year. Make sure you support the volunteer in trying to balance school (a full-time job), a part-time paying job, and the volunteerism. Youth need to be able to discuss their volunteer schedule with an employer and their paid work schedule with the organization. Flexibility of scheduling is of prime importance.

When you do this, however, don't devalue the volunteer program in relation to a paying job. Expect them to keep their volunteer commitment. If you allow them always to put other things first they will get the idea the volunteer program isn't very important. This devalues their contribution and makes them feel less important when they volunteer.



Involving Seniors as Volunteers

by
Susan Combs

When asked to conjure up an image of a senior citizen, many people might describe a sweet, little old lady who is fond of her rocking chair and enjoys knitting. Or perhaps the image of a senior may be a cranky, unhappy woman yelling 'Where's the beef?'

Neither of these images represent the true character of today's 31 million older adults. Ken Dychtwald, in his book *Age Wave*, gives many examples of seniors who break from the traditional stereotypes. On his 60th birthday, Jack LaLanne, fitness aficionado, swam from Alcatraz to Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, handcuffed, with his ankles shackled and towing a half-ton boat. Mavis Lindgren of Orleans, California is still running marathons at 80 years of age, having run her first marathon at 70. Lucille Thompson of Danville, Illinois began tae kwan do at age 86 and two years later earned a black belt.

Gerontology 101

These examples help to dispel some of the myths surrounding aging. To effectively involve seniors as volunteers, a good volunteer manager will see through the following myths:

X *Most older people are in poor health.*

Aging and disease are not the same thing and, in fact, most older adults maintain good health and stamina.

X *"You can't teach an old dog new tricks."*

This adage does not hold true in reference to seniors' learning abilities. In general, the time required to learn new tasks or skills increase with age, but *all* people are capable of learning, regardless of age.

X *As you age, you will become senile and live in a nursing home.*

This is definitely not the normal pattern of aging. Of the 30 million Americans over the age of 65, only 10% show any significant loss of memory. As for ending up in a nursing home, only 5% of the elderly live in institutions such as nursing homes or homes for the aged.

X *All older persons are alike.*

Seniors are probably the least homogeneous group with a variety of physical and mental abilities, personality factors, values, and beliefs. Robert Atchley, in *Aging: Continuity and Change*, asserts that "if we begin with a group of 1,000 high school freshmen and follow them throughout their lives, we would find that they become more unlike one another with each passing year."

Now that you have passed the mini-gerontology course, let's look at seniors as volunteers. In 1991, Marriott Senior Living Services and the US Administration on Aging commissioned a study on senior volunteerism. In

A look at the research

Where to find seniors

telephone interviews of close to 1,000 Americans 60 or older, they found that 41% performed some type of volunteer work in the past year. The greatest percentage of volunteers was found in the 65-74 age range. *Thirty-seven percent of older Americans are potential volunteers who are or may be willing to volunteer if asked.* This figure is an increase from the response found in a study by Hamilton, Frederick & Schneiders on older adult voluntarism. They found that 28% of those not volunteering in 1987 would be interested in donating their time in the future. Both studies show a significant, but largely untapped, resource for volunteer service. Even among active volunteers, one out of four said they preferred to give more time.

The study found that the two most compelling reasons for volunteering are a genuine desire to help others and the need to feel productive and useful. One out of four seniors volunteered as a way of finding companionship. Most seniors prefer to volunteer by helping children, other seniors, or people with physical and mental disabilities.

Providing companionship, either in person or by telephone, and providing transportation were the two volunteer functions most often performed by seniors. The study also found that men are more likely than women to volunteer (45% to 38%), although the number of women volunteers is greater than that of men since there are more women over the age of 60.

The Marriott Study shows some interesting results, especially the great opportunity that exists in utilizing seniors as volunteers. But where might you find older adults? How do you recruit them?

If you are starting from 'scratch', check around for a Retired Senior Volunteer



Program in your community. RSVP recruits men and women at least 60 years old to respond to a myriad of community needs. This national program does the initial screening, offers some limited training, and then refers the new volunteers to various schools, hospitals, libraries, courts, nursing homes, and many other agencies. RSVP is a program of ACTION, the federal domestic volunteer agency. Currently there are 760 Retired Senior Volunteer Programs across the country with 500,000 participating older adults.

Another organized group of seniors can be found in retirement groups of local companies. Check with the Human Resources Departments for more information on how to contact their company's retirees. Senior centers or 'congregate meal sites' are another good place to reach the 60+ population.

Many offer short programs following lunch and staff are looking for new speakers. When asked to speak at one of these centers, it may be helpful for credibility if you bring a senior with you who is currently involved and can attest to his or her peer group the worthiness of your program.

Another avenue to check is your local Area Agency on Aging. The 670 AAAs across the country are charged with planning and coordinating services to older people and with providing information and referral. They should be able to direct you to other pools of senior resources, such as your local chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons. AARP is the largest group of seniors in the United States. They are involved in legislative advocacy, research, informative programs, and community services provided by a

Recruitment



network of local chapters and experienced volunteers throughout the country. The AAA folks can give you the names of the officers of your local AARP chapter.

As with many other volunteer groups, one of the best recruitment methods is word-of-mouth. Give a senior a positive and rewarding volunteer experience and she is sure to tell her friends about it. To encourage your current seniors to gather more help, offer incentives for each additional person they recruit to your cause. Incentives may include a gift certificate to a local restaurant or

special recognition in front of their peers.

When distributing recruitment brochures or posters, remember to include the senior apartment complexes, retirement communities, pharmacies, doctors' offices, and grocery stores. *If using a picture of a senior in your literature, note that older people generally see themselves as 10 years younger than their chronological age.* Be sure the image you use portrays older adults in an attractive and positive way.

Another method of getting your message to this target group is to use the newspapers specifically geared to older adults. Many communities now have monthly newspapers called *Senior Times* or *Senior Living* or some variation. Try to get an article written about your program, submit a picture, or write a letter to the editor. Also, your regular newspaper may have a feature section once a week ('Age Page') or a monthly supplement ('Generations') targeted to older adults.

As stated earlier, seniors' preferences are quite varied. Some older adults will be bored with retirement and will desire to use their skills again in a productive way. Others may want nothing to do with their previous career and may relish the opportunity to try something new. A retired engineer in Atlanta loves his volunteer job as a docent in an art museum because he does not have to be 'the expert' anymore.

For many seniors their later years are a time that they see friends and family move or pass away. With these changes may come feelings of isolation and loneliness. For this segment of seniors, volunteer activity in a group setting would be most appealing. The group project would provide companionship and give the senior a sense of connectedness.

Seasonal volunteer assignments will also be appealing to many older adults. Each winter a mass exodus takes place as seniors leave the cold climate of the midwest and head for the sunny shores of Florida, Texas, and warm southern states. Even if seniors do not leave for a whole season, they often take extended vacations of 3 to 4 weeks.

A key to any volunteer assignment given to an older adult is the

Attitudes of Americans Over 45 Years of Age on Volunteerism

"Of those possibly interested in volunteering, 21% would consider working for programs for older persons. The same number would be interested in programs drawing on their own experiences (21%) and 18% would be interested in school or youth programs. Those most interested in possibly volunteering in programs for the elderly include blacks (35%), women aged 45-to-54 (33%), and those earning over \$30,000 per year (27%).

— Hamilton, Frederick & Schneiders, 1988

Types of jobs

Recognition and retention

meaningful use of that person's time. A mistake volunteer managers sometimes make is under-utilizing a senior volunteer. As you remember from the mini-gerontology lesson earlier, the majority of adults over 65 years of age are capable individuals. Treat them as co-workers and members of the 'team'.

By listening to seniors, your interest in their feelings conveys respect and concern. This recognition of their continued value to society helps retain senior volunteers. As a good volunteer manager, you know that the best way to acknowledge and keep your volunteers is through the day-to-day recognition – sincere 'Thank You's', hugs, praise – adding that personal touch.

On the flip side, the annual recognition dinner or luncheon is still liked by some senior volunteers, especially those with a strong group identity. Others will prefer to try a new experience such as a boat ride, a train ride, or an ice cream social where family members are also invited. Because the 65+ population is the most diverse, a variety of types of recognition will most likely be required. Look for volunteerism awards specifically set up for seniors. The State of Michigan, through its Office of Services to the Aging, has a "Senior of the Year" award. Citizens Insurance also sponsors a senior volunteer award called the "Concerned Citizen Award."



Another form of recognition that seniors seem to appreciate is the opportunity for training and in-services. Just like the general public, seniors want to be up on the latest developments in AIDS research, Alzheimer's Disease, and other current topics. Older adults generally enjoy continued learning and by offering training you demonstrate that you are making an investment in them.

For many older adults transportation can be a challenge. They may want to volunteer, but no longer drive. When possible, it is beneficial to offer transportation or reimbursement for public transportation such as the bus or dial-a-ride service. This can be an important benefit in keeping your senior volunteers.

Demographics point to an ever-increasing pool of seniors. This group has the time and a wealth of experience like no other segment of the population. Take advantage of this trend by involving older adults in your program.



One on One Volunteers

by
Sue Vineyard

There are volunteer assignments that, by their very nature, demand one-on-one relationships between the service recipient and volunteer.

This very special type of volunteer is targeted from the start for a specific assignment – sometimes even toward a specific person in need of individualized attention.

When such a need arises, the manager of the volunteer program plays the critical role of *matchmaker* and should understand that a great part of the ultimate success of the matches she makes will depend on how well she planned, targeted, recruited, trained and supported the volunteers in question.

Successful one-on-one volunteering begins with the volunteer coordinator gathering as much information as possible about the client or clients to be served. The depth of that information is determined by the nature of the service that is to be provided.

For example, if a volunteer is needed to work with a third grade child requiring help in reading, it is critical to find out if the child is struggling because they have a learning disability, a non-English first language, a behavioral disorder, mild retardation, or simply would rather be at recess.

The following need to be determined in regard to the client to be served:

- ✓ What specifically is needed?
- ✓ What is the goal of the assistance to be provided?
- ✓ What is the background and history of the client that would affect the one-on-one relationship?
- ✓ What characteristics does the client exhibit?
- ✓ If "normalization" is the goal for the client, how is that defined?
- ✓ What time commitment is needed for the volunteer to attain the stated goal?
- ✓ What other services and support are being provided the client?
- ✓ When, where and how will services be rendered?

Obviously, if the one on one volunteer assignment is that of a 7th grader helping a 3rd grader to improve reading skills, such in-depth information is not necessary. On the other hand, if an adult is to work regularly to assist a person who is developmentally disabled, even more specific information may be needed.

Recruitment

With client-specific information attained, the volunteer coordinator begins recruitment efforts by targeting known individuals or those most likely to be found within certain settings. For example, a search for an assisted-living volunteer for a person who is developmentally disabled and needing to live independently in the community, might easily be found in a local chapter of AARP, retired teachers association, a church or synagogue, seniors club, etc.

Volunteers recruited from such groups might meet the needs of maturity, patience, have coaching skills and free time during the day as such a one on one placement would require.

In making recruitment contacts, describe carefully the needs of the clients. Present specific job descriptions complete with time frames, accountability, expectations, skills, etc. Include any reporting requirements and parameters such as legalities that effect the relationship, etc.

General recruitment efforts can come in the form of "ads" in group newsletters, requests for help in newspapers, on church or temple bulletin boards, appeals at meetings, requests given to intermediary agents such as teachers, ministers, group leaders, doctors, business owners etc, who can pass on volunteer requests to constituents, asking those interested to contact you directly.

This actually becomes a first step in screening potential volunteers as it sorts through large numbers of people to identify those interested in specific assignments.

One on One Examples

Intervention volunteer
Literacy trainer
Tutor
Community living aide
Personal advocate
Nuring home visitor
Meals on Wheels volunteer
Crisis counselor
Latch-key "Grandparent by phone"
Aide to person with disabilities
12 step program partner
Hot line volunteer
Personal shopper
Counselor
Cancer patients driver
Adopted Grandparent/child (in an institution) volunteer.

Screening

Interviewing



Although aimed at "likely" locations for finding the volunteers needed, the above is far less specific than the highly personalized and targeted recruitment and screening that is the next step.

At this point, each person who has responded to the general appeal to help is interviewed individually to zero in on the best "match" between client and volunteer. In some cases you will be trying to identify a number of qualified volunteers for

on-going service in one-on-one placements such as tutors, hospital baby-rockers, etc.

In other cases you will be looking for that one best match for a specific client in need. To this end you will want to use non-directive questions that allow you to truly understand the potential volunteer.

Non-directive questioning's goal is to attain the most honest and revealing

answers rather than "telegraphing" a desired response. An example would be: "Tell me about your family" (non-directive) rather than "Are you married" (directive).

Such questions might include:

- *Tell me about yourself.*
- *Tell me about your time availability.*
- *What major demands do you have in your life?*
- *What interests you most about this volunteer assignment?*
- *What would you consider "success" for this client? For the relationship?*
- *What jobs have you had previously that you enjoyed? Why?*
- *What jobs have you not enjoyed? Why?*
- *What support would you expect in this assignment?*
- *What do you see your role being in this job?*
- *What really tough decisions have you had to make in your life?*
- *What are the strongest personal characteristics you would bring to this job?*
- *Is there anything in your back ground that could prevent you from being placed in this assignment?*

Again, the depth of the questioning is in proportion to the degree of challenge in the assignment. The object is to find out as much as you can about the volunteer applicant.

Actual placement of a one on one volunteer may also involve background checks, recommendations,

interviews with other agency officials or family of the client. Be clear from the start as to the procedure necessary for final approval for placement and share this with the prospective volunteer so they are not surprised by the depth of the scrutiny.

For very sensitive one on one placement, it is suggested that the final decision about matching with a client be held only after the client and potential volunteer meet face to face. The client (or advocates) and volunteer should each then make an assessment as to whether they believe the "match" is right.

Keys to Successful Mentoring Relationships

- ✓ Clients need to be prepared to accept a mentor. They should not feel that something is 'wrong' with them.
- ✓ Programs should seek a core of dedicated volunteers, not a large quantity.
- ✓ Select volunteers who enjoy spending time with clients rather than those focused on 'saving' people.
- ✓ Mentors need access to support teams of staff and other volunteer teams. Mentoring can be a 'team' volunteer job.
- ✓ Programs need to have adequate staff to insure that mentors show up and have adequate training and supervision for the job.

— Marc Freedman, *The Kindness of Strangers*

Placement

Assure both that no judgement will be made about either if they choose to look further for assignment. Some people simply don't "click" when they meet and in a 1 on 1 this is critical information, although it must be acted on very, very carefully to circumvent feelings of rejection. Never pressure a volunteer into an assignment with which they feel uncomfortable. Feelings are facts and forced relationships rarely bear the fruit of truly voluntary ones.

Confidentiality



After meeting, if all parties feel it is a good match, the volunteer coordinator sits down with the volunteer, going back over details of their job assignment, reporting requirements, support, etc. and any further details or questions the volunteer may have.

Be most clear about rules of confidentiality with the volunteer. Answer questions they might have after meeting the client but explain directly that information is never to be discussed with anyone other than appropriate people involved in the client's support. Make the consequences of breaking this trust very clear.

Go over again:

- ✓ The goal of the relationship.
- ✓ Reasonable expectations for the client.
- ✓ Any limits of the relationship. Let the volunteer know that it is OK to say "no" to any requests outside of the limits. Have them inform their supervisor of such requests so that the needs of the client can be met by more appropriate means.
- ✓ Any legalities that might govern the relationship.
- ✓ Support available for the volunteer such as training, debriefing, information, etc.

Monitoring

The job of the volunteer supervisor does not end at placement of the volunteer! Especially where vulnerable clients are involved, the relationship and efforts of the volunteer must be carefully monitored to see that it gets off to a good and appropriate start and continues as such.

Check with both volunteer and client plus any other observers for feedback on the interaction. Drop in to view first hand how they are relating. Listen "between the lines" for any problems and respond appropriately.

Remember that in the role of volunteer coordinator, you are an advocate for the client as well as the supervisor of the volunteer. Your primary responsibility is to facilitate service to the client.

Maintaining trust

Maintaining *trust* is the key to one-to-one volunteerism:

- ✓ *Trust* must be established in a 3-way direction between agency, volunteer & client
- ✓ Confidentiality must be maintained at all times.
- ✓ Volunteers must be given the training and information needed for success.
- ✓ Clients must be honestly respected for their unique strengths & capabilities.
- ✓ Volunteers must be respected for their ability to handle situations with the clients as they arise.

Recognition

- ✓ The agency must establish norms of support, professionalism, honesty and caring for both volunteers and clients.

One-on-one relationships offer incredible examples of satisfaction and reward for the two individuals involved. Life-changing interactions can fortify both client and volunteer with great good feelings and memories. Appropriate recognition, most frequently given in conjunction with the client served, is typically the most meaningful for the volunteer.

