
Involving **SPECIAL GROUPS** *Meeting* **SPECIAL NEEDS**



The Unemployed

AKRON'S DEMONSTRATION PROJECT YIELDS HIGH BACK-TO-WORK PERCENTAGE

Most volunteer programs emphasize the benefits volunteers can provide to other groups, but for specific types of volunteers, that goal must be shifted toward the volunteers themselves. Such is the case when developing volunteer programs for unemployed persons, particularly if many are among the chronically unemployed.

In the past year, the Volunteer Center of Akron, Ohio, placed 53 unemployed persons in volunteer positions at various non-profit organizations. The main goal of the project is to replenish the volunteers' self-esteem while providing needed community service, according to Akron Project Director William Blake.

"It also helps the participants develop job skills, references and contacts, which they can use in obtaining employment," Blake added.

The Center served as the pilot program for VOLUNTEER's Unemployment Project funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. One reason for its selection was the Akron area's high unemployment rates: 11 percent among the general population and 16 percent among the black population. But that figure does not reflect continued plant closings and erosion of the local economy, Blake notes. In the last two months, for example, 250 top-level workers lost their jobs at the B.F. Goodrich tire company.

In helping the unemployed make the shift from the production line to the service sector, the Volunteer Center has placed the unemployed in such volunteer pro-

PROJECTS RESULTS

The Volunteering and Unemployment Demonstration Project in Akron was based on two assumptions:

1. That volunteering by unemployed people can help them cope with their unemployment and to return to the paid workforce.

2. That in most communities, the future of paid work lies in the service sector rather than in traditional manufacturing jobs and that volunteering is an appropriate way to introduce workers in the latter industries to networks in the service sector.

The results of the Akron project were quite positive: Of the 53 participants to leave the program, 32 "graduated" by finding paid employment. Of the balance, only 4 "dropped out." Of the remainder, 8 were students who returned to school; 6 relocated out of town; and 3 had completed an alternative sentencing requirement.

At the end of the year, an additional 57 unemployed were enrolled in the program, bringing the total number of participants to 110. Of this total, 86 were black, 24 white; 33 were high school graduates, 16 college graduates; 10 had a ninth-grade education or less. The vast majority had held some form of paid job within the past year.

The project demonstrated that

- Minorities *will* volunteer, particularly if recruitment efforts are specially targeted and designed and if there are a variety of job placements available to them.
- A new volunteer resource was available to the community.
- The community will join in a new initiative such as this.

grams as those administered by the Akron parks and recreation department and the local adoption agency.

Even though the volunteers are unemployed, Blake added, volunteering lets them know they are still a resource to their community. While the overall intent of the project is not to produce employment, if a volunteer obtains a job, the project naturally can count that individual as a success. Still, participants are cautioned that the program is not a "job-getting" or job training program.

The hoped-for result for participants, mainly minorities, Blake said, "is to produce a better job candidate—a person who has shown initiative, has gained additional work experience, displays a willingness to report regularly for a position, has demonstrated ability to handle responsibility, and who consequently feels better about himself or herself."

To enable them to volunteer, the unemployed participants are reimbursed 20 cents a mile if they drive or are given bus passes. The Center also made arrangements to provide them up to 50 free hours of child care, followed by a greatly reduced sliding fee scale for subsequent care.

Blake cautions other programs considering an unemployed project, however, to limit the amount of support for child care and transportation. In Akron, as some volunteers were working almost every day of the week, the project ultimately had to limit transportation reimbursement to three bus passes per week. The ultimate goal of the unemployed volunteer, after all, is to get a job and earn money, Blake said. He also advised reminding participants to keep the office informed of address changes, since many of the unemployed move a lot.

The experience of the Akron project,

however, indicates that the unemployed are willing to give of their time and that their response was immediate, in part thanks to area radio, television and newspaper publicity about the program.

When setting up such a program, Blake counseled, care must be taken that the plan will not conflict with state regulations on unemployment benefits that may interfere with volunteer involvement by the unemployed. Organizers should check with the local unemployment bureau to protect volunteers from unnecessary or unintentional problems.

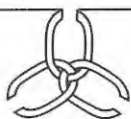
"In most cases volunteering poses no threat to unemployment benefits," Blake said.