Be sensitive to what might be more personalized in the way of thanks to the volunteer. Do not assume that reaching the goal assigned is reward enough for everyone (though it may be for some) and find ways to express appreciation from the agency overseeing the assignment.

One-on-one volunteering is part of the diverse face of volunteerism today and is as old as humanity. Its nature is rooted in the ageless joy of friendship given and friendship received.

It is the heart of all voluntary interaction and truly stimulates miracles as one person makes an incredible difference in the life of another through caring action and intervention.



Volunteers in Rural Areas

by
Trudy Seifa

The concept of *rural volunteerism* is as old as the country itself. "People helping people", "neighbor helping neighbor" was the founding principle upon which America was settled. The barn raisings, building of churches and schools, assisting neighbors during times of crisis, and the creation of what is now the infrastructure of our nation, most often began in rural areas when people joined together to solve common problems.

Today, volunteerism in rural areas is based on many of the same principles of neighbor helping neighbor and joining together for a common cause. For this reason, just the words "volunteer," "volunteerism," or "will you volunteer?" may be confusing to rural populations. If you restate your need and say it in terms of "Can (or will) you *help*?" or "I need your *help*?" you may have bridged a major communication gap with the rural culture.

Rural areas often have limited resources in people power and organizations from which you can recruit support. The enthusiasm and willingness of people to help, once they understand the need and become committed to it, however, can be extremely refreshing and exciting. Rural volunteering presents a spectrum of opportunities but calls for creativity and understanding – an understanding of the people, the barriers, and the opportunities for success.

Rural people are extremely proud and often fiercely independent. Many have roots that go deep into the community where they reside. More recently, however, there has been an influx of new rural residents, or those who are looking for refuge from the hustle and bustle of the big city. Rural people are often skeptical of outsiders and may be slow to accept them as members of the community or to accept even their ideas.

Stereotypes of rural people have not been kind. *Green Acres*, *Deliverance*, *Gomer Pyle*, and *Mayberry RFD* – all TV shows or movies from the 60's and 70's, portrayed residents of rural communities as dumb, bumbling, and illiterate. Today's media stereotype is somewhat improved, but the subtleties are still there.

The rural culture is very family oriented, and is based on a matriarchal or mother-dominated system or unit. The mother is strongest member of the family unit. Although men often have the outward appearance of dominance, the mother often wields the most influence and control over the inner workings of the family and particularly over the children. Perhaps that's where the saying originated that "if momma ain't happy...ain't nobody happy." Understanding this matriarchal dominance is important if you want to influence any members within the family unit and gain acceptance for your ideas.

Understanding the rural culture

Establishing trust

The key to success in working with rural populations is the level of trust which can be developed. Historically, rural people have often operated on a 'hand shake' philosophy. No papers needed to be signed because each party trusted and respected one another. The level of trust you build is often reflected as you visit with rural residents in their homes. If you are invited into their living room you are accepted only to share in their "public" life. However, if you are welcomed into their kitchen or share a meal with them, it often signals a greater level of trust. You have been invited to share in their "private" life.

Many members within the rural community have already developed their credibility with other members, but outsiders are treated with more skepticism and must work hard to build their acceptance. It may take months or years for this to happen. If you are an 'outsider' you may want to enlist the help of someone who is already accepted by the community, to help build your own credibility and gain acceptance. The success of a rural volunteer program must be built on trust.



Building trust among rural populations includes:

✓ **Understanding and accepting individuals, their culture, and their needs.**

Rural people are different from urban people. They often view the world with a different "map" and have different ideas on how to handle problems. Because of their isolation or the space they have, they view their home as their "castle" and do not feel outsiders should tell them how to run things regarding their personal lives. Although rural areas often have problems relating to poverty, unemployment, and under-employment, there are many members of the rural community who are intelligent, well-educated,

and highly skilled. They simply *see* things differently because of their culture. If you want to change the way rural people *see* things and teach them new ideas, you must accept them as they are and believe that change is possible.

✓ **Communication skills.** Culture can create barriers to communication. The diversity of our volunteer workforce has created a greater need for good communication skills than ever before. Good communications means that the message has not only been received, but has been understood. In the rural community trust can be built in the communications process if the messenger is accepted and liked by the group and if they message is presented in an honest, open, and non-threatening, friendly, style. Barriers may also involve dress, accents, and non-verbal cues. What you wear, how you look and act should send messages of similarities rather than differences. Politicians often take off their coat and tie and roll up their shirt sleeves when they head to the rural areas because they want to be more readily accepted.

✓ **Overcoming physical and psychological barriers.** Rural areas often look differently on a piece of paper than in reality. Physical barriers may be distance, mountains, rivers, or county lines. If you are to be realistic in planning your program and bringing together people of rural areas, you must understand the physical barriers. Sometimes the physical barriers also contribute to psychological barriers, such as the northern part of the county not associating with or supporting anything from the southern part of the county. Psychological barriers may stem from differences in religious beliefs,

cultural background, loyalties, and community ties. Building trust often means working separately with individuals or in small groups before bringing them together. It may also mean the maintenance of separate entities.

✓ **Identifying leaders from within.** Rural communities often have strong leaders who are already well-established. If you are presenting a new program and need the help of the rural community, you must gain access to



the community through the identification of already-established organizations and key leaders from those groups. They will be the *door openers* for you. I must warn you, however, that some of the most overworked people in existence are the volunteer leaders in rural communities. Because of the shortage of people, many are often wearing a lot of "different hats" and are involved in numerous community activities and organizations. Value their time, knowledge, and expertise. If you gain their trust and commitment, you will have greater success in gaining the trust of their co-workers, colleagues, and the rest of the community.

✓ **Creating common ground.** You may be worlds away from the rural people with whom you are trying to connect, but seek and identify common ground. Open your conversation with an observation about

their community or home. While making rural home visits I often commented on the size and health of their garden. It sets a friendly tone and puts everyone at ease. A concern for families, education, health, and a quality life is a cross-cultural concern. Trust can be built by speaking their language and creating a linkage between what it is you need or want. An explanation of how they (and their neighbors) will benefit will strengthen the linkage. Then let them know how they can help achieve the goal. Ask for their ideas and input and create common goals.

✓ **Empowering others and "bringing people along".** Trust can be built when you share information with others and teach them to create their own "better world." Often those living in rural areas do not know how to access the systems which control their lives – governments, agencies, officials, high technology, and "big city ways." They may not have had the experience in dealing with organized groups. They can be taught the skills necessary, however, and as they gain in understanding, they grow. As they grow in their knowledge, they become empowered to make more decisions, become more involved and take more responsibility. They begin not only to trust you but to trust themselves more. This empowerment creates new leaders and builds stronger communities.

In establishing ties with the rural community where resources are limited, you may want to create

Existing Groups for Collaboration

Churches
Schools
Governmental Agencies
Extension Homemakers Clubs
4-H Clubs
Scout Troops
Farm Bureau
Community Centers
Boards of Education
Sheriff's Department
County/District Courts
Regional Authorities
Ministerial Alliances
The Grange
Ruritan
Senior Centers
Women's Clubs

**Collaborate for
greater impact**

collaborations among existing groups or access networks already established. Many of these groups are well-organized and have a power base from which you can draw. They may also be doing some of things that are similar to or linked to what you want to accomplish. They may have a mission similar to yours or want to impact the community in the same ways you want.

Tapping into existing organizations offer the following opportunities:

- You gain greater understanding and quicker access to community resources.
- Combining resources creates strength and synergy.
- Affiliation with a successful group lends credibility to all involved.
- Collaboration with others may increase your funding opportunities.
- Services will not be duplicated and may become less fragmented

The risks involved in collaborating with other organizations are that groups may get into "turf-protection" battles, power struggles may arise, some may not get needed recognition

and communication links may be difficult to maintain. These risks can be minimized if they are explored as potential barriers in the planning stages and strategies for overcoming these obstacles are planned. The opportunities that rural coalitions offer far outweigh the risks.



Develop your own vision

Since much of the rural culture is based on trust and is built on verbal communication, can you state your mission and goals clearly? Do you know what it is you want to accomplish? Is your goal to educate those in the rural community, to provide a service to or for them, to raise funds, to initiate change, or to spur them into action and have them work for you? How can you present the message of your mission in a way that is most likely to be accepted. Be organized and professional but be careful not to be too 'slick' or you will be instantly met with skepticism and distrust.

Before beginning your recruitment process, look at the existing organizations and learn as much as you can about each of them. What is their mission? What are some of the projects and issues they are currently working on? What has been their success in the past? Who are the power people in these groups who could possibly "open doors" for you in the community? If they agree to join with you, what do you have to offer them?

If you have developed an understanding for the rural culture and community, have your mission clearly in focus, and have decided on the established audiences you want to target, you are now ready to develop an action plan. Begin by setting specific, measurable goals. Too many times people from the outside tend to set goals that are unrealistic given the circumstances one is likely to encounter in the rural setting. Unrealistic goals can be self-defeating for brand new projects or programs. Since resources are naturally limited, you may want to initially think *small* rather than *big*. Small successes will help your credibility in the community and a series of small triumphs will lead to greater success.

Develop your strategy and decide how the work will be accomplished. Do you

Create a plan for success

Final keys for success

need an organizational structure? If so, what will it be? What resources will you need in terms of personnel, money, equipment and information? Who will be responsible for what? What timelines or schedule do you need to consider? Build in evaluation checkpoints. Do you know what success will look like and how you will celebrate the success and the contribution of participants? Being able to map this out for yourself is a very important part of the planning stage. Asking new recruits or members of the participating organizations for their input and ideas and creating an understanding, and commitment to the

plan is also important. Although work in rural areas may *appear* to be more informal, it is not. Because of the limited resources and natural obstacles, more planning is often needed than in more populated areas where it may be easier to get people to "fill in the gaps." *Overlooking the formal planning process will lead to less than satisfactory results.*

Follow these keys for success in working with rural populations:

- ✓ Search for understanding.
- ✓ Be realistic.
- ✓ Build trust.
- ✓ Do your homework and plan ahead.
- ✓ Dress to blend, not to offend.
- ✓ Speak their language and tap into their world and needs.
- ✓ Tell them what you want and why.
- ✓ Ask for their help and listen to their ideas.
- ✓ Work your plan.
- ✓ Celebrate your success and their success!

Creating volunteer programs in rural areas offers challenges, but the rewards are great. The people you meet are wonderful. They are the very fiber of our country. They care about one another and about their communities. They may have limited resources, limited knowledge, and limited access and experience with the metropolitan world, but they are concerned and can be very creative in meeting the needs of their community.

An Example of Rural Collaboration

Because of the high incidence of cervical cancer, a health agency targeted a rural region for cancer screening in hopes of educating women about examinations and pap smears, early detection, and prevention. The rural terrain as well as the culture had isolated the women in the targeted region. They had limited access to quality preventive medical care. (You go the doctor when you are sick, not when you are well!) Their culture brought specific attitudes about their bodies (and especially about their 'privates') which prohibited 'outsiders' from performing routine medical examinations. The health department teamed up with the Cancer Society and developed an educational program for reaching those in the rural areas. Then the Cooperative Extension Service was selected to be the 'messenger.' Many of the women to be targeted were members of Extension Homemaker Clubs, were participants in nutrition programs, or had children involved in 4-H. The Extension Agent was already an accepted and trusted outsider in the community. Rather than try to draw the women into the county seat, the educational programs were presented at the Homemaker Clubs meetings, rural health clinics, and at nutrition sites. The women then took the information home and convinced their husbands that it was alright to have this test, that the 'outsiders' could be trusted, and that the results would be beneficial to the family. If the right messenger had not delivered the message to the matriarch of the family in their 'own backyard', the message would never have been received and the project would have failed.



'What do you mean, you want to volunteer here?'

The workplace as a focus for volunteering

Staff as Volunteers

by
Steve McCurley

Almost every volunteer manager has encountered at some point in their career the perplexing question of how to handle agency employees who wish to volunteer somewhere within the agency.

The volunteer manager who first confronts this situation, usually posed by an agency staff person who approaches them and asks (somewhat shyly) if they can 'help out', often experiences a brief cognitive disorientation. After all, if the person has to be paid to do the rest of their job with the agency, it 'feels' strange to think of them as unpaid volunteers.

If this philosophical dilemma is resolved, the volunteer manager then begins to experience an equal feeling of disequilibrium upon contemplating the logistical questions involved: can, for example, a person both volunteer and be a staff person in the same department without totally confusing everyone? Do we ask them to wear a badge marking their current status, or give them a series of hats to wear to notify others of their identity? What happens if they end up being supervised as a volunteer by someone they in turn supervise in their paid staff role?

And by the time things reach the legal department, whose natural reaction is to say "no" to anything strange, the situation is in complete chaos and the would-be volunteer is off in the corner muttering quietly "but, I was only trying to *help*..."

It should not, however, be surprising that staff occasionally desire to volunteer, and even to volunteer within the same organization where they are employed.

Staff are, after all, basically normal human beings. Many staff members of non-profit agencies work within their field out of a deep commitment to the clientele and cause, precisely the motivational elements which prompt volunteering. Like others, they care and want to help.

Like other volunteers, the staff person may see donating time to their agency as a way of further contributing to the cause, or as a way to advance their own interests, such as expressing a hobby or learning a new skill.

And a volunteer assignment where one already works can be a totally convenient way to contribute. There is, after all, almost no wasted travel time!

In fact, far more employee volunteering currently takes place than most people realize.

The entire area of Employee Service and Recreation programs, in which

Legal aspects of staff volunteer involvement

corporate employees volunteer within their companies to operate 'self help' programs in the area of wellness and sports, is one example.

Another example is that of volunteering within an agency to help operate a program designed to benefit others. In the state of Washington, for example, over 2,000 state government employees volunteer each year to operate the Combined Fund Drive which raises money to support community causes.



There are even a significant number of direct client service programs in existence. One of the better known is a combined program of the US Postal Service and the postal employee unions in which mail carriers check on the well-being of seniors and shut-ins along their delivery routes, reporting addresses where mail has accumulated.

Less common are those instances where staff volunteer internally for work which is being done in the normal course of business operations of the agency, but positive examples do exist that can serve as models

for staff involvement. Almost any large non-profit or governmental organization could offer numerous opportunities for staff volunteer involvement.

Let us first dispense with the legal questions that impinge on allowing staff to donate additional time to the same agency with whom they have a paid employment relationship.

At the federal level, the Fair Labor Standards Act, administered by the Wage and Hour Administration, is the law which governs the ability of employees of an organization to also volunteer within that same organization. The intent of the FLSA is to prevent abuse of employees, particularly those paid by the hour ('non-exempt employees').

While the issue is not directly addressed in the Act itself, a series of regulatory rulings has provided some guidance. Volunteering by employees is allowed if these criteria are met:

- ✓ *There is no 'coercion' or 'undue pressure' on the employee to participate.*
- ✓ *The work done is different from that normally done by paid employees.*
- ✓ *The work is outside the normal business hours of the employee.*

It is important to take some care in this area. The enforcement of Wage and Hours regulations is proactive, which means that claims can, and have, been brought by the Wage and Hour Administration itself. They can be brought even if the staff involved do not themselves join in the claim and can be brought even if the staff members involved *disagree* with the position of the Wage and Hour Administration. This means that careful records clearly demonstrating conformity with the criteria above must be maintained.

Not all organizations are subject to the federal Wage and Hour laws, but the criteria make good guidelines to follow, whether or not you are legally

Working productively with employee unions

required. You will also want to check applicable state laws and requirements.

In large institutions with employee unions it is also important to reach an agreement with the union on the suitability of staff involvement as volunteers.

Upon first encountering this situation union representatives are likely to be as perplexed as you, and this often leads to a quick negative response. On the other hand, unions have a long history of involvement in volunteering themselves. One technique for working through the union question is to arrange a joint meeting of the requesting staff person, yourself, and a union representative to discuss this issue.

The actual 'request' for union approval should come from the staff person, to avoid any semblance of management pressure.

Since the decision on this will be setting a precedent of sorts, the involvement of the union should occur whether or not the staff person involved is a member of the union or subject to collective bargaining agreements.

If the union is uncomfortable with the involvement of staff as volunteers it is probably in the best interests of the volunteer program to attempt to find a volunteer placement for the staff person in another agency. Turning volunteer utilization into an issue of contention in labor negotiations is in no one's best interest.

While the above legal issues may seem sufficiently fearsome to deter any consideration of involving staff as volunteers, they are actually quite minor and should be considered more as a matter of taking some additional initial care rather than any justification for prohibiting staff from volunteering. The vast majority of agencies who involve staff as volunteers have never encountered any difficulties of this nature.

The logistical aspects of staff involvement also pose some complexity.

The first managerial consideration is ensuring that the decision to volunteer is entirely employee initiated. This probably means that you should avoid any organized program or project created by the agency to specifically involve staff as volunteers in which the type of work is directly connected to the normal business activity of the agency. This would not prevent employee wellness or fundraising campaigns, since they are not business-connected.

Checklist for Involving Staff as Volunteers

- Have an established agency policy on the involvement of staff as volunteers.
- Require consultation with the employee's supervisor before assignment.
- Require employee to meet all requirements and procedures of the normal volunteer program: application, interviewing, orientation, training, evaluation, etc.
- Impose a requirement that the volunteer activity may be terminated if it interferes with the employee's work duties.
- Require that the volunteer assignment be separate and distinct from the time and type of work normally done by the employee.
- Verify that there is no coercion upon the employee to volunteer and confirm this in writing with the employee.
- Check with the staff who will be supervising the volunteering staff as to their comfort with the situation.
- Do not assign the staff person to any unit with which they have significant interaction in their paid job.
- Avoid accepting any persons who might pose a conflict of interest, a supervisory conflict, or a nepotistic relationship.

Logistical aspects of staff volunteer involvement

It may also be prudent to avoid any organized recruitment campaign, which might be viewed as pressure from management to participate. The most suitable recruitment process, if any, would be spontaneous decisions by staff who are volunteering to tell their co-workers about what a good time they are having.

Much greater care must also be exercised in making sure that involvement in volunteering will not negatively impact the staff person's professional work. Before allowing the staff person to submit a volunteer application, suggest strongly that they consult with their work supervisor and seek approval for the volunteer work. You may also want to discuss the situation with the supervisor yourself.

The purpose of this preliminary work is to ensure that the volunteer program does not become involved in disputes between supervisors and their staff (or between labor and management) which are not really its concern and which will only harm the volunteer program. To avoid this you may want to consider a requirement that an employee's volunteer position may be temporarily suspended if it conflicts with performance of normal work duties.



After this consultation, the staff person should follow all the normal enrollment procedures of the agency. This includes completing an application, being interviewed, going through orientation and training, and all other steps of volunteer involvement.

If background checks are normally conducted on volunteer applicants, they should also be conducted for the staff person, unless they have already been done by the agency's personnel department.

While it may seem silly to ask a staff person to participate in an orientation session about an agency where they may have worked for a number of years, this step is important for two reasons. First, it will allow the staff person to be introduced to some aspects of agency operation with which they are not familiar, such as the procedures of the volunteer program. And second, *it is important to remind the staff person that, while volunteering, they are subject to all the rules and procedures of the volunteer program.*

This last point is quite important. You will need to monitor the ability of the staff person to adapt to their new role, and to maintain that role while volunteering. This means that they must be able to keep to the status and limits of their volunteer role while interacting with staff who are assigned as their supervisors, even though in their 'work' identity they may have greater authority than those staff.

And they must also maintain their volunteer identity while working with other volunteers. Any attempt to 'pull rank' or display a sense of greater knowledge or importance could be very detrimental to other volunteers.

It will also be important for you to keep good written records on staff who volunteer. An up-to-date job description should be maintained and time sheets of volunteer hours (recording the actual hours worked, not just the total amount) should be kept, even if you do not keep them for other volunteers. Both of these documents could become invaluable if a dispute

Special situations to watch out for & avoid

about 'employment' status ever arises.

Finally, the following are some special situations where you will want to take extra care or even avoid entirely.

X *Volunteering within Small Agencies*

Staff involvement works reasonably well in larger organizations because their size and complexity allows for a clear separation of work and volunteering. In smaller agencies, however, this is seldom the case. Jobs are often ill-defined, everyone does everything, and nothing can be separated.

If you encounter a staff person who wants to volunteer in a small agency, suggest that they simply add the work to their paid job description, perhaps under "other duties as assigned."

X *Professional Services*

If staff with professional credentials want to volunteer in jobs where they will be utilizing those professional credentials, then some additional care must be taken. Your best bet is to try to discourage them, since it is very difficult to show a separation between their paid and volunteer work. Your other option is to expand their paid work responsibilities to include involvement in the volunteer activity or with the client group with whom they are interested in working.



X *Conflicts of Interest*

Be careful about assigning staff as volunteers in departments with whom they have a 'professional' relationship. This would include departments with whom they work extensively in their paid job and departments where they will have access to information which impacts on their own paid job (such as personnel information) or upon their co-workers.

X *Nepotism*

Another situation to usually avoid is allowing family and close relatives of staff to volunteer. The only thing more delicate than supervising the Vice President who wants to volunteer is supervising the Vice President's spouse...

X *Community Service Assignments*

While not mandatory, it may also be wise to avoid accepting volunteer applications from staff who are fulfilling community service requirements. One reason for this is that it will become difficult to maintain privacy for the employee in cases where you notify volunteer supervisors about community service volunteers. If you do accept a staff person who is fulfilling a requirement of this sort, make sure that the sentencing authority approves the placement, since there could be some dispute as to whether volunteering within one's own agency qualifies as work for the 'community.'



Who is the military volunteer?

The Military Volunteer

by
Kathleen McCleskey & Barbara Williams

The strong history of volunteer commitment in military communities makes military family members especially effective and productive volunteers. In spite of this, however, they are often not recruited actively or managed well. In order to understand the military family volunteer, it is first beneficial to understand the military community and culture.

First, it is wise to remember that military families are not separate from the rest of the population. The demographics of America are fairly well represented in the military. The range and diversity are wide. Military personnel represent every shade of opinion, every political outlook, every creed and ethnic origin, every degree of education and personal development. Military spouses are increasingly finding their own identities outside the military community in employment, community commitment, and personal fulfillment.

It is dangerous to generalize, and yet some assumptions are safe. Generally speaking, there is a relatively high level of education and experience among military families. Their lives have often taken them far from their roots, and they have seen much more of the world than many of their civilian counterparts. There is a streak of patriotism, an occasional thread of conservatism, and a respect for tradition coupled with a willingness to accept change. They are usually adaptable, flexible, and quick to acclimate to new surroundings.

It is important to remember that military spouses are not all wives; many husbands now follow military wives around the world. There are also teens, dependent parents, and other relatives residing with military families who might be available to volunteer organizations.

Historically, volunteerism has been a constant among military families. Even today, when there is no longer the negative connotation to working outside the home for military wives, their opportunities are somewhat limited by the transient nature of their lives. At times 'volunteerism' has not been very 'voluntary' - for many years it was 'expected' that military wives would devote their spare time to those volunteer efforts dictated by such circumstances as their husband's unit or command status. Until the last two or three decades few military wives (military husbands in large numbers are a relatively new group) pursued careers outside the home, even when as well educated as their civilian sisters. Many military family members are unemployed, and even more are underemployed. In spite of the history of less-than-voluntary volunteerism, a large proportion of military personnel and their family members participate in service organizations and volunteer agencies. Many such programs flourish on military installations.

The changing military family environment

Generally it would appear that in past years military family members did not commit to their civilian communities as closely as they did to their military installations. In part this was because of their seeking the familiarity of the military surroundings; but even more it was a result of civilian agencies not letting their needs be known. The good news is that military family members are becoming more open and available to civilian volunteer agencies and activities.

Military families are not moving as frequently as they once did. Tours of duty frequently extend more than three or four years. Fewer military families sequester themselves to military installations. Fewer military installations have schools, so their children attend local schools. Military personnel buy homes, attend church, send children to school, and patronize local merchants.

They are available.

Like all families, military or not, they are buffeted by public and private concerns, and the tradition of military volunteerism continues. Many military spouses are frustrated by their underemployment. Even the best educated and qualified have trouble maintaining job or career continuity. Each time they relocate, they start over.



Planning for military volunteers

It is important to remember that many military volunteers will not stay with your agency more than a few months, since, as they achieve employment, many no longer have as much time to spare. However, this can be a positive for your agency, for they can serve as effective recruiters, advocates, and promoters of your cause. If your agency is such that you require a specific

time commitment (perhaps in exchange for training) be sure to make this clear at the outset.

Often young soldiers, many away from home for the first time, are looking for wholesome activities that might remind them of home and family. Many military units are willing to join in community activities, such as 'Adopt-a-School' programs. Many work with special activities and agencies such as Special Olympics and environmental concerns. It is also possible to think in terms of individual volunteers. *When recruiting active duty military, remember that they work long hours, and rarely are in control of their own schedules.* Military commitments come first, and soldiers are subject to field duty, deployment, extra duties on post, and many other demands on their time.

Another bountiful resource for volunteer agencies is the pool of military retirees and their families that can be found in almost any town or city. They are usually more geographically stable, and generally more tied to their civilian community, but many of their characteristics are those of active duty military and their families.

To recruit military volunteers it is necessary to *ask* them to help. There are a number of ways to get your message heard:

✓ Almost every military installation or organization has a newspaper, often published weekly. Contact the Public Affairs Office at the installation for

Getting the word out

information about having your program publicized.

- ✓ Almost every installation has wives' or spouses' groups.
- ✓ Many times groups are formed by families belonging to certain units, ships, air wings, military departments, and divisions.
- ✓ There are organizations representing the entire military installation, such as Officer's Wives (Spouses) Clubs, Enlisted Wives Clubs, All-Ranks Wives Clubs, as well as their counterparts in the retired community.

Groups generally meet monthly from September through May or June. Many of the groups have special 'sign-up' activities in August or September, and again in January. These are an excellent opportunity to recruit for your agency. Most clubs generally sponsor a monthly program of interest to members, and it is often possible to offer to do a presentation highlighting your activity. To do so, contact the Public Affairs Office for referral to the appropriate club officers.

Other resources include:

- All the services have a form of social service agency. In the Army, it is Army Community Service; in the other services it is called Family Services.
- Many Army installations have mayoral programs which offer services and information to families living on post.
- The Navy has the Ombudsman program to tie all families together.
- The National Guard and the Army have Family Support Groups.
- Military posts and bases have chapels whose bulletins can print your information.
- There are also Boy and Girl Scout troops, teen clubs, thrift shops, and many other organizations which might help you reach potential volunteers.
- All the services have some form of welcome or relocation help that might include your information to newcomers.

To reach retirees and their families consider the following groups in addition to other resources listed:

- The American Legion (and Auxiliary)
- The Veterans of Foreign Wars (and Auxiliary)

Note that many military installations have the equivalent of Volunteer Centers. These are known by a variety of names and fall in different places in the military organization. Contact the Public Affairs Office for the specifics of

The Early Recruiter Gets the...

One of the best times to involve military members is early in their residence in your community. In the time that they are job-hunting, they are very open to volunteer activity. This is enlightened self-interest, for it gives them contacts and acquaintances in the civilian community. It also continues the sense of accomplishment that is vital to all people.

What military volunteers need

your area.

It is often possible to recruit a group of volunteers for a short-range or limited project, and it is also possible to recruit long-range volunteers, particularly from among the retired community.

Volunteers from the military community have certain needs in the volunteer agencies they commit to. Because they move so often, results are important to military volunteers. They are particularly drawn to 'finishable' projects that can come to fruition while they work on them. Short-term assignments are often very attractive, and if the volunteer manager markets appropriately, will be easy to fill.

Those who are experienced in military programs are accustomed to high degrees of organization and efficiency. They can be impatient with wasted time or effort, or if they perceive that they are merely doing 'busy work.' Many also can be impatient with those who resist new ideas or say, "But we've *always* done it like this!"

Military community volunteers are used to a 'chain of command' with clearly delineated lines of responsibility. They can become uneasy if they don't know who is in charge, or if they are unclear as to their own roles and responsibilities. They are used to having information available to them, and have a capacity for seeing the 'big picture.' They are especially motivated by a view of the results of their activities.

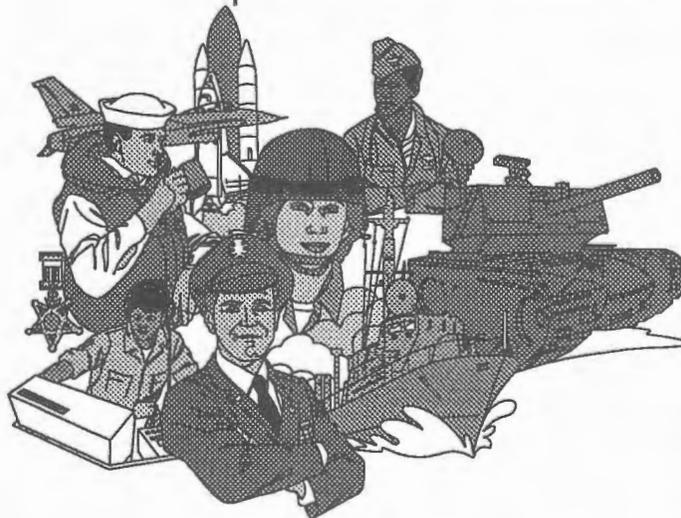
There are personal needs of military volunteers, too. A chief motive of many who volunteer is the need to make friends and establish a social or professional network. Many have felt shut out by civilian communities where everyone has known everyone else since childhood. Military members make friends fast – their experience has not allowed them to hang back for a year or two to decide if it is worth trying to become acquainted with someone. Because they are so used to relocating, most military volunteers have good social skills, yet their integration into an otherwise well-established programs can be difficult. Their wider experience, and comments like "Well, when we lived in Europe..." can be misinterpreted as boasting, when in fact it

is nothing of the sort. Their references to successes in other places can be interpreted as criticism of your agency, although it is not intended as such. Their open friendliness can be seen as 'pushiness', but it is the norm of their community and springs from a desire to fit in.

It is vital to remember that although military family volunteers may be at entry level in your organization, they quite possibly have broad experience in similar activities. It is worth listening to and valuing their opinions and suggestions. Use their experience to build new ideas into your program. At

the same time it will be your responsibility to give them a fuller picture of your activity so they can see its functions clearly enough to contribute wisely.

The stress levels of military families can be quite high. Their lives have significant challenges, and they are sometimes without knowledge of the help available to them. Although military installations provide a very full and sophisticated network of helping agencies, some military members are



Stresses on military volunteers

reluctant to seek help or advice on post. If your agency is one that provides social service, you may well find 'client volunteers' from the military community. An agency dealing with child abuse might attract someone coping with a heritage of such pain, or someone living with it in the present. Monetary stresses can be severe, also. Although pay is equitable in the armed forces, the constant moves can be a severe drain, and military members may have difficulty if their commitment to your organization requires a lot of monetary outlay.

The greatest stress military families deal with, however, is uncertainty –

uncertainty about what comes next in their lives. Consequently, you can help your military members most by making your expectations and commitments clear and unambiguous.



The bottom line

There is nothing mysterious about the military volunteer. Once you have recruited and worked with your first military family volunteers, you will be rewarded by an increasingly available pool of other military volunteers. Happy and productive volunteers will recruit their friends and acquaintances. Their diversity, experience, and commitment will benefit your agency, will help the community. The volunteer will benefit as well.



Involving Youth as Volunteer Leaders

by
John Steinbach

Most volunteer programs are hungry for people with energy, enthusiasm, creativity, and a desire to serve. But they often overlook a rich source of these qualities: the youth of their community.

Young people want to serve. The Search Institute studied over 46,000 young people and found that 41% of sixth grade girls and 37% of sixth grade boys were spending an hour or more per week serving their community. By 12th grade the percentages drop to 38% of girls and 26% of boys.

A major reason for the decline is young people's frustration with a lack of opportunities to serve, often stemming from a lack of appreciation by adults of young people's motivations and talents. In *The Kids Guide to Social Action*, Barbara Lewis, an elementary school teacher and author of numerous books on youth issues, asks young people:

'Do you find it insulting that most adults think you're only interested in video games and loud music? Are you tired of adults making most of the big decisions in your life? No one can represent you better than you...You have a fresh view of life. You don't know all the reasons why something won't work. You're willing to try new things. You come up with ideas. And you have your own opinions.'

And young people are ready to share their fresh view of life, represent themselves and get involved in the community. If you want to tap the tremendous potential of youth as volunteers, here are some guidelines to keep in mind.

Young people are most interested in serving during junior high and early high school years, a time when they have little access to transportation. Set up a car pool system so adult volunteers can provide transportation for young people. Consider young people's schedules when you plan volunteer meetings and other events. Don't make it too late on a school night and don't expect young people to show up when their school is playing in a big sporting event.

Placing youth on your board will transform the level of commitment and energy youth give to the organization. Nobody will be able to speak for the needs of young people with the authority of a young person. Having youth on your boards gives a fresh perspective, energy and valuable insight on how to get more youth to volunteer. Here are some points to remember when getting youth involved on your board:

✓ **Give youth full status and board membership.** Don't create a token 'youth advisory board'. Have youth serve as full board members with equal power as adult members and equal responsibility for attendance, service on

**Make volunteering
accessible**

**Get youth involved
on your board**

committees, and other board guidelines. Anne Hoover, who is currently developing a 'Youth in Governance' curriculum with funding from the Lilly Endowment, says, "Don't just put youth on the board because it sounds like a good idea. Be sure and go the next step and let youth know that they are equal, important and have a vote like everyone else. And be sure that the adults are ready to treat youth as equals."