In Akron, the project director interviews the potential volunteers and gives them information about the program. Then he considers their interests, skills and experience to make an appropriate match. Although the unemployed volunteers are treated the same as regular volunteers up to a point, they are also offered free group counseling at the University of Akron and are strongly encouraged to attend a workshop series on job-seeking skills and self-exploration.

An unemployed individual "very often feels tossed around by outside forces, that no one really understands his or her predicament or even cares," a project report noted. The program also offers interaction among the out-of-work so that they can form a network to share feelings, thoughts and promote action. It alleviates the sense of isolation and restores a sense of control over external and internal forces.

Teens

CAREER-LINKS



The transition from full-time school to full-time work can often be jarring to both students and employers, but the Career-Links project of the Valley Volunteer Center in the suburban San Francisco area has been easing that transition since 1981. About 60 "average" and high-achieving high school students complete employability seminars each semester and go on to provide volunteer services through "hands-on" internships in area corporations, businesses, law and medical offices and a wide range of social service agencies.

This career assessment and internship program also involves 10 to 20 students with social and behavioral difficulties, plus others with physical, learning or de-

velopmental disabilities. Another 10 or so participants are school age mothers.

Marilynne Moyers, Career-Links director, notes that students with special needs have significant barriers to overcome to make a positive transition from school to work. Because of its flexible and individualized nature, Career-Links provides the chance for career education and exploration to every type of high school student. Students' interests range from highly professional careers to skilled trades and "blue collar" occupations.

Before the students begin their volunteer work, the Volunteer Center and the local high school district provide an academic curriculum of seven hours of instruction on requirements for completing the seminar, job search, interview and resume techniques as well as what employers look for in employees.

Staff members make all placement arrangements for the internship and accompany the students to the placement interview. A mid-semester meeting of interns and sponsors is held where experiences and concerns are shared. Each student completes 80 hours of volunteer work, in addition to another 10 hours of seminars, interviews and meetings.

In addition to such tangible benefits as the academic credit, letters of recommendation, development of career-related skills and intensive "hands-on" exposure to a career field, the student volunteers gain valuable intangibles.

"The internship experience often helps students develop self-confidence," Moyers said. "They quickly learn the standards and expectations of the working world and the importance of preparing for them and often return to the classroom more motivated to learn because the class work seems more relevant."

But the community benefits as well, as Career-Links provides four avenues of involvement:

1. A business or agency may sponsor a student for an internship of 80 hours.
2. Community professionals may provide instruction or share their career experience through group presentations, Career Faire and other special programs.
3. A community advisory committee of students and representatives from the academic, business and nonprofit sectors meets regularly to assist with planning, resource sharing, public relations, evaluation of the program's progress and funding development.
4. Local businesses or organizations may provide a financial contribution or finan-

cially sponsor a student's internship.

There is a national trend towards educators and businesses working together, so Volunteer Centers are effective intermediaries, Moyers said. She cautioned others, however, to be careful in assessing the needs of the community and students and warned against duplicating services. There has to be a genuine need, she said, rather than just a great idea for a project.

EL PASO'S TIPS NOW 10 YEARS OLD, STILL GOING STRONG

What may be one of the largest and oldest volunteer efforts involving teens is the Teens in Public Service (TIPS) project in El Paso, Texas. About 1,000 students from nearly every junior and senior high school in the area take part in the decade-old



program, according to project head Jeanne Massey. The teens volunteer in nursing homes, hospitals, churches, school playgrounds and tutoring programs.

The project is a joint effort of the Volunteer Bureau of the United Way and the Newspaper Printing Corporation, publisher of the two area newspapers. The latter organization publishes the names and school affiliations of all the volunteers who have demonstrated a regular, on-going commitment to volunteerism.

TIPS awards Certificates of Appreciation to the students in recognition of their efforts, although one-time activities such as benefit car washes, do not qualify a student for a certificate.

The Volunteer Bureau recruits the students by encouraging school personnel to announce the program over school public address systems and providing posters and sign-up sheets to the schools.

TALLAHASSEE'S VOLUNTEERS RECRUITS THROUGH SCHOOL SERVICE CLUBS

Using school service clubs to recruit teen volunteers is the focus of a program underway since June in Tallahassee, Florida. Sponsored by the Volunteer Center of Leon County, Inc., VOLUNTEENS provides an avenue for local agencies and nonprofits to involve high school students in a variety of community projects.

This year, for example, teen volunteers decorated and later took down Christmas trees for senior citizens who still live in their homes, yet are too frail to do the task themselves. Washing vans used by agencies for the handicapped is another example of involvement, project director Meg Guyton said.

Some of the more than 100 volunteers are also peer counselors at Someplace Else, a shelter for runaways. It is this group that is considering appointing a teen to its board of directors—a process that the Volunteer Center is working on, although a student has not been placed yet on the board.

The Volunteer Center recruits the students by contacting members of the school-affiliated service clubs and placing announcements in school papers.

"We worked purposefully and very slowly in setting up this program," Guyton said, "in order to avoid any pitfalls along the way."

The Disabled

VOLUNTEERS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION IN L.A. AND D.C.

Students with disabilities in Los Angeles schools receive benefits as varied as the volunteers who provide them through the Volunteers in Special Education program cosponsored by the Los Angeles Volunteer Centers and the Unified School District's Division of Special Education. Initiated by VOLUNTEER two years ago, the VISE concept—to provide support to disabled youths through new and challenging roles for volunteers—has taken hold in many cities across the country.

In Los Angeles, VISE volunteers range from those sent from court referrals because of outstanding parking tickets to a couple of Los Angeles Raiders who make planned visits to schools.

Beneficiaries of the program are students who require special education due

to physical, emotional, intellectual or learning disabilities. Most of the physically handicapped are in wheelchairs, although that population includes the deaf and hearing impaired, according to West Los Angeles Volunteer Center Director Tony Angel.

Many of the volunteers have teaching backgrounds, Angel said. The 40 or 50 people referred from the court system usually provide maintenance and gardening

work at the schools, most of which are so financially hard pressed because of education budget problems that they cannot earmark money for such work. VISE volunteers also perform clerical and cafeteria tasks, in addition to accompanying the handicapped on field trips.

High school students are also a source of volunteer help, particularly those enrolled in private schools in Beverly Hills, West Los Angeles and Venice, where 15 to 20 hours of community service are often mandatory for seniors. The Volunteer Center's "We Care Too" program has uncovered a "tremendous response" on the part of the high school students, Angel noted, because many high school students are very enthusiastic and particularly enjoy working with children.

"'We Care Too' is one of our major recruitment tools for VISE," Angel said. "It involves face-to-face communication by students and agency representatives within the classroom. Directors from the many handicapped schools go to their classes with information pamphlets, ready to answer all questions. It has proved to be very effective; the students' interest in working with these children has been overwhelming."

Statistics prove the program's appeal and success.

"Up to 45 percent of the handicapped students themselves join the volunteer program after they graduate from high school," Angel said. "In addition, many of the court-referred volunteers come back voluntarily after fulfilling their community service requirement."

While the Los Angeles program has been in existence for about two-and-a-half years, a Washington, D.C. program just getting underway will also target groups similar to those benefiting from the Los Angeles VISE project. Here, the D.C. Volunteer Clearinghouse has received a \$6,000 grant from the city government to administer a mentor and tutoring program for students in juvenile detention facilities.

"The main problem with these students, who are also in special education classes, is not having good role models," said Clearinghouse Director James Lindsay. "With this grant, we plan to involve local celebrities and sports figures such as former Washington Bullets basketball star Phil Chenier."

Starting such a project has been complicated by requirements of the city social services office, Lindsay admitted. The city government, which asked the Volunteer Clearinghouse to do the work, wanted it to

HOW TO INVOLVE A NEW SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT INTERN

- Give simple instructions, and demonstrate the way to do a job. Assign one task, and when completed, assign another. Some students can follow only one- or two-step instructions.
- Train the intern to perform regular routine responsibilities. When ability is demonstrated, train for more complex tasks.
- Monitor the student's work carefully to ensure that your standards are being met. Frequent guidance, retraining and reminders may be necessary.
- Discuss with the student immediately any attitudes or behaviors that are inappropriate to the work site. Positive social skills are important for this and future work experience.
- Give positive feedback for work well done. When constructive criticism is necessary, help the student see the problem in a positive way. Give the student the opportunity to offer suggestions to correct the work done improperly.
- When a problem arises, discuss it with the student immediately, and contact the program staff. The staff and Special Education teachers are working as a team with you to make this internship a rewarding experience for both you and the student.
- Share what your business and other employers look for in good employees. Give "pointers" to help the student's vocational growth and development.
- Share your ideas on what steps the student could take when the internship ends to continue to prepare for his/her career goal.