✓ **Make officer positions open to youth.** Youth as Resources is a program that encourages young people to get involved in the community by awarding grants to projects designed and implemented by youth. The Fort Wayne, IN Youth as Resources program has operated with a majority of board positions being held by youth since 1987. All officer positions on the board are held by youth. Muriel Dennie, the current director of the program, says "The youth really know what is going on. They are out in the community and see what is happening, especially with issues that involve youth. And they make important decisions – there isn't an adult in the corner saying do this and this and not this." Among the many responsibilities of the Youth as Resources board is distributing \$20,000 program budget funding to a variety of youth-run community projects.

✓ **Provide training in board operation to youth.** Some young people may need basic training on board functioning and meeting rules, but the investment in training will result in a valuable return. Explaining Robert's Rules, how to make a motion, nomination of officers, and the workings of committees will give youth the knowledge they need to contribute fully. Since there are many adults who can use the same skills and knowledge, consider offering training for the entire board.

Young people also need some mentoring and some patience from adult board members. Mindy Notestine had served for two years on the Youth as Resources Board before she became president. But she still needed some help

from adults when she took over the leadership role. "I was so nervous the first meeting I could hardly talk. But everyone was real patient and helpful. They helped me remember Robert's Rules and didn't rush me to express myself. After a couple of meetings I was fine, and have really enjoyed being president."



✓ **Prepare adult board members before placing youth on the board.** If you are serious about making youth equal board members, all adults on the board must be ready to treat youth as equals. This means ideas proposed by

you people get the same hearing as other ideas, that young people are able to have a meaningful role in discussions, and, also, that the ideas of young people will be challenged the same as any other board member. To fully accept youth on the board, be sure that adults are ready to allow youth to hold officer positions. Having a training session for adult members on acceptance of youth *before* young people are placed on the board will help make the transition a smooth one.

✓ **Don't limit board involvement to youth serving organizations.** Many youth-serving organizations have begun to have young people on their boards, but any organization, whether or not it is primarily youth-serving, can benefit from young people on the board. Organizations that have youth

involved as volunteers should definitely consider having youth serve on the board. Placing youth on a board expands the feeling of influence and commitment among all young people in the organization. And young board members also become outspoken recruiters who encourage other youth to get involved in the organization.

✓ **Don't limit involvement to one young person.** Being the only young person at a board meeting can be intimidating for even the most competent and confident of young people. Have at least two or three young people on the board – this will make each young person feel more a part of the group and more willing to contribute.



Whenever I do leadership workshops for youth, I am surprised by their insights and comments. Young people often ask questions and have ideas that never occur to adults. As adults we can be quick to shoot down fresh ideas with the rationale that "that's not the way we do things around here" or "that sounds good, but it will never work in the real world." Listen to young people's ideas, and when appropriate and possible, allow them to try out their new ideas. The fresh eyes of youth can see things differently and start an organization changing in very positive ways.

Adults often expect youth from affluent backgrounds to be interested in giving to the community, but ignore youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The Boys and Girls Club of Fort Wayne, where 80% of club members qualify for free or reduced lunch programs at school, has an annual "We Care Week" where members take part in community projects. Duane Hinshaw, director of the Fort Wayne club says, "At first kids from the circumstances of our members aren't overly receptive because community service hasn't been modeled to them. But they usually respond overwhelmingly because of the positive feelings they receive that they may never have experienced. The hardest part is getting the initial interest and involvement."

In a September 10, 1991 article in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, John Mutz, president of the Lilly Endowment, which funds the program, says, "Somehow or other, kids who thought they had nothing to offer suddenly have a great deal more to offer than they thought, and this turns their whole attitude around."

Many communities now have Youth Leadership or Youth as Resources programs. Youth involved in these programs are usually looking for possibilities for community involvement. Key Clubs, Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA, YWCA, and scouting groups are other places to recruit volunteers. Don't try to create a program designed for youth involvement and then fit participants into your design; instead, present a volunteer opportunity to youth groups and allow them to design their own method of service.

Allow young people to express their creativity

Involve youth from diverse backgrounds

Recruit youth volunteers through established groups

Expect the best

Young people are very good at living *up to* or *down to* adults' expectations. When youth are treated with respect and trust that they will do a good job, they usually deliver wonderfully. But if they encounter excessive guidance and supervision born of distrust, young people will often rebel. Make sure that the adults working with youth expect the best and communicate high expectations and levels of trust.

Provide training in leadership and community service



Every community can benefit from a youth leadership training program. These programs give youth the skills to work in groups, act as leaders, and find meaningful ways to get involved in their community, and to raise funds for projects. The best leadership programs help young people become aware of community issues and have a service project as an integral part of the leadership experience.

Start young and keep youth involved

Statistics cited earlier in this article point out that involvement drops over time. It is important

that young people have ways to get involved in junior high or even elementary school years so they can experience the value of community service.

Conclusion

The next time you feel the need for an infusion of fresh energy in your volunteer program, go to a place where young people gather. Wouldn't you love to tap into that energy? You can. Youth are waiting to serve, they just need the invitation and encouragement of those of us involved in volunteer activities.

As 17 year-old Mindy Notestine puts it: "Really give youth a chance. Young people aren't as ignorant as some people think. There are some great young leaders out there, they just need to be given a chance."

Getting youth involved is a true 'win-win.' The community and organization win by receiving all that youth has to offer and youth win by experiencing the rewards of volunteering and leading, plus the resulting higher self-esteem, sense of power and purpose. And for organizations that face a shortage of volunteers, getting young people involved in serving can help fulfill today's needs and insure a pool of committed, experienced, talented volunteers for decades to come.



A 'professional'?

Getting the job done right

The Volunteer Professional

by
Steve McCurley

Almost everyone who engages in work likes to think that they do so in a 'professional' fashion, but we will deal with a more limited definition of that term in this consideration of recruiting the *volunteer professional*. For our purposes, one assumes this status if one is a *member of a recognized trade whose professional work involves specific skills or knowledge and who is utilizing those skills as a major element of one's volunteer job*. In addition, membership in the field of activity may often require possession of a license or certificate of competence granted by an official body.

In one sense the volunteer professional might simply be described as a *specialist* brought in to perform a technical task. And it is this status of *expert* that creates some differences in working with the volunteering professional.

Step one in involving professionals as volunteers is **job development**. A common mistake is to assume that the professional should be the one who designs their own job since, after all, they *are* the experts. While it is true that the professional can probably best determine *how* the work is to be done, it is equally true that two others aspects of job design must be carried out with the involvement of the volunteer manager.

The first of these is determining the exact *purpose* of the job and the *results* that are desired. The professional will need to be told *what* is to be accomplished and *why* those results are important.

Outlining these elements will serve both to better motivate the professional and to assist them in deciding how to best undertake the work. After all, the professional knows lots of 'answers'; the problem lies in figuring out which ones are correct for this situation. The more information you can provide them about what you really need, the better they can match their knowledge to your specific concerns.

The second aspect involves determining the parameters of the job. This will include items such as desired timeframe for completion, available support system, treatment of

Professional Help?

- ✓ Attorneys
- ✓ Doctors
- ✓ Nurses
- ✓ Social Workers
- ✓ Engineers
- ✓ Computer Programmers
- ✓ Architects
- ✓ Construction Workers
- ✓ Counselors
- ✓ Athletic Coaches
- ✓ Accountants
- ✓ Designers
- ✓ Photographers
- ✓ Financial Planners
- ✓ Contractors
- ✓ Chefs
- ✓ Actors
- ✓ Artists
- ✓ Film Makers
- ✓ Management Consultants

expenses, and needs for reporting and approvals. All of these will need to be discussed and negotiated with the professional, many of whom are accustomed to exercising virtual autonomy and independent control over their work.

While this independence on their part works well for them, you may find it uncomfortable. A common problem is that their notion of *expenses* may not match your capacities. An attorney conducting an extensive computer search on Lexis may incur several hundred dollars worth of charges in an afternoon, and be accustomed to billing these to clients. You, on the other hand, might find that amount to be larger than the entire budget for your project...

Another common problem lies in detailing any *requirements for approval*. If, for example, plans need to be reviewed and voted on by the agency Board of Directors, then this requirement should be explained at the start, with an explanation of the system and timeframe for this process.

And, of course, if there are *restrictions* which will impact the shape of the job, these should also be outlined. If a computer programmer is designing a system to enhance agency operations then any financial limitations need to be explained upfront.

In practice, more time needs to be spent on job design and negotiation with volunteer professionals than with most other categories of volunteers. Because the professionals are more likely to work independently and be self-supervising, it is imperative to have a clear initial mutual understanding of the desired results, parameters, and process of the volunteer work.



Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteer professionals is often easier than recruitment of other types of volunteers. To begin with, it is usually much simpler to locate professionals, and in fact, targeted recruitment techniques are perfectly designed to assist in recruiting professional volunteers. As you probably know, the key planning questions for a targeted recruitment campaign are:

- ✓ *What skills are needed to do the job?*
- ✓ *Where can people with these skills be found?*
- ✓ *How can I appeal to these people?*

Professionals with specific skills are easily found – through advertisements in the Yellow Pages, through membership in professional associations, through publications aimed at their profession.

Motivational appeals may vary with different types of professionals. A common type of appeal to those newly entering a profession is the opportunity to gain experience and to demonstrate their new skills. An appeal to the experienced practitioner is the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in the profession or to meet possible clients. Another appeal to this group is that of public recognition of their assistance. It sometimes helps to think of the professional the same way you would of a corporation that helps you, since many of the professionals are simply miniature independent corporations. Appeals to retired professionals often center around maintaining involvement in their field or passing on their knowledge and experience.

In directly asking the professional to volunteer, a common technique which works well in some cases is "We saw your work and really liked it." Flattery, as they say, never hurts. Another approach is to recruit an intermediary, such as having a Senior Partner in a law firm help in recruiting other attorneys (and not necessarily those from their own firm).

Many professions are now 'encouraging' community service as a part of professional responsibility. Both the legal and accounting professions have taken strong leadership stands in this area.

And finally, many professions are now organizing their own *groups* of volunteers. Check in your community for a group such as Lawyers for the Arts, Accountants in the Public Interest, or Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility. These operate much the way other service clubs do, evaluating projects submitted to them.

Screening professional volunteers is somewhat more delicate than usual screening practices. To begin with, you may well go to the volunteer rather than having them come to you.

Two major elements should occur in the screening process:

The first of these is *verification of the required skill*. Do not assume that simply because, for example, the individual is an attorney that they will know anything about your particular legal concerns. Professionals tend to have sub-areas of expertise and may occasionally be spectacularly ignorant outside of those areas. Many attorneys, accountants, and management experts know nothing about the unique problems of non-profit groups and have occasionally demonstrated this in unfortunate ways.

Describe your situation to the professional and let them determine whether it is within their area of speciality or whether they are willing to undertake the work to learn about it. Beware of those who don't ask you a lot of questions about the operation of your program.

A second, and very delicate, area is *verification of credentials*. If the volunteer is going to be performing professional work for you then you need to determine their capacity to do the job. In the case of a licensed professional, this includes having a valid license. One good way to explain to the potential volunteer why you need to have a copy of their license is to note that it is just like the procedure you utilize in screening volunteer drivers – you verify that they actually have a current drivers license.

Another way is to say that you keep a record on file so that you won't have to bother them later in case someone needs to see their license. A third way to do this is to have the volunteer fill out an application form (so they can be added to your records) and include the request for the credentials as a part of the form.

Orientation and training of professionals may be substantially different than you usually undertake. Training, for example, you hope is unnecessary, because, after all, they are supposed to know how to do the work.

Orientation, however, is still necessary. The professional volunteer working



Screening

Orientation and training



on an independent project needs to receive grounding in the shape and system of the organization and its services. The more background you can provide them, the better the answers they can provide for you. You may well carry out this orientation in a one-on-one setting, but it is essential to provide the volunteer with a firm sense of 'grounding' in the system which they will be serving and in the ways in which they will interact with that system.

This orientation may well be on-going, since the more they learn about you and your concerns the more likely they are to develop further questions for which they will need answers.

If the professional will be working one-on-one with clients, as opposed to conducting an independent project, then they will also need to learn the procedures and rules which your agency has established for this relationship.

This would include reporting requirements, procedures for dealing with problem situations, and parameters of the volunteer/client relationship. 'Professional' in no way implies 'perfection', so assume that they will make the same types of mistakes to which other volunteers are prone.

Supervision

Supervision of the professional volunteer may assume some different forms. If you are working with large numbers of professionals, then it is sometimes very helpful to recruit a *lead volunteer* from the group, who will act as your intermediary, assuming responsibility for supervision. This peer relationship will make it easier for them to deal with any problem situations.

For situations in which only one professional is recruited, then sometimes a *quasi-buddy system* works well. One person (sometimes paid staff and sometimes a volunteer) is appointed to 'work with' the professional, operating as primary liaison with the agency. This person both monitors the progress of the work and helps the professional by retrieving information from the organization, presenting reports, etc. This 'informal supervision' allows you to maintain some control of the situation without risking ego problems.

One common problem encountered in supervising professionals lies in tendencies toward 'second guessing' or 'back seat driving'. The disadvantage of professionals is that you recruit them and motivate them by appealing to their expertise: they know how to solve the problem and you don't. This means that you must, in many ways, trust that expertise, which is often more difficult than it sounds.

Marlene Wilson, for example, relates a wonderful story of recruiting an advertising expert to help design a new brochure for an agency. The expert was internationally acclaimed for his work, had agreed to help out, and eventually presented his suggested design. Marlene, who like most of us has her own preferences in style, started to make a few 'suggestions.' The expert stopped her, and asked "Why did you ask me to do this job, Marlene?". After a moment she realized that it was because he was, in fact, *the expert*, which meant she might well keep her opinions to herself. The brochure, unchanged,

Recognition

went on to win several design awards.

The volunteer professional may, in truth, have a much better notion of how well the job is progressing than you do, and any evaluation of the work may rely on their expertise. If the contribution of the professional is to be on-going or recurrent on an annual basis, then you might want to conduct an evaluation or de-briefing session, and review the work or project much like you would a special event, concentrating on *how can we do this better in the future?*

Finally, **recognition** of the professional can easily be integrated into normal job-related recognition procedures. If the professional is engaged in a project, then the recognition should usually take place around that project. Examples of this might include:



- ✓ Formal thank-you by the Board following presentation of results
- ✓ Commemorative photograph of the project site or team
- ✓ Thank you letter from the client group
- ✓ Letter of appreciation addressed to business setting or professional association
- ✓ Letter of appreciation addressed to family members

Before undertaking public recognition efforts such as an announcement in the newspaper, check with the volunteer. Remember that, like many corporations, they may not want to advertise the fact that they provided free service.

Recognition of groups of professionals will probably best work if conducted within that peer setting, having a separate celebration or recognition event for the group. This will allow them to maintain that sense of uniqueness which is one of the key factors in working with professionals.



The 'mom' and 'POP' connection

Parents as volunteers

Parents as Volunteers

by Sue Vineyard

Whenever the parents of clients receiving services are targeted for volunteer positions, the volunteer coordinator has a unique challenge! Different factors will influence the recruitment, retention, and recognition of parents – or other close relatives – of recipients of an agency or organization's services.

There are several varieties of *parent volunteers*, each with different characteristics, unique motivations and specific expectations. For our purposes here, we'll examine four major classifications: *Events*, *Developmental*, *Modeling*, and *Challenged*.

A word of caution, however, about labeling too quickly any parent that comes to a program: Each is an individual with different hopes, dreams, skills and expectations. Just as it is unfair to stereotype clients, it is also unfair to stereotype their families. The challenge is to see each parent as an individual, evaluating where they can best serve the mission of the organization, and thereby finding success in their contribution of services.

Let's define the four different categories generally:

Events: parents willing and desirous of assisting on field trips, parties, athletic activities, celebrations, etc. Usually episodic in nature.

Developmental: parents who will accept on-going assignments as their children develop. In grade school they are room mothers or little league coaches; when their children are in religious classes they assist the teacher as an aide; in high school they are on the Board of the child's booster club. A sub-category is those parents who work to *Uplift* their children's circumstances and future.

Modeling: parents who seek out volunteer assignments that allow them to interact with their children while modeling behavior. Examples might be church or temple religious instruction or service; community service as a family, such as with Special Olympics.

Challenged: parents of children with disabilities, or those working as parents for a cause in memory of a child. In the latter category they often join or found organizations working in the problem area which afflicted them personally.

Obviously, parents can mix and match all of these categories in different volunteer settings – a *Challenged* parent can also be involved in *Events*; a parent wishing to *Model* can also be classified as *Challenged*; and so forth. As parents perceive changes in needs, demands, or benefits, they will frequently wish to volunteer when they believe it will help or support their child.

Events & developmental volunteers

The first two categories are rather simple to define and do not require elaborate managerial skills! Neither do they require 'great beating of the bushes' recruitment. Parents frequently approach volunteer supervisors, teachers, agency directors, program leaders, athletic managers, etc., offering to 'help out,' with a replenishing volunteer supply each year. It is not unheard of to have more volunteers than jobs, a problem many other corners of volunteer administration would love to have!