From materials for employers who involve special education students in Pleasanton's Career-Links program for teens.

administer the program out of its offices. The Clearinghouse had intended to operate the program in the schools. It also took time to do the administrative work required by the proposal and to get a clear definition from the government on its requirements for the project.

In cooperation with the administrators of the detention centers, Lindsay hopes to involve about 100 students in the project and will recruit volunteers from the Clearinghouse's skills bank.

KALAMAZOO'S HANDI-ABLE PROJECT ATTACKS ISOLATION

Being disabled, either emotionally, physically or mentally, can often mean isolation for such persons. So a project of the Voluntary Action Center of Kalamazoo, Michigan, that offers training and volunteer opportunities for the disabled, also serves another crucial purpose—to get them involved with other people.

"What you see in the schools sometimes is horrifying," said Project Coordinator Kathy Klein. The kids are very often physically set apart in the school itself, they have no friends many times and no way to become an active part of the community.

The Kalamazoo VAC, through its Handi-Able project, places these disabled students in a variety of volunteer positions after they complete a five-unit curriculum on volunteering. That curriculum, "the re-

sult of three years of labor and love," is used by teachers in various Kalamazoo schools.

Ten members of the Handi-Able Volunteer Program Committee gave more than \$4,268 worth of their time and expertise in 1984 to further develop the curriculum and make volunteer recognition plans. The current roster consists of eight classes of 125 students and some adults. About 50 have been placed in volunteer posts recently, Klein said.

Some of the volunteers' projects include agency newsletters, reading at the Library for the Blind and taking care of animals at the zoo. The teachers determine which disabled person is ready to go out into the community. Each student is asked to work at least once a week, two to three hours per session for as long as they feel they can commit to volunteering.

"It is important to realize that persons with disabilities have the same hopes and emotions as persons without disabilities," Klein notes. "Likewise, they progress or atrophy according to their environment and opportunities. For instance, much of retardation that is due to deprivation is reversible and also preventable through changes in the social conditions that contributed so heavily to its occurrence."

The Kalamazoo project has been so successful over the years that it will serve as the blueprint for other Michigan Volunteer Centers in a new W. K. Kellogg Foundation-funded VOLUNTEER project called "The Next Step: Mobilization of Dis-

abled Youth." This program will provide opportunities for leadership skills development to high-achieving disabled youths. A follow-up to the original Kellogg-funded Disabled Youth as Volunteers Project in which the Kalamazoo and Lansing Volunteer Centers participated, The Next Step will involve United Community Services of Detroit, Volunteers in Action of Grand Rapids, Voluntary Action Center of Greater Lansing and Volunteer Action Center of Saginaw. The Lansing Volunteer Center will coordinate its efforts with the Michigan School for the Blind.

Their hardest job, according to Klein, will be to get teachers in the schools involved in the curriculum. Those teachers often say that they have enough work to do already with the students, and are hesitant at first about taking on any more. It is also important to work closely with the agencies where the disabled volunteers will be placed, Klein said. She recommended setting up a task force that would include people in the field.

SAVE PROMOTES SKILLS SHARING

The goal of involving individuals with disabilities in volunteering has met with success in the Volunteer Service Bureau of Orlando, Florida's SAVE (Share Able Volunteer Effort) program.

The Volunteer Bureau recruited more than 40 volunteers last year and currently has 30 active participants. They work in such agencies as nursing homes and the Orlando police department and join the effort for the same reasons most people volunteer—to become involved in constructive activity, improve self-worth and keep employment skills polished.

"Some are looking for jobs and all but one or two are unemployed, but many of these volunteers have been the beneficiaries of community services and want to reciprocate," said SAVE Director Virginia Hilty.

The program started as a VISTA project and two VISTA volunteers continue to help administer it, providing support and follow-up. They recruit volunteers through presentations to disabled groups and public service ads, although these efforts are aided by referrals from the state Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

"One of the most successful compo-



Westlake School students sign up at volunteer fair.

Judy Haberek, a writer in the Washington, D.C. area, developed the material and wrote the articles for this section.

When You Meet a Person with a Handicap . . .