Parent-volunteers who seek to *uplift* their children's futures are commonly found in examples such as Head Start programs or in work that immigrant parents volunteer to do to assist their children's education and assimilation.

Some characteristics that can be seen in the 'Uplift' variety of *Developmental* volunteers include:



- Coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Potential lack of knowledge of where they might volunteer within existing systems. They need to hear about volunteer opportunities in their own languages, from peers, or in trusted and frequented sites. It needs to be easy for them to connect with programs.
- Their emphasis is on concrete results (test scores, demonstrated skills, awards, etc) as they relate to their child.
- They often welcome opportunities to add to their own skill levels so they can 'keep up' with their child and therefore are able to contribute to their growth and development. At this point they make take on characteristics of *Modeling* parent-volunteers.
- They tend to put pressure on their child to succeed, as it fulfills their own dreams for him or her. On occasion this may lead to unrealistic expectations and therefore a need for intervention by volunteer coordinators or other staff such as teachers, coaches, etc.

- Because of the feelings for their children's future which run deep in the hearts of parents who have immigrated to America or Canada, the Hispanic and Asian communities, for example, become potentially very fruitful grounds for volunteer recruitment of parents.

Recruitment: offer opportunities to volunteer for special events by sending home a letter with the child.

- ✓ Be specific on needs – dates, times, responsibilities, etc.
- ✓ Allow plenty of lead time so parents can arrange schedules at work.
- ✓ Insure liability issues are addressed.
- ✓ Make clear if child-care for younger children will be available or if it would be permissible to allow those children to be part of the activity.

Retention: *Events* parent-volunteers are most involved in happy times and celebrations; occasions that are joyous and fun. It's a rewarding time and therefore needs to be shared with many rather than a few.

- ✓ Try to involve as many parents as possible. Be creative in finding meaningful work for those who indicate their wish to volunteer.
- ✓ Keep in mind that *Developmental* parent-volunteers will move on as their children grow. Don't expect the mom who loved working with pre-schoolers to

stay in that job until their child makes them a grandma! Their tie is primarily *their* child, even while loving others of the same age.

✓ Facilitate the flow of information from one year to the next so the new parent-volunteer does not have to take time researching hard-to-locate data on what has been done in the past.

✓ Stimulate and support a climate of flexibility and creativity. Enjoy the variety of people who pass through the job assignments as they bring their unique ideas to the work.

✓ Avoid any attempts by parents to gain special favors for their child. Side-step any such overtures and rotate parents and assignments often.

✓ Monitor interactions between volunteers and children. Keep in mind that you are working with a vulnerable population. If inappropriate behavior of the volunteer is noted – either toward their own or another's child – intervene immediately to halt and correct it. If it should be truly damaging, remove the volunteer from the assignment. (A very, very rare occurrence.)

Recognition: We frequently fall short when it comes to recognizing these volunteers. Assumptions are made that either being involved is 'reward' enough, or parents volunteered out of obligation and therefore are not truly 'volunteers.'

Both assumptions need to be avoided!

✓ Recognize parent-volunteers creatively. Remember that recognition is 'user-oriented,' so try to find a particular interest of each and tie recognition into that – a parent who loves to play golf is given a 'golf crying towel' as a thank you memento after 2 years on an Athletic Booster board.

✓ Use the opportunity to involve children in ways to recognize and thank parents for their efforts. Turn any recognition event into a learning for the children and allow them freedom to create a truly unique 'thank you.'

✓ Opportunities to be with the children served is frequently most appreciated. Find ways to hold a party or include volunteers in previously scheduled ones in order to recognize the parents.

Modeling parent-volunteers are a relatively newer category, evolving from modern demographics that include single-parent households, working mothers, latch-key kids, time demands, drugs, increased crime, and negative influences. In addition, it is felt by many parents that there are a lack of positive role models among public figures for children.

As America moved away from its agricultural society where frequently three generations lived together, towns and communities were smaller and close-knit, divorce was rare,

Mom (and Grandma) stayed home, and people were less mobile and tended to stay in one geographic area for life, children were surrounded by examples and role models for positive behaviors and family values.

Developmental Job Possibilities

Room parent

Party aide

Coach

Club advisor

Teacher aide

Event assistant

Advisory Board

Modeling volunteers



Today, when most of those characteristics have been turned upside down, parents who wish to influence their children positively, and seek ways other than lecturing, are looking for opportunities to model values.

Modeling Job Possibilities

Church ushers
Special Olympics helpers
Clean-up workers
Meals on Wheels delivery teams
Nursing home visitors
Humane Society volunteers
Arts ushers
Food Pantry aides
Shelter Food server

Volunteering offers them ways to demonstrate good choices, hard work, prioritization, helping others, showing faith in practice, while, hopefully, strengthening their parent/child relationship.

The same guidelines for the 3R's of volunteerism covered for *Events* or *Developmental* parent-volunteers apply here with *Modeling* parents. Keep several other factors in mind also:

- ✓ Examine work in your volunteer program that could be accomplished by a parent and child working together. Episodic opportunities are usually better received than on-going jobs, but in certain situations even these are possible.
- ✓ The more flexible the work the better, to accommodate changing demands on parents and children.
- ✓ Recruit parents widely. Help the general public understand this unique opportunity to allow parents to interact and demonstrate values and ethics, rather than having to 'preach.' Get photos of some parent/child team volunteering and use it in PR and brochures explaining efforts.

- ✓ Do not expect such volunteers to stay with you forever, but do explore the possibility that they may utilize your volunteer job opportunities for additional children in their family or even other children they seek to influence. Match assignments and volunteers according to their skills and time-frames to best mesh the needs of the volunteer with those of the agency.
- ✓ Insure that parent-volunteers are very clear as to the mission of the organization. Bringing their own goal of modeling to their child is fine *as long as they also work toward the mission of the agency.*

All of the comments to this point come from experience in all of the categories. I was room mother, cookie baker, party planner, church school superintendent and booster club board member as our sons grew. My husband was coach, church volunteer, scout leader, walkathon partner, Indian Guide club dad, and even built a cardboard 'rocket ship' for one son's science class!

None of these experiences, however, was more challenging than that of being a parent-volunteer in one son's struggles with learning disabilities. My involvement started in 2nd Grade with the simple act of assisting on a field trip and graduated to founding and presiding over a community Learning Disability Association and being a national speaker on the topic.

Parent-volunteers in the *Challenged* category come to any assignments with a great deal of 'baggage' – some positive, some negative. They have expectations, hopes and dreams they bring to their work as well as adjustments, joy and sorrow.



The challenged volunteer

“Welcome to Amsterdam...”

As parents look forward to the birth of their children, there is a universal prayer that all will be well when the child comes into the world. Along with that prayer which implies the possibility of a different reality, there usually comes a hidden expectation that the baby will be just fine.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

I once read a poem in which an analogy of the birth of a child with a disability was likened to an exciting plane trip to Paris. Travelers prepared for Paris, read guides so they'd know exactly what to do when there, and imagined all the lights, glitter, and fast pace of that destination. When the plane landed, however, the travelers were startled to hear the stewardess say, "Welcome to Amsterdam.."



A different destination than planned. A city with fewer bright lights, a slower pace, a different look, even a different language. In many respects, having a child that has one disability or another is like that. Different from what you expected. A different pace, new language to learn, different bright spots – all requiring adjustments that must let go of original expectations.

Do not mistake my words – 'Paris' is not better or prettier or sharper than 'Amsterdam', but it is different, and it is at first a shock to find yourself there.

This then is the baggage many parents and children challenged by disabilities bring with them to their work in an organization. A parallel, but differing, set of circumstances comes with those parents working in memory of a child.

Tips for challenged parent-volunteers

In working with these 'special' parent-volunteers, keep in mind the following possibilities:

✓ They may bring definitions of their child's disabilities which they believe fit every other child with the same challenge – a parent of a child having Down's Syndrome may assume every other child with the same challenge has exactly the same capabilities as their own. This will not be accurate, although there may be similarities.

Help them to understand that the clients being served are individuals and need to be respected and treated as such. Give them as much information as allowable (still protecting confidentiality) about each client with whom they will interact so that they can establish the best possible relationship.

✓ Insure confidentiality. Always. Strictly. Clearly. Have it spelled out in a written job description for the positions parent-volunteers accept. If trust is broken, remove the volunteer immediately, both as a preventative for further breach of confidential information and as a statement to other parents that this will not be tolerated and the information regarding them and their child is safe.

✓ Have back-up volunteers at the ready at all times. Some children's health is so fragile that at any point parents could be too involved in a crisis to carry out responsibilities. Consider team or shared-volunteer assignments for this reason.

- ✓ Monitor new volunteers carefully to observe and react to:
 - any inappropriate behavior
 - a focus only on their own child to the endangerment or neglect of others in the program
 - excessive emotional reactions to the work being done
 - unrealistic expectations of clients, including their own child



✓ Check regularly in specific, undisturbed interviews to find out how the volunteer is feeling about their work with clients. For some people, it's great therapy; for others it becomes a burden but they feel obligated to stay in the position. It is critical to continually check to see that the placement of this parent-volunteer is best not only for them but also for their child and the agency. If it's not a 'match', explore other options of service.

✓ When recruiting, do so with a long list of service options to best fit individual needs, demands, and skills.

✓ Involve clients in recognition efforts. Don't slip into the easy assumptions that being part of their child's growth and development is all the thanks these parents

need.

✓ Create a norm in your climate that says, "It's OK to take a leave of absence from any position." Don't lay guilt on anyone honestly saying "I need a time out from working with this effort." Allowing a short time for R&R may be the greatest tool for retaining this volunteer in the long run.

✓ Keep everyone's eye on the mission of the organization. It's very easy for a parent to have tunnel vision toward their own child's needs.

✓ Be open to new ideas. Often parents have discovered or developed ways to serve clients that no classroom or 'expert' ever thought of!

✓ Be prepared for emotional ups and downs. As parents we all have good times and not-so-good times with our children. This can be intensified when the child is challenged and sets the stage for over-reactions and out-of-character emotional responses – highs and lows, hyperactivity or lethargy.

Parent-volunteers of children served by a cause present many joys and challenges, opportunities and understandings to the managers of their volunteer energy.

Like parents universally, they are unique individuals trying their hardest to do the best job they can in raising their children. They make wonderfully energetic, creative, and enjoyable volunteers when respected, recruited, retained, and recognized appropriately and with sensitivity.

Final thoughts



Definitions: What Is It?

Episodic Volunteering

by
Nancy Macduff

"Ep-i-sod-ic/ep-e-'sad-ik": 1) made up of separate, especially loosely connected episodes; 2) of or limited in duration or significance to a particular episode, *temporary*; 3) occurring, appearing, or changing at usual irregular intervals, *occasionally*.

Thus it is that Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary defines the word *episodic*, a word gaining popularity in the volunteer field.

A study by the National VOLUNTEER Center and J.C. Penney Company asked those not volunteering why they were reluctant to volunteer. Over 79% of those asked said they would be more inclined to volunteers if the jobs were short in duration. Many volunteer organizations and programs are seeking ways to attract the episodic or 'short-term' volunteer.

In order to develop effective strategies to both recruit and sustain these volunteers it is essential to understand what *episodic volunteering* is and how it is different from the type of volunteering that is currently the standard in the field. The dictionary definition outlines the two most predominant types and kinds of *episodic* volunteer opportunities:

- ✓ Service that is short in duration
- ✓ Service that occurs at regular intervals for short periods of time

Service that is short in duration

Volunteers who provide service that is short in duration can vary from the one-day volunteer at a Special Olympics Track and Field day to the college student who provides assistance on a special project for 10-12 weeks to the volunteer serving on a Board of Director's Task Force for six months or less. They come into the volunteer program, organization, or agency for a pre-established time and are truly finished when the job is done in the prearranged period of time. Training, orientation, supervision, and sustaining the volunteer's efforts are all planned and implemented around the short term nature of the job they have been asked to complete.

Service that occurs at regular intervals

Service to a volunteer program that occurs at regular intervals is often done by people who want to serve their organization, but are unable to do that in a sustained and regular way which occurs on a monthly or weekly basis. This type of service can be the parent who chairs the annual fund drive for a child's group (cookie or candy sales). This is sustained work for a short period of time, usually less than three months, often being less than a month in duration. It includes people who work on the same annual event each year for several years in a row, or every other year.

Both of these models are familiar to the volunteer program manager. On an

The episodic volunteer program



informal basis, volunteer programs, organizations, and agencies are accommodating individuals to serve in short-term assignments. So why is the notion of an *Episodic Volunteer Program* such a revolutionary idea?

Most volunteer programs have organized their jobs and services around the 'regular' type of volunteer. The 'regular' volunteer is a woman between 35-60 with a Master's degree in social work or business administration, not working outside her home, with semi-independent children and spouse, and willing to give 20-30 hours per week for at least 15 years to a program. *This individual is in rare supply today.*

Studies of volunteers show us that giving regular service – on Boards, as docents in museums, as church school teachers, leading youth clubs and troops, providing service each week in hospitals and libraries – is frequently given by those employed, males, or the newly-retired. The volunteer recruitment effort is geared to the 'regular' long-term volunteer. Jobs are designed for them, training is created to meet their long term needs, motivational activities are used to promote their retention over time, and recognition activities occur during National Volunteer Week in the Spring.

This strategy is accurate and well-conceived and totally inappropriate for the episodic volunteer.

The short-term volunteer may question the validity of their job choice if they are forced to sit through an orientation designed for the long-term volunteer. The volunteer program manager who wants to implement a program designed specifically to attract episodic volunteers must first realize that taking a current job description, written for the long-term volunteer, and applying it to someone serving for a short time is not developing job opportunities for those wishing to give short time service. There are no short-cuts to developing an effective and quality program to attract those who will serve volunteer programs in small segments.

The development of an episodic volunteer program requires thoughtful consideration by volunteers and paid staff. Start by conducting an assessment of your readiness.

When you have completed this self-assessment it will be clear if your program, organization or agency is ready to move to the next phase of developing the episodic volunteering program.

Are We Ready for An Episodic Volunteer Program?

- What type of episodic volunteer jobs do we currently have? List all the different types of episodic volunteer jobs you have accommodated in the last three years. Remember to list those in both categories.
- Will short-term or episodic volunteers be accepted as members of the volunteer and staff team?
- Are there human and financial resources needed to launch an episodic volunteer program? This requires an analysis of the support for such a program.
- Can you document the need for episodic volunteering in your program, organization, or agency?
- Is every partner in the equation prepared to support the development of a dual-focused volunteer program? Conceptually, this means thinking in new ways about your program.

Recruiting the episodic volunteer

Formal and informal episodic volunteer positions already existing in your organization can be the root for developing a full-fledged episodic program. To do that, however, requires planning and implementation of an organized recruitment and support strategy. *Use a clearly defined process to develop an episodic volunteer program and its success is assured.*

There are six strategies needed to effectively develop an episodic volunteer campaign and conduct recruitment:

✓ Needs Assessment

Any new program or service begins with a *needs assessment*. For the episodic volunteer program this includes identifying the current quality and quantity of service by volunteers and the perceived need for episodic volunteers in areas where they are not serving or the need to increase service in under-utilized areas.

✓ Plan

If the decision is made through the needs assessment to develop and implement a volunteer program, the next step is to *establish a plan* to accomplish the task. This includes setting an overall goal, and smaller objective statements that describe in measurable increments the steps to be taken to implement the episodic volunteer program. This strategic planning process also serves as the foundation for evaluating the success of the total program.

✓ The Job Description

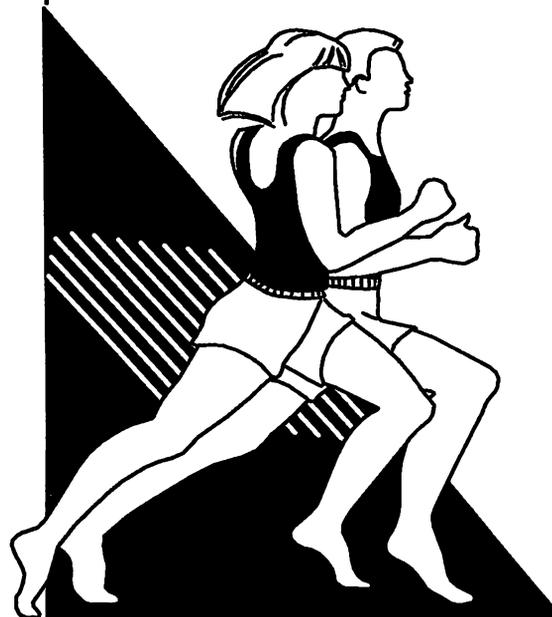
One mistake to avoid is to take current jobs for volunteers and assume they can be done by episodic volunteers, as is! A primary task to be completed is the *identification of new jobs* that can be performed on a short-term basis, and the *re-design of traditional volunteer jobs* so they can be more appropriately assigned to the short-term volunteer.

✓ Screening

Screening episodic volunteers should have all the elements of screening for long-term volunteers. Screening includes written job descriptions, applications, interviews and contracts. Episodic volunteers should be expected to complete a similar process.

✓ Advertising and Promotion

The development of the episodic volunteer program thus far has outlined steps to identify jobs and potential criteria for individuals to fill specific jobs. The process used is a *target marketing strategy*. Understanding the tasks and qualifications necessary to be successful in the episodic position provides the information to develop a targeted advertising and promotion campaign. The most effective way is to brainstorm a list of the kinds of people who could fill the positions.



✓ The Recruiting Team

The use of a *recruiting team* could ease the burden of work on the volunteer director or program manager.

Providing support for the short-term volunteer

The team can set numerical targets for recruiting, design the screening process, review job descriptions, and design and carry-out advertising and recruiting strategies. The volunteer program manager has a 'work force' to implement the new program.

The development of a short-term volunteer program does not end with bringing the recruits through the door to an organization, agency, or program. An episodic volunteer program also includes strategies to *sustain and support* the volunteer during their time of service.

Notice that the word used to describe support for the episodic volunteer is *sustain*. **Sustenance** is the process of 'supplying with the necessities of life, *nourishment*."

The process of supporting the long term volunteer is often referred to as *maintenance*. This is to 'continue to support or preserve.' The difference between sustenance and maintenance is a subtle but significant one for the short-term volunteer.

✓ Training

The best place to begin is with *training*. The episodic volunteer does not have time to attend 35 hours of required training. The nature of episodic jobs for short-term volunteers rarely requires that amount of training. The best method to develop and design training is to engage current experienced volunteers and some experts in adult education and training on a volunteer training committee.



✓ Supervision

Supervision of short-term volunteers can be done quite effectively by long-term volunteers. A large national organization is exploring the idea of designing programs to recruit a small number of long-term volunteers who will agree to serve 15-20 hours per week for a minimum of three to five years. The agency will dramatically change the support and education provided to the long-term volunteer. The long-term volunteer then becomes a key player as supervisor and planner of the much larger episodic volunteer corps. This makes the volunteer program

director the supervisor of volunteers who supervise other volunteers. This intriguing idea is best done in a field study situation, but has extremely interesting possibilities for such organizations as Hospice, the Humane Society, orchestras, hospital volunteer programs, youth agencies, and so many more.

✓ Recognition

A key to effective supervision and sustenance of episodic volunteers is *recognition*. This is the formal and informal system of acknowledging performance. As with long-term volunteers, the episodic volunteers need to have their work recognized in a variety of ways. It is inappropriate to use the

What Incentives Would be Most Important to Nonvolunteers to Encourage Their Involvement?

Short-term assignments	79%
Volunteering with a friend or group	71%
Training	70%
Involving one's family	55%
Low-cost day care	49%
Employer recognition	49%
Transportation to job	42%
Reimbursement of expenses	40%
Volunteer freebies	38%

Source: *VOLUNTEERING: A National Profile*, The J.C. Penney Company, 1987

Conclusion

current volunteer regard and recognition system to acknowledge the work of people who only do one-time service.

✓ Evaluation

Evaluation is one way to provide recognition to volunteers. For example, auction volunteers might receive a short report on the effect of the event and thus their own work. You could include total receipts, attendance, net receipts, the money earned and its relationship to client services. This short report and thank-you letter can be a powerful way to acknowledge the volunteer's job and reinforce the agency's mission.

The sustenance of episodic volunteers does not happen accidentally. Like the recruitment, selection, and screening of short-term volunteers, it is best done in a planned and organized manner.

Futurists and studies, like that of the J.C.Penny/National VOLUNTEER Center, tell us that short-term volunteering is the wave of the future. Futurists predict that 3000 voluntary associations, organizations, and programs will be lost between now and 2010. The organizations that survive will be those that, like their brothers and sisters in the for-profit sector, have learned to diversify. Volunteer youth programs, programs to attract volunteers who are disabled, and episodic volunteering programs are an effective means to diversify and reach out to new markets of volunteers.



“To heck with one-at-a-time – let’s take ‘em all...!”

Groups as Volunteers

by
Sue Vineyard & Steve McCurley

For years we have known that many volunteers are recruited or provide services through groups. In fact, early volunteering was primarily a process of groups with common interests deciding to contribute something to their neighbors and community.

Service organizations such as Jaycees, Federated Women's Clubs, Kiwanis, Lions, the Junior League, and others have regularly selected causes or human services organizations which they support through fund raising, special projects, or direct service.

Church groups have traditionally supported community service efforts, as have home-owner's associations, Scout troops, PTAs, professional associations and many others.

In recent years two new types of 'volunteer groups' have formed. One is the employee volunteer team, operating under the aegis of the corporate structure but focusing on providing service to the community. The other is the helping groups being formed by Baby Boomers, operating either from an existing social or athletic structure or a newly-formed project.

This type of volunteerism has obvious benefits:

- ✓ A single recruitment effort can produce many volunteers.
- ✓ Help can be provided in a variety of areas from public information, to fundraising, to special event management, to direct service.
- ✓ Some groups are self-managing, so a lot of assistance can be obtained with little managerial investment on the part of the agency.
- ✓ An on-going relationship can be established which ensures continued support.
- ✓ Groups usually can give a commitment to a project and do their own 'policing' to ensure follow-through.
- ✓ The group's own networks may produce additional support not otherwise available to the agency.

And the group itself benefits from the availability of a 'worthy' project in which to involve its membership and the community recognition accorded successful accomplishment.

Group involvement can also have disadvantages:

- ✗ Groups can quickly change their mind and priorities as their leadership changes or as other offers arrive, and a previously 'firm' commitment may suddenly disappear.

Developing group volunteer jobs

- ✗ All members may not be enthusiastic about the project and may need to be coerced into producing the required work as scheduled.
- ✗ Control over the shape of the project may pass from the agency to the group and the final product may not meet all the needs of the agency.
- ✗ Along with the network of friends of the group, the agency may inherit all of its previous enemies.

Much like working with neighborhood associations, involving groups of volunteers involves a lot of diplomacy, compromise, and choice. It should not be undertaken lightly, since it will involve considerable effort on the part of the volunteer manager to coordinate successfully.

The first step in involving groups is to ensure that you have types of volunteer jobs that are appropriate for completion by a group. Basically, such jobs usually fit the following characteristics:

- They are short-term or episodic in nature. The dynamics of group operation do not lend themselves well to continuous or sustained performance.
- They are project-oriented, in that they have a definite goal in mind and definite parameters for performance which can be explained to the group.
- They require, or allow, teamwork and interaction to accomplish.

Within this framework jobs may be very simple in nature (huggers at Special Olympics games, participants in any variety of 'a-thon') or quite complex (managing an entire fundraising event).

Group recruitment



The next step is *recruitment of the group*. Group recruitment commonly takes a very different type of campaign than individual recruitment. The campaign usually involves making a presentation to the leadership or entire membership of the group.

Follow these steps:

- ✓ Find out as much as you can about the group and its leadership. What is their purpose? What have they previously selected as activities? Who are the key leaders? How do they go about making decisions?
- ✓ In seeking entry to the group, consider going through a group member. The member can serve as your authenticator to his or her peer group, paving your way to a more receptive audience. They can also make it more likely you will be invited to speak.
- ✓ Try to schedule your presentation to meet with the group's processes and needs. Find out what other projects the group is committed to and time it to coincide with their need to develop a new project. Determine how much lead time they need and give them the opportunity to make a reasoned decision.
- ✓ In your recruitment pitch, stress the opportunities for accomplishment and interaction. Show them what they can do and how they can have fun doing it.
- ✓ Pick your presenter carefully. Make sure the person who is presenting

Management and supervision of groups

can explain what your agency does and exactly what is needed from the group. Consider sending along a volunteer who can speak forcefully about the worth of the effort, and someone who, if asked, can talk about all the fine details.

- ✓ If possible, utilize a visual presentation, with slides, pictures, etc. If your presentation is boring, the group will assume that your jobs will be too.
- ✓ Be prepared for success. Have jobs available both for individuals and for the entire group. If someone expresses interest, don't leave without their name and phone number, and commit yourself to following up with them. Follow-up as quickly as possible.

If the groups votes to support you, emphasis then shifts to nurturing and directing that support. Keeping quality control over the actions of group volunteers can be a tricky job, as you have to keep a balance between the volunteers feeling ownership and responsibility and having your agency in control over what is done in its name. Consider the following as ways to juggle the two needs:

- ✓ When events or activities are to be done by group volunteers, offer clear, simple guidelines in a step-by-step fashion. Make sure the mission of the effort is clearly outlined. If there are any restrictions or requirements that need to be explained, let people know quickly. An example of this might be any restriction on the use of agency name or logo or any prohibition regarding positioning of corporate sponsorship information related to a fundraising event. You don't want to wake up one morning and discover you're operating the USF&G Food Bank Marathon...
- ✓ If the project or activity has been done before, give the group all the information you have about what was done, what worked, and what didn't.
- ✓ Be clear about the various jobs that need to be done. For complex efforts, provide sample job descriptions and indicate how the jobs interconnect and work together toward the goal.
- ✓ Clearly outline supervisory responsibility between you, the group, and its individual members. Make sure everyone is in agreement about who is in charge or what and of whom.
- ✓ Establish reporting dates and a

Screening Issues and Group Volunteering

Agencies involving children who commonly perform background checks on potential volunteers face a difficult logistical problem when it comes to group involvement. Basically, you would like to be able to do the background checks but may be unable to due to the short duration of volunteer service and the numbers of volunteers involved.

Where background checks are mandatory under state law, you will need to check the exact wording of the requirement. It may require checks only for those who work directly with the children on an on-going basis. It may also require checks only if the volunteers are officially enrolled with your agency, not working in a collaborative group effort.

The best system to follow is common sense. Do not set up situations where there is unsupervised individual contact with the children. If some volunteers will be working directly with the children, then perform the same reference and background checks as you would for volunteers from any other source.

Make sure you explain your process to the group and also explain that you will be closely monitoring interactions and may step in if there is a problem.

channel for communication between your agency and the group. Meet more frequently early in the relationship so you can identify any problems or confusion and so you can be helpful.

✓ Get the group to appoint its own 'volunteer manager' with whom you will work. This is especially important for a one-shot event, such as a weekend construction project. Work with this person to help them with recruitment, on-the-job supervision, and overall management. *Make sure that someone understands that they are in charge of overseeing the project.*



✓ Establish at the beginning the procedures you will use to assess the results of the effort. Let the group know if you need data about volunteer hours and costs of operation, or if you will want to conduct individual evaluations of volunteers or a group debriefing session. Remember that both the individual evaluation and the de-briefing should concentrate on the *effort* not the *person*, and should focus on how the *job* could be improved in the future.

Recognition in the group volunteering setting needs to take place at both the individual and the group level.

Recognition in the group setting

When recognizing individual members of the group, remember the following:

✓ Many group members can gain recognition or credit from their group by working on your project. Learn how this system works and provide support to group members in completing paperwork, keeping records, etc. If awards are available, nominate outstanding volunteers for them.

✓ Design recognition appropriate to the individuals. This may mean providing recognition that they can take with them, such as training or equipment (the screwdriver they used in building a home). It may mean a letter of thanks to their employer or family or pastor.

✓ Give recognition in a peer group setting. Go to their next meeting and hand out individual awards in front of their friends.

✓ Give them mementos that commemorate the activity. These would include T-shirts with the event and date or photographs showing group members at work. A great recognition ceremony would be certificates given out while a slide show (with both serious and humorous shots) of some of the event was being shown. *Try to make the work memorable.*

When recognizing the group itself:

✓ Find out if there are awards offered by the group's state or national structure. Either help the group apply for the award or nominate them yourself for a local volunteer award.

✓ Recognize the group amongst its peers. This could be at a meeting of other community groups or it could be by writing a letter or article for a local newspaper about what the group has done.

✓ Give the group leadership something that can be displayed at their headquarters. This could be a 'trophy' or simply a framed photograph of all of the group's volunteers at work.

Conclusion

✓ Keep recognizing and 'stroking' the group throughout the year. Don't fall into the Attila the Hun mentality of simply showing up at their gates annually and demanding 'tribute.' Add group leaders to your mailing list, send them information about the results of their effort, invite them to be guests at other events that you are having. In short, treat them like they were your friends all year long.

Often the greatest benefit that comes from recruiting a group to support you is that individuals emerge who become personally committed to your mission and will continue volunteering with you even after the group project has ended. Watch for these individuals and cultivate their involvement because they will both provide additional support of their own and may influence the group to continue working with you.

Groups are a goldmine of volunteer energy for those seeking support. They are readily available, open to appeals, organized, mission-oriented, easy to locate, have traditions of service, and can provide both 'generalists' and 'specialists' for your program.

When carefully researched and cultivated, and with attention to the volunteers at both the individual and group levels, support can continue for projects for years, offering both group and individual energies to accomplish goals.

Group volunteerism is truly a win-win situation for all concerned.



An untapped resource?

Myths

Volunteers with Disabilities

by
Heller An Shapiro

There are an estimated 43 million Americans who are able to volunteer – but haven't yet been asked. Sixty-four per cent (30 million) of them are not currently in the work force. They want to gain work experience, are typically very committed workers, and can bring many unique skills and values to your organization. They have not previously been recruited because they are people who happen to have disabilities.

Traditionally, people with disabilities tend to be viewed as clients – not as staff or volunteers. Yet, many volunteer programs already utilize volunteers who have difficulty hearing or seeing or who use a cane to get around. A long-term volunteer may acquire a disability following a stroke or accident. After all, we are, each of us, only 'temporarily able.' Every volunteer manager has experienced making accommodations for nondisabled volunteers to allow them to accomplish their tasks. Often these accommodations improve everyone's job satisfaction. A volunteer with a mental disability may require written, step-by-step instructions for a task. Once these are completed, every volunteer will benefit from clear guidelines. And almost every nondisabled person prefers to use the curb cuts when crossing the street, finds it easier to read large print signs, and becomes frustrated when they can't see and hear a lecturer. *Many of the accommodations we make for people with disabilities are in fact welcomed by everyone.*

Many of the fears volunteer managers might worry about concerning utilizing volunteers with disabilities are in fact myths. For example:

X They will need extra care.

In fact, people with disabilities learn to live and work with their disability. After an initial accommodation is made, most need no extra care.

X They are unskilled.

In fact, 60% have completed high school, compared to 85% of people without disabilities. Recent studies show that employees with disabilities perform just as well as employees without disabilities.

X They will make others

uncomfortable. In fact, sensitivity training for staff and

What is a Disability?

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a person is considered 'disabled' if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of that individual. 'Life activities' means caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. This includes physical and mental impairments as well as drug/alcohol addiction, emotional illness, and incurable disease.

volunteers provides everyone with an opportunity to benefit from the services of a volunteer with a disability.

X It will cost too much to make accommodations. In fact, 31% of job accommodations to enable volunteers with disabilities to perform their jobs cost nothing; 50% cost less than \$50. For example, a headset for a phone can be rented to allow a volunteer with cerebral palsy to write while talking – cost, \$49.95. A desk layout can be changed from the right side to the left for a visually impaired volunteer – cost, \$0.00. A heavy door can be rehung to make it easy to push open – cost, \$0.00. A volunteer with poor motor skills can use a typewriter to record phone messages – cost, \$0.00.

It may be easier to think about people with disabilities if you think of them as people *who just happen to have disabilities* instead of as a *disabled person*. When speaking to or about a person with a disability, it is crucial to pay attention to the words you are using. Words can create barriers or stereotypes that are demeaning to persons with disabilities. When you are speaking, try to use words which encourage dignity and independence. If you refer to a person as 'disabled' or 'handicapped', you are stereotyping them. Using these stereotypes implies that being 'disabled' is the only distinguishing feature the person has. If you refer to someone as a *person with a disability* then you are implying that s/he is a person, and the disability is only one aspect of that person. In this way, you are recognizing the individual, not the disability. The same reasoning applies to groups of people with disabilities. Instead of saying 'the disabled', try to say *people or persons with disabilities*. This wording also applies to specific disabilities.

Describing Persons with Disabilities

- Persons who have mental retardation
- Persons who have hearing loss or with partial hearing loss or who are visually impaired
- Persons with a speech impairment
- Persons with epilepsy
- (Family of) a person with mental retardation
- John Doe, who has a speech impairment.

When referring to the companion of a person with a disability, use the term *nondisabled*. Using the term 'able-bodied' implies that persons with disabilities are less able.

When referring to a person who uses crutches, a wheelchair, braces, etc., try to use words that emphasize the person's abilities. For example: *walks with crutches, walks with braces, uses a wheelchair*. Words that should not be used when referring to persons with disabilities include: *special, birth defect* (use congenital disability), *handicap*. The reason 'handicap' is derogatory is because it comes from 'cap in hand' which described people who were forced to beg for a living.

Preparing your organization for volunteers with disabilities involves a three-pronged approach:

- ✓ **Physical Access:** are your building and work areas accessible?
- ✓ **Materials Access:** can your training materials be made available on tape, in large print, or in braille?