IDEAS FOR COMFORTABLE FEELINGS

1. Remember a person with a handicap is a person and is like anyone else EXCEPT for the handicap.
2. Delay making up your mind about a person with a handicap. First impressions are limiting.
3. Show friendly interest when you first meet a person with a handicap. Between friends, a disability can be recognized and discussed openly.
4. Be yourself when you meet.
5. Talk about the same things you would with anyone else.
6. Help only when it is requested. When a person with a handicap falls, he or she may wish to get up alone and a person who is blind may prefer to move without assistance. Offer help, but wait for an okay and do not be offended if the person declines your offer of assistance.
7. Be patient. Let the person with a handicap set the pace of walking or talking.
8. Laugh with him or her.
9. Give the person the same courtesy you would to anyone else.
10. Stop overprotective or oversolicitous actions. Showers of kindness are usually resented.
11. Remember that pity or charity are not needed nor appreciated. People with handicaps want to be regarded as equals.
12. Keep a person with a handicap within reach of the wheelchair or crutches, should he or she become separated, unless otherwise requested.
13. Remember, when dining, a person with a handicap will ask you or the waiter for assistance if needed.

—One of the handouts at a SAVE Awareness Seminar, compiled by the Center for Independent Living in Central Florida, in Orlando, Fla.

nents of the program is the awareness seminars," Hilty said, "which we conduct for the staffs of agencies that place the disabled volunteers. Participants sit in wheelchairs, for example, to become more aware of the needs and problems of the disabled."

SAVE's first year concluded with a recognition luncheon on October 1, at which 24 disabled citizens were honored with certificates of appreciation "for their commitment to improve the Central Florida community through volunteerism."

CONTRACTING TO INVOLVE TRANSITIONAL VOLUNTEERS

A project to ease the transition for those with mental health problems who have been deinstitutionalized began operating last fall in Portland, Maine—under a contract between the Center for Voluntary Action and Shalom Apartments, a local mental health agency.

"The contract spells out the funding arrangements and also each party's expectations of the other," said Anita Murray, the Center's executive director.

The funds enabled the Center to hire a half-time person who holds a weekly meeting for those who want to volunteer their services. Participants learn about social skills and discuss topics that will help them on their volunteer job such as proper dress and how to be assertive so that they can let the agencies know their needs, rather than just quit. The group also adds structure to their lives, Murray said.

The first three from the group should be placed in volunteer jobs soon, she predicted, working, for instance, in a hospital flower shop and cooking at the Maine Center for the Blind. Most of the volunteer placements will be task oriented such as clerical or kitchen jobs.

"But what matters," Murray said, "is that the volunteer jobs do not involve a lot of pressure."

The weekly group meeting, in addition to giving the clients more hope and enthusiasm, also furthers the project's goal of helping local agencies handle the clients' unique problems. The staffer who conducts the weekly sessions also helps the Center train the staffs of the nonprofit agencies on how to deal with these special volunteers.

As I See It

Governor George Romney, Chairman, VOLUNTEER



The strength and adequacy of community problem-solving depends essentially on a separately structured Volunteer Center with its own leader-

ship board, committed skilled director and community identity. There is no substitute for problem-solving by caring volunteers in all the ways in which volunteer programs have proven effective. Learning of such programs anywhere and encouraging their effective local replication with enough competently managed, dedicated volunteers, are fundamental, distinct functions of a Volunteer Center.

Barbara Mandel, President, National Council of Jewish Women

The hungry are fed, the illiterate taught, children's rights are championed, and the aged helped to live with dignity. These and other programs are what



make NCJW Sections, and the Volunteer Centers they work with, life forces in their communities. They serve to improve the quality of life for those in need around them. They offer opportunity for individuals to enrich themselves by volunteering: to give of themselves, to learn new skills, to make new friends and to give new meaning to their lives.

Edward I. Koch, Mayor of New York City



The Mayor's Voluntary Action Center is celebrating its twentieth anniversary of service to the citizens of New York. It started as a pilot effort to promote

voluntarism in city government and the private sector and has grown steadily—initiating new volunteer programs, mobilizing hundreds of thousands of volunteers, and providing information and referrals to those who call, write, or visit the Center. Last year, in fact, it handled more than 83,000 calls. It may have been a pilot program 20 years ago; today, it's an essential part of city government.