Preparing your organization

Physical access

- ✓ **Personnel Sensitivity Training:** will paid staff and volunteer staff be trained to work comfortably alongside a volunteer with disabilities?

Start by imagining that you are in a wheelchair. What would you have to go through to get to the volunteer work area? Think about steps, reaching the top button on the elevator, narrow doorways, curbs, etc. Then imagine being a person with a hearing impairment. How would the front office staff respond to you? How much extraneous noise is present in your work area? Will you be in a position to read lips? Imagine being a person with a visual impairment. Could you obtain braille, large print or taped versions of materials such as training manuals and applications? Are there places where dim lighting or shadows make navigation especially difficult?



Consider forming a community task force which determines the level of accommodation needed and develops appropriate services. A task force may also look at ways in which established volunteer jobs can be modified for people with disabilities, and suggest places to recruit the many available volunteers with disabilities. Contact local students or community groups to construct ramps or replace raised thresholds.

The Americans with Disabilities Act does not advocate advance preparations for every type of disability. Once your building and meeting rooms are accessible and you have encouraged people with disabilities to apply, modifications may be made, upon request, to accommodate each individual's needs. One person with a visual impairment may prefer large print materials, while another prefers braille. As each volunteer is unique, so is each person's disability. Working with each volunteer to provide accommodations will pave the way for future volunteers.

Materials access

Look for a copier with an enlargement feature or experiment with the fonts on a computer in order to provide large print materials. Recruit volunteers to read materials onto a cassette tape. Although only 10% of the population read braille, local agencies often offer the use of a braille typewriter at little or no cost. Volume enhancement devices in a variety of price ranges can be attached to a phone for volunteers with hearing impairments.

Make sure that the wheelchair access symbol is used on brochures and that special entrances and other access information is provided. If available, list the TTY or TDD number on stationary alongside the phone and fax numbers. A simple statement can accompany all of your public information: *The _____ organization offers access for people with disabilities.*

Personnel sensitivity training



Staff and volunteers may require sensitivity training to help them learn to work with people with disabilities. Training should be done prior to recruiting volunteers with disabilities, and then again prior to placement to address individual needs. Things to emphasize in sensitivity training are:

- ✓ recognizing the person, rather than the disability
- ✓ talking directly to the person, not the interpreter, as well as

making eye contact with the person who has the disability

- ✓ asking each person what type of help is needed, rather than making assumptions
- ✓ using words such as 'see' and 'hear' because they are part of everyone's normal vocabulary

Ideally, sensitivity training can offer the opportunity to roleplay being a person with a disability. Ask trainees to imagine entering your building and trying to find basic services without using their eyes or ears, or to try getting around in a wheelchair. A pair of glasses with waxed paper over the lenses can show trainees what it is like to have a visual impairment, a personal tape player that plays only loud static can show what it is like to have a hearing impairment. Training should also include a full description of each of the agency's services for people with disabilities as well as accessible routes to restrooms, emergency exits, and other facilities.

To recruit volunteers with disabilities, begin by forming a recruitment team that includes people with disabilities. The team might contact local rehabilitation hospitals, organizations and newsletters that serve people with disabilities, and support groups.



Because two-thirds of working-age people with disabilities are unemployed, recruitment materials can advertise volunteer opportunities that provide valuable job experience.

When volunteers with disabilities attend your meetings, ask them what types of accommodation they need. Sometimes written materials can simply be enlarged on a copy machine, or a microphone can be used when addressing a group. Walk to your meeting room and be sure it is easily accessible. If people are using a special

entrance, is it always open and easy to find? Pay special attention to transportation needs, since many people with disabilities rely on public transportation or use an oversize van.

Jobs may need to be divided up or rearranged to accommodate people with disabilities. For example, a person using a wheelchair can perform an alphabetization task, but may need assistance to reach the file drawer to complete the filing job. A person with a visual impairment may need assistance mapping out the tour route and reading the tour script, but will easily be able to manage the crowd and give the tour.

The best way to retain and recognize volunteers with disabilities is to treat them like every other volunteer. Once physical accommodations have been made, and jobs modified when needed, volunteers with disabilities will be able to perform fully in the volunteer program. Ensuring that volunteers with disabilities are able to train and work alongside your other volunteers will send a strong message to volunteers and the public that your organization is truly accessible.

Recruitment

Job design

Retention and recognition



What's this name?

Basic components of a grassroots group

Working with Grassroots Groups

by
Dr Ivan Scheier

Ever since an acquaintance described her work on a prestigious national board as 'grassroots', and ever since I heard of a workshop for 'grassroots community groups' at \$500 a pop, I've wondered whether this word, too, is being popularized out of existence. So let's begin with some core examples of groups or activities I believe are clearly *grassroots*:

- ✓ neighborhood groups
- ✓ self-help groups
- ✓ local political campaign efforts
- ✓ co-operatives
- ✓ local cultural, ethnic, recreational, educational or issue-oriented groups
- ✓ most networks and support systems
- ✓ many local chapters of service clubs, particularly as they have flexibility and autonomy to choose programs relevant to their community
- ✓ many religious groups, especially as based on spontaneous initiatives of congregation members.

Accepting these examples, the basic components of 'grassroots' seem to be:

- Directly and immediately *responsive* to the needs and wishes of the people involved.
- The major part of the work is done not only *for* the people involved but also *by* them, without paid staff and often without much specialized expertise, either. We're talking about bootstrap operations, here, usually without big budgets or other large resource reservoirs.
- Related, these tend to be what have been called 'all-volunteer' or 'mainly volunteer' groups, with certain special characteristics organized volunteerism is just beginning to study.
- Grassroots groups tend to operate more informally, with less overt structure as compared to staffed volunteer programs or agencies.
- What this usually means is that grassroots groups are almost always local, actually *very* local, such as the small church, the neighborhood group or block organization. Wistful insinuations to the contrary, 'National Headquarters' is hardly ever 'grassroots.' Say the same for national consultants and trainers.

The above is consistent with my dictionary's definition of 'grassroots', though lacking its reference to 'the common people.' In today's parlance the phrase comes off as something of a double entendre, with a probably unintended insulting side to it.

Examples of working with grassroots groups

We can consider grassroots groups from either or both of two perspectives: strengthening the group itself, for its own sake, or involving the group cooperatively from the viewpoint of a staffed agency or organization (with a volunteer coordinator, community resource specialist, or the like). Here we will concentrate on the latter perspective – a staffed agency reaching out to grassroots groups, on a mutual benefit basis.

Here's an example: a Volunteer Coordinator in Social Services in a medium-sized community wants to establish a community gardens programs for elders over the summer. Instead of recruiting, training, supplying, etc. her 'own' volunteers for this purpose, she decides to get the job done by collaboration with existing grassroots who have interest, resources, and expertise in this area. As it ends up, she gets the use of the land for garden plots from a local church; expertise and participation from local cooperative extension and 4-H; a service club to help with some heavy work, equipment, and occasional night patrol (mainly to protect against two-legged predators); and seeds from a local feed store (not exactly *grassroots*, to be sure, but lots of other roots, anyhow).



This is only slightly adapted from a true story and it worked as far as getting the gardens going. Although the social services establishment refused to give the volunteer coordinator 'credit' for involving volunteers, presumably because they weren't 'enlisted' and 'owned' by Social Services. For shame!

Another example is the mutually supportive working relationship that sometimes grows up between local law enforcement and grassroots crime prevention groups in neighborhoods; such as Neighborhood Watch or Citizen Patrol groups.

Ideally, there are many potential advantages in this approach for the agency. Given the current shortage of volunteers in many service areas, it is great to be able to get *groups* of volunteers involved all at once. Moreover, their membership in the grassroots group gives added indication of solid motivation, and some relevant experience as well.

The agency accordingly has to invest less in training, supervision, individual recognition, and maintenance of the program.

Finally – and here recall especially the community gardens example – there is the potential for very wide community involvement with the agency, among groups who, again ideally, may see you as having done *them* a favor in the successful collaboration. All this is still not 'something for nothing' for the agency, and shouldn't be treated as such (see the later section on 'Negotiation').

We the People

Let's say you are a Director of Volunteer Services, a Community Relations Coordinator or the like, looking out on the community and wanting to accomplish some goal through collaboration with grassroots community groups. This collaborative process can be understood in three stages: identification, negotiation, and ratification.

Advantages of working with grassroots groups

The collaborative process

✓ Identification

Here we aim to identify the set of grassroots groups (if any) it will be most promising to work with in achieving our goal (usually the set will likely differ for each goal). Follow these steps in determining with whom you might most productively work:

Criteria for Selecting a Collaborating Group

- ☐ The group is definitely 'going your way' on *this goal*, though, please remember, they don't have to be on board for any *other* goal. Thus, the 4-H group that gladly and naturally helps you with community gardens for elders may have little interest or expertise in your goal of getting part-time paid jobs for elders. An even tougher situation would be the union which helps you with the gardens but worries greatly about elders taking jobs at sub-minimum wage levels.
- ☐ Though the group may share no other *program* interest with you, you should still expect a basic commonality in philosophy, or at least no basic conflict. Thus, a grassroots religious group which helps implement your interest in exposing jail inmates to diverse spiritual enrichment may be a helpful voluntary collaborator in that program. It is nevertheless important to know beforehand if their theology rejects the value of every other denomination except their own.
- ☐ The group is reasonably stable, reputable. Check references for groups, if you need to, in the same way you'd do so for individual volunteers. If you encounter an otherwise suitable group which is too 'controversial' for your agency managers, it may be possible to involve them on a very low profile basis, officially independently of you, but with lines of communication open.
- ☐ The group has a track record of reasonably proven effectiveness.

- Be sure **you** are clear on what **your** goal is.
- Brainstorm all possible grassroots collaborators. Staff, volunteers, board members, knowledgeable community people, potential doers and 'done-to's' should be represented as brainstormers. Remember, some of the most promising grassroots groups will not be listed in directories of community services or even in the telephone book. And don't expect a small neat list at this point. Some years ago, I brainstormed groups of this type with a few agency people and community leaders in the wonderful town of Parkersburg, WV, population about 35,000 at that time. We had *hundreds* of such groups in what seemed like no time at all and settled for an ultimate estimate of near-infinity. I recall Sue Vineyard once estimating that there were half a million self-help groups in North America – and that's only one type of grassroots effort!
- Consider this initial set according to the *Criteria for Selecting a Collaborating Group*.
- Among the remaining voluntary cooperation candidates, be alert to groups which have actual (or clearly potential) conflict with one another, unless you happen to *be* primarily in the conflict resolution business. *I suggest a proactive cowardice approach here.* That is, be extremely wary of involving both of the conflicting groups, unless you're confident of isolating them securely from one another. Be almost equally wary of choosing one instead of the other unless you have very solid, defensible reasons for so doing, and even then be careful...Best of all is to find another relevant group not at all involved in the conflict.

✓ Negotiation

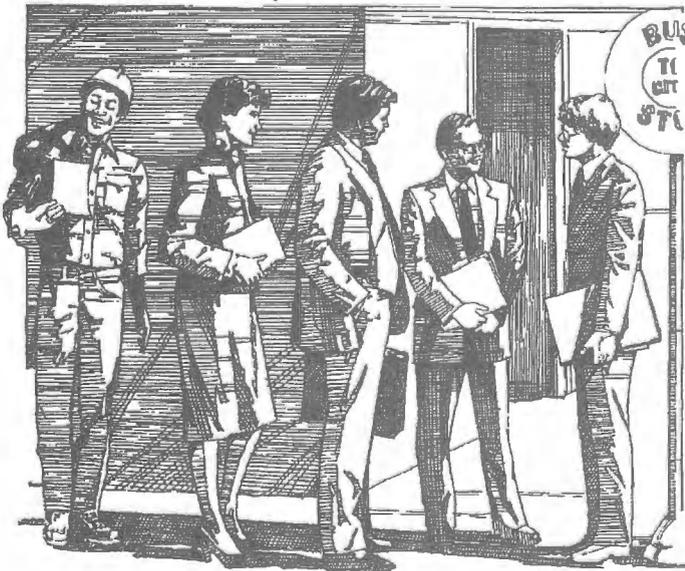
The knack of positively involving grassroots community groups is more diplomacy than management, more negotiation than supervision, more community development than volunteer administration.

You are, if you will pardon the expression, the Henry Kissinger of community relations. You don't 'manage' grassroots groups any more than in international relations, the US 'manages' or should try to manage, England,

or vice versa. So begin by trying to forget just about everything trainers have told you at at volunteer management workshops the past thirty years. Then, since we already have a pretty good idea of the collaborative advantages for the agency (see earlier), begin to think about what's in it for the grassroots groups you hope to engage as collaborators. Possible negotiation points here include:

- ✎ *Positive Association:* your agency has a good enough reputation so that they'd like to be identified with you, expecting to share some of your prestige and community goodwill.
- ✎ *Public Recognition:* for similar kinds of reasons, they would like some (public) recognition from you.
- ✎ *Client Access:* they get access to clients they care about through your agency; e.g. jail inmates, hospital patients, students, etc.
- ✎ *Resources:* you will often have some resources they need. These can include:
 - *Money:* limited and in strictly controlled amounts.
 - *Facilities:* meeting rooms, recreation places, etc.
 - *Equipment:* a word processor, copier, phone, etc. Be precise about limits, usage, etc.
 - *Materials:* food, clothes, books, toys, etc.
 - *Expertise:* from your staff and volunteers.

An interesting question here is whether some of 'your' regular individual volunteers should be asked or encouraged to join the cooperating grassroots group(s). My strong inclination here is to make this entirely voluntary on the part of your volunteers – no pressure at all. Ditto in the other direction. Unless they happen to want to, and it is also appropriate for other reasons, members of the grassroots groups should not be pressured in any way to enlist in your volunteer program as individuals



Agency inflexibility is a major block to productive cooperation with grassroots community groups. In the negotiation, try to be as flexible as possible on *how* the goal is to be reached. Thus, *if you were committed to vegetables in your community garden project, and the 4-H'ers favor some flowers as well, let there be flowers!*

✓ Ratification

Ordinarily, you won't need a full legal contract; just be sure you get the negotiated arrangements written down in clear language. Be sure, too, that the proper people in their organization and yours have seen the document and signed it.

The agreement should include clear specifics on how the parties to the collaboration can describe it publicly. In a worst case scenario, you don't want a grassroots group referring to you as their partner, supporter or endorser in *everything* they do. Rest assured that they will prefer not to be so connected with you, either.

The agreement should not be for vague eternity. Make it no longer than a

Final thoughts

year at a time, and usually only for one specifically designated project.

The accomplishments of organized volunteerism need no further endorsement from me. At some point, however, enthusiasm overshot realism, and some of us began to believe that people couldn't help unless they were in an agency volunteer program – managed, trained, supervised, and formally recognized.

Today, volunteer administration seems comfortable enough with its achievements so that it can begin to re-explore and re-exploit the common ground of grassroots helping from which we all came. I think here of T.S. Eliot's wonderful saying:

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*



“Somewhere, over the rainbow...”

Volunteer Managers as Change Agents

by
Steve McCurley

In the early part of *The Wizard of Oz* Dorothy turns around to her dog, Toto, and offers the astute observation, "Toto, I don't believe we're in Kansas, anymore."

The way things are going, a new version of the movie would have Toto look back at Dorothy and reply, "Dorothy, *Kansas* isn't even in Kansas anymore."

As you will have noted from the previous chapters of this book, our society, its population, and its institutions are experiencing some remarkable changes. More than any country America is becoming a microcosm of the entire world, housing within its borders a little bit of every nation and every culture. Our ability to assimilate these different expressions of life without losing their richness may predict how well in the long run our entire world can learn to live together.

In the meantime, we have to learn how to deal productively with the following:

- Changes in the composition of the population, including its age variations, racial and ethnic characteristics, national cultures, sub-groupings, lifestyles, and just about everything else.
- Changes in preferred styles of volunteer involvement, marked both by alterations in the timeframes of volunteering (such as the shift from long-term to short-term) and differences in the structures of volunteer groups.
- Possibilities for new options in the ways that people volunteer, including groups, teams, families, etc.

At the same time, there are some things that remain comforting.

According to the Independent Sector's Gallup Surveys the percentage of Americans volunteering has remained at about the same 50% level for the last 10 years despite cultural changes, and the percentage of those willing to volunteer if asked has remained in the 80-90% range. Consider these findings from the 1990 Gallup Survey of Giving and Volunteering:

- ✓ When Americans were asked were asked if they had refused to volunteer when someone asked them, 24% said they had refused and 75% responded that they had not.
- ✓ People are nearly three times as likely to volunteer when they are asked than when they are not. Among the 41% of Americans who reported they were asked to volunteer, 87% volunteered; among the 57% not asked, only

New systems of volunteer involvement

"O Mercy Me, Things Ain't What They Used to Be..."

- 1 in 4 Americans is black, Hispanic, Asian-American, or Native American. By 2000, 1 in 3 Americans will be.
- 14% speak a language other than English at home; 6% speak no English.
- 25% of American households are a person living alone.
- The Asian-American population grew 108% from 1980 to 1990. The Hispanic population grew 53%.
- By 2010, Hispanics will be our largest minority group.
- 21.7% of the population of California in 1990 was foreign-born.
- 85% of new entrants to the workforce in 2000 will be women and minorities.
- In 1991, 51% of American households with at least two members related by blood, marriage or adoption had no one under age 18.

30% volunteered.

✓ Those who were least likely to be asked were blacks (26%), Hispanics (27%), persons 18 to 24 years of age (31%) and those with household income below \$20,000 (26%). *Among the smaller proportion of these groups who were asked, the proportion who volunteered was more than three times higher than among those who were not asked.*

The old adage about recruitment remains perfectly correct:

"If you don't ask, they can't say 'yes!'"

And asking is more than just words. It requires a sincere intention on the part of the agency, not just a pro forma gesture. It requires adjustment of systems and procedures, education of staff and other volunteers, and just plain hard work, particularly in those cases where we don't even know what the right answers are. After all, volunteers recruited from diverse populations decide every day if they will show up tomorrow, just like the volunteers we're been working with all along...

Volunteer management involves working with people and, as such, effective volunteer management requires adjusting to changes in the ways that people operate. The system of managing volunteers which worked quite efficiently 30 years

ago is no longer appropriate to a population that has itself undergone significant alterations.

Among the changes in management which we know are required are:

- **Alterations in job design:** making changes in the styles of jobs so that they better fit short-term involvement while leaving room for growth and ensuring that all jobs have a significant impact on the agency mission. Right now, the quality of available volunteers far outstrips the general quality of most volunteer jobs. It is very difficult to persuade people to volunteer for 'bad' jobs and it is even harder to persuade them to keep doing them.
- **Proactive recruitment:** Most agencies do not seriously plan and implement their recruitment campaigns, mostly because they have never had to. Unfortunately the pool of reliable volunteers that agencies have utilized is disappearing and the replacement group is in a "Show Me" mood. This is particularly true when the agency is attempting to recruit types of volunteers who have no previous experience with the agency and have no particular reason to



The key role of the volunteer manager

believe that it is truly interested in developing a relationship with them.

- **Real support from the agency:** Agencies have traditionally treated volunteers like they were some magical breed of elves, capable of mysteriously accomplishing tasks with no real support system. The new volunteer workforce expects to receive all the training, supplies, and back-up it needs, and to receive it without asking. And they also expect a flexible approach from the agency that will adjust support and requirements based upon the needs of the volunteer.

- **Staff proficiency:** Perhaps the most important requirement for the future will be an upgraded capacity on the part of agency staff to handle both volunteers in general, and volunteers from diverse backgrounds in particular, with more skill than ever before. Agency staff will be the volunteer coordinators of the future, and they will need to know how to effectively interact and manage volunteers. Staff who currently have no background in or training on working with volunteers will need to learn how to use a resource that thinks for itself.

The next 20 years will basically witness a re-invention and re-application of all of the basic principles of volunteer management, applying them to a new world and to new organizational resources and needs.

This development will not occur without leadership, and the primary person for accomplishing this change successfully will be the manager of volunteer resources within the agency. The change will not happen automatically and it will not happen accidentally.

You might choose to accept three guiding principles or truths in evaluating this need for guided change:



- ✓ *Basically, volunteers are just like real people – they won't go where they aren't wanted and they won't stay where they aren't appreciated.*

- ✓ *Basically, staff are just like real people – they'll get frustrated by what they don't understand.*

- ✓ *Basically, agencies are just like real people – they'll learn faster with a little help.*

You will certainly need to master the skills for three roles in accomplishing diversity and change within your organization:

- **The Advocate:** Arguing for an expansion in volunteer involvement. You might want to suggest that volunteer services can serve as the 'test case' for the changes that will also need to be made in relation to diversification of staff and clientele.

"Volunteer jobs, for the most part, haven't changed. Staff is still recruiting by the numbers...asking professional women to come in and do menial clerical jobs. It's a wonder that we still have as many volunteers as we do, especially as we have never recruited men or young people well...It is we who have not learned to recruit and utilize the modern volunteer effectively."

Frank Wylie
California State University
"Crisis Time for Nonprofits"
Vital Speeches
January 1, 1989

• **The Consultant:** Working with staff to customize volunteer utilization and persuading staff to make necessary changes to accommodate new styles of involvement.

• **The Teacher:** Educating staff on the ways to work effectively with volunteers and to fulfill their new roles as coordinators of volunteers.



Volunteer managers are in a unique position to argue for, plan for, and train for the alterations in agency operation that will be necessary for receptivity of new audiences, whether they be clients, paid staff, or volunteers.

And it's still a world of opportunity...

As you will have learned from the rest of this book, the new styles of volunteer involvement are opening a wide range of opportunities for volunteer programs which never existed before. We hope that you noted as well the synergistic relationships that exist between some of the categories addressed in separate chapters. Among our favorites are:

- ✓ The possible uses of volunteers with disabilities to fill in the current gap in available 9-to-5 or long-term volunteers.
- ✓ The high concern for children among Asian and Hispanic-American immigrants which might be utilized in recruiting for family volunteer teams.
- ✓ The similarity in operational style and structure between rural and neighborhood volunteer groups.
- ✓ The similarity between staff and parents as volunteers within agencies.

And we hoped you noted as well the cross-cutting impact of such trends as the shift to short-term volunteering, which affects every group covered in this book, but does so in a complex fashion. Remember, for example, the comment about short-term volunteers being inexperienced with your group but potentially having a lot of experience with other groups.

It is clear that we are just beginning to learn how to effectively diversify volunteer programs and it is clear that those of you who are reading this book will invent many of the practices that will eventually become common.

We hope you find this material helpful in your effort, and we wish you success and enjoyment in your endeavors on the cutting edge of volunteer management. As the old Chinese curse goes, "*May you live in interesting times...*"



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Alternative Sentencing

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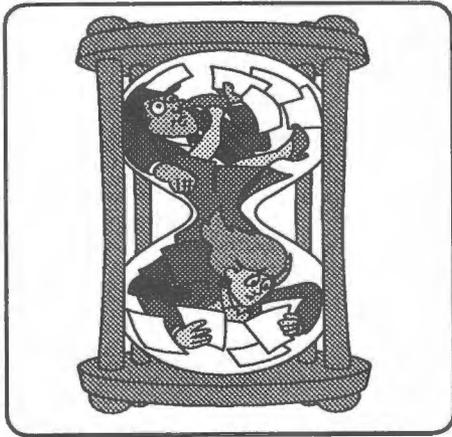
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Susan Combs

Rick Lynch

Nancy Macduff

Meet The Authors

Susan Combs is the Director of the Kalamazoo Senior Companion Program. She has her Masters in Business Administration and a Graduate Specialty in Gerontology from Western Michigan University. Before assuming her current position, she was in charge of scheduling and volunteer coordination for a 400+ daily rides volunteer transportation program.

Susan has served on numerous boards, including the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Junior League of Kalamazoo, Metro Transit Authority, and the Kalamazoo Association of Volunteer Administrators. She enjoys her works with older adults and has volunteered with the local Elderhostel program.

Rick Lynch has over eighteen years experience in the management training field, and is known for his ability to help participants discover practical action to make themselves and their organizations immediately more effective. An entertaining and dynamic speaker, he has been acclaimed across North America as one of the top seminar leaders by businesses, non-profit organizations, schools, and government institutions.

Rick has had extensive experience with all types of volunteer structures, has served on a variety of boards of directors, and has even been a volunteer fire chief.

A frequent contributor to professional journals, he is also the author of *Precision Management* and co-author of *Essential Volunteer Management*. His recent publications have concentrated on techniques for developing and practicing leadership traits.

Rick is currently President of Lynch Associates, a consulting firm located in Seattle, WA.

Nancy Macduff is President of Macduff/Bunt Associates, a publishing and consulting firm located in Walla Walla, WA.

She previously served for fourteen years as a volunteer manager with a non-profit youth agency and for six years as a Community Resource Program Manager with the Department of Social and Health Services.

Nancy has extensive experience with the presentation of training programs on volunteer management at the local and national levels and as a member of the Graduate Faculty of Washington State University has taught classes on volunteer program management since 1985. She currently serves on the faculty of Concordia College, in the Center for the Management of Non-Profit Organizations.

She is the author of numerous books and articles on volunteer involvement,

Kathleen McCleskey

including *Building Effective Volunteer Committees, Volunteer Recruiting and Retention: A Marketing Approach*, and *Episodic Volunteering: Building the Short-Term Volunteer Program*.

Kathleen McCleskey has been an Army Community Service volunteer since 1975. She has served on reception committees, English as a Second Language, High Neighbor outreach, budget counseling, and supervisor of volunteers. Since 1985 she has served as a volunteer consultant to 21st SUPCOM and HQ V Corps in Germany and at present she is the TRADOC volunteer management consultant at Fort Monroe, VA. She has written pamphlets on 'Families and Deployment' for the Army, as well as various regulations on volunteer management and awards.

She has received the Civilian Service Award, Civilian Patriotic Service Award, Certificates of Achievement, and the Emma Baird Award. She is the Region IV Chair of the Association for Volunteer Administration and a Regional Director for the National Military Families Association. She is a frequent presenter at national, state, and local volunteer management conferences.

Since 1984, she has owned her own training and consulting business, KM Consulting and Training Connection.

Steve McCurley

Steve McCurley is an internationally-known trainer and speaker in the field on effective volunteer management. He is currently a partner in VM Systems. He previously served as Director of Field Services for The National VOLUNTEER Center.

Steve has served on advisory groups for the National Rural Development Institute, the Council on Accreditation of Services to Families and Children, the Coalition of Hispanic Mental Health and Social Welfare Organizations, and the American National Red Cross. He is a former national board member of the Association for Volunteer Administration and currently serves on the advisory committee for the Volunteer Center of Olympia, WA. He has served as a consultant on volunteer program development to the American Association of Retired Persons, the National Association of Partners in Education, the US Tennis Association, the Aid Association for Lutherans, Special Olympics International, and the National Park Service.

Each year he gives workshops to over 15,000 participants from groups as diverse as the American Hospital Association, the Fraternal Congress of America, the Nature Conservancy, and CBS, Inc. He is the author of more than 75 books and articles on volunteer management, including the bestselling basic text, *Essential Volunteer Management*.

Martha Mercer

Martha Mercer began as a high school volunteer at, and later served as volunteer coordinator for COSI, a science museum in Columbus, OH. While there she developed and coordinated programs for junior high, high school, and adult volunteers.

She currently supervises the consumer assistance line for the Department of Health in Washington state.

Loretta Gutierrez Nestor

Loretta Gutierrez Nestor is the Manager, Transformation Training for Blood Services of the American Red Cross. Previously, she was the Director, National Office of Volunteers, for the American Red Cross, representing 1.1 million volunteers. She has served in local and national offices in the Red Cross for almost 25 years. She has received numerous awards for her community service.

She is a frequent contributor to *Voluntary Action Leadership*, with an entire

Ivan Scheier

series of articles on expanding volunteer diversity published over the past few years. She has presented on cultural diversity in volunteer organizations at numerous national volunteer conferences, and in Nicaragua, Mexico, Colombia, France, Australia and the Far East. She founded the first all Spanish-speaking Red Cross Volunteer Group, which numbered 700 and which became a model for a nationwide program.

Dr Ivan Scheier is the Director of the Center for Creative Community, a technical assistance, networking, and information-sharing organization located in Santa Fe, NM. Ivan has been a creative force in the volunteer community for more than 25 years, and developed many of the major concepts of organized volunteer management. A founding member of the volunteers in criminal justice movement, Ivan was also the initiator of the National Information Center on Volunteerism.

The author of innumerable books and article on volunteer management, Ivan currently concentrates on providing a hub for local Directors of Volunteers in Agencies groups and in doing intensive training sessions and visionary think tanks for local groups.

Trudy Seita

Trudy Seita is a nationally-known speaker, trainer, and author in the field of volunteer management, communications, stress management and leadership development. As President of Trudy Seita Associates, based in Vienna, WV, she has challenged, educated, and entertained audiences from Florida to Alaska with her energetic style of 'do-able' information for leaders and staff of nonprofit organizations and small businesses.

She holds a Masters Degree in Counseling and has worked as a medical social worker, 4-H youth agent, Executive Director for March of Dimes, and Recorder for a city government. She was instrumental in forming a Volunteer Action Center in her community. She is the author of *Leadership Skills for the New Age of Nonprofit*, and *Communications: A Positive Message from Youth*, and is the co-author with Sue Waechter of *Change: Meet It and Greet It*.

Heller An Shapiro

Heller An Shapiro is Director of Volunteers at the Friends of the Kennedy Center, the national performing arts center in Washington, DC. The Friends volunteer program received a 1991 President's Volunteer Action Award. Ms Shapiro is member of the board of the Association for Volunteer Administration and has worked as a volunteer manager since 1984. She has a Master's Degree in Psychology, is a guest teacher in the American University Arts Management Graduate program, was a trainer at the National Volunteer Conference in 1991, and a trainer at AVA conferences since 1990. She has directed several Train-the-Trainer Institutes. She is founder and chair of MVP Arts: Managers of Volunteer Programs in the Arts.

Heller An is actively involved with accessibility issues. She has presented several workshops and served as a consultant to organizations working to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. She served as a columnist for *Volunteer Today* from 1989-1991. Her articles have been published in *The Journal of Volunteer Administration* and *AVA Update*.

Betty Stallings

Betty Stallings is a national trainer, consultant, author, and keynote speaker on fundraising, volunteerism, leadership, and change. Formerly, Betty was the founder and 13-year Executive Director of the Valley Volunteer Center in Pleasanton, CA, one of the nation's most effective and creative centers. During her tenure as Executive Director, the Center served as a pilot site for a Kellogg-funded project on family volunteering. She also has had extensive experience in family volunteering herself, for such programs as Special Olympics, visitation with the elderly, and hosting of international visitors.

John Steinbach

Betty volunteers for numerous health, educational and community activities and has received many citations and awards for these endeavors. She is the author of *Getting to Yes in Fund Raising*.

John Steinbach is a training consultant in Ft Wayne, IN, working with JP Consultants. In addition to presenting leadership training for youth, John has presented training for many Fortune 500 companies and has conducted numerous planning retreats for not-for-profit boards. John is currently working with a team of trainers to write and present *Youth as Trustees* and *Youth in Governance* curriculums through a grant from the Lilly Endowment.

Sue Vineyard

Sue Vineyard is a partner in VMSystems and the President of Heritage Arts Publishing. From 1973-1979 she worked with Project Concern International, a charity which annually serves over a million children of poverty worldwide. Rising to National Director, she worked with over 30,000 volunteers raising pledges of \$17 million across the nation.

Sue is the author of 12 best-selling books for volunteer administrators and is the editor of the highly acclaimed newsletter *Grapevine*, which links people in our field across America. She is a nationally-acclaimed trainer and consultant in volunteer management.

Sue is the recipient of many awards for her work in human services, including "Outstanding Young Women of America" in 1974, and the "Distinguished Service Award" of the Association for Volunteer Administration in 1986.

She lives in Downers Grove, IL.

Barbara Williams

Barbara Williams has been 'married into the military' since 1970. During those years she has been active in many volunteer programs and community activities. She has moved seventeen times in the first 22 years and is now living in southeastern Arizona with her husband, recently retired from the military. She has been an Army Community Service Volunteer since 1973. During that time she served in many capacities, including two years as the Volunteer Consultant and trainer for all of the programs in Europe. She has also been an active volunteer in Boy Scouts of America, PTA, church and youth groups, and local unit organizations.

She has received the Award for Civilian Patriotic Service and one of the first Emma Baird Awards, given for excellence in volunteer leadership. She was named Volunteer of the Year for European PTAs in 1989.

In 1989 she formed her own training and consulting agency, Better Worlds, concentrating on volunteer concerns. She has offered training throughout the United States and Europe, specializing in military family programs and programs with youth.

In addition to training, she is active in community activities, serving with the Army Community Service at Ft Huachuca, with Boy Scouts of America, and with her church. She works with the National Military Family Association, serves as president of a Parent-Teacher-Student organization, and is a member of Rotary.



Managing Volunteer Diversity

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Everyone is Culturally Diverse
Culturally Diverse Volunteers
Families as Volunteers
Diversity in Membership Groups
Youth as Volunteers
Involving Seniors as Volunteers
One on One Volunteers
Volunteers in Rural Areas
Staff as Volunteers
The Military Volunteer
Involving Youth as Volunteer Leaders
The Volunteer Professional
Parents as Volunteers
Episodic Volunteering
Groups as Volunteers
Volunteers with Disabilities
Working with Grassroots Groups
Volunteer Managers as Change Agents
Volunteer Diversity Bibliography
Meet the Authors

