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# Chicken or Egg: Why Are Our Professional Associations Weak?

By [Susan J. Ellis](#)

December  
2004

After several years of increasingly smaller audiences, both my local DOVIA and my state association cancelled their annual training conferences this year because registrations fell to a record low. In England, a multi-year attempt to foster a national association of volunteer program managers admitted failure. Despite three consecutive years of “let’s-get-started” events, a network of national organization staff responsible for national-level volunteer resource offices has still not gotten beyond square one. AVA membership figures continue – for more than two decades -- to hover around the 2,000 mark, although even a conservative estimate would determine a potential membership pool of over 300,000.

Of course there are some sterling examples of strong professional networks in our field, but they are sadly few and far between. Most struggle to maintain membership levels, find it hard to get members to take leadership roles, and chronically run on shoestring budgets.

Why? And which came first: weak professional associations or a weak profession?

This issue, which obviously starts at the local level on up (or perhaps on the national level on down), is integrally related with the recurring question of “is volunteer management a profession?”

## The Chicken

Why do professionals form societies? There’s power in numbers, especially at the national level:

- for collegial exchange and debate on issues
- for licensing or accrediting – setting standards for themselves
- to speak with one voice on issues facing them, especially to protest when something surfaces with the potential to do more harm than good
- to mentor newcomers to the field

- to analyze trends through the lens of their perspective/approach
- to affect public and political opinion on behalf of their profession (and, often, the people they serve)

The reason for forming counterparts at the local level is to provide nearby support, answers to quick questions, and contacts for job changes.

Go back and review the list of reasons for the existence of professional societies. How would you rate the volunteerism associations to which you belong in each of these activities? If we're honest in our assessments, we'd have some dismally low scores. For example, very few of our associations have public affairs, political action, or even current issues committees charged with keeping informed about news affecting the field. And even fewer conferences offer a forum for learning about or discussing such trends. Perhaps the worst thing is the lack of courage to criticize public policy even when it is clear that government officials or funders are negating our legitimate knowledge of best practices in our field.

Further, most associations' training events tend to cater to newcomers, rarely providing more experienced volunteer program managers with advanced materials to meet their needs. Similarly, many DOVIAs find that veteran members tend to stop coming to meetings after a while because there is nothing new – making it hard to show newcomers that this is a profession with any type of career ladder.

## **The Egg**

Why is it so hard for volunteer management professionals to form viable, strong associations? I've discussed this in one way or another at least four times since I began writing these Hot Topics in 1997 (see links at the end of this essay), but the answer eludes me.

I recognize a number of important factors. For example:

- For too many practitioners, leading a volunteer effort is a *job*, not a *career*. Therefore people seek how-to skill training that they can apply now. They are not focused on the long-term in this field and, in fact, expect to leave the position as they advance in whatever they do consider to be their career. So joining or being active in a volunteerism professional society does not further their goals.
- Most of us did not come to this work through the channel of formal education – and it seems unlikely this will change soon. We tend to “fall into” the field and learn by doing (or, if we're lucky, chance upon a mentor or a useful conference). So there is not a consistent flow of new practitioners coming from educational programs, supported by faculty who prepared them for integrating into a profession.

- Because so many of us are isolated in our positions (the only one in our agencies doing this work), we haven't learned the skills of collegiality. Although we may be creative in finding all sorts of community organizations to participate in our volunteer programs' work, we focus on collaboration to help everyone but ourselves (that seems too selfish).
- The settings in which we work are so incredibly diverse that we are quite fragmented. Added to our isolation within our organizations, this results in many people not even knowing where to obtain information about volunteerism associations.

## Money Is a Red Herring

Bring together the officers of any volunteerism association and ask them why they think it's a struggle to get people to pay membership dues or attend events and they'll start talking about the lack of money in this field. Sure money is tight, but our field notoriously runs events on the cheap, with annual dues for association memberships far lower than any comparative profession.

Certainly there are volunteer program managers without a professional development budget, though the question is whether or not this is true for other positions in an agency or just for us. But the fact is many of us won't spend our own money for anything – once again because we don't see a career path for which we are willing to extend ourselves. It's a fact: If we're in a job, we expect our employer to pay our expenses. If we're in a career, we don't expect someone else to obtain it for us, though we'll happily accept reimbursement if we can get it.

More proof that money is not really the issue is that many conference scholarships have been known to go begging. We also don't brainstorm how to cut expenses. For example, I've suggested for years that volunteer centers or DOVIAs organize a group bus rental to take local people to a state or nearby national conference. I've never seen it happen (if you have, please tell us all how it worked out, please). Further, only a handful of workshop sponsors even try to ask outside sources for funds, such as underwriting the cost of speaker fees and travel.

Finally, some will say that the problem is being in a field that's predominantly women. Sure there is some correlation, but look at teachers, nurses, and social workers, all of whom are disproportionately female and yet have managed to create strong professional associations.

*Do you agree our professional associations are generally weak?*

*Why do you think this is?*

*What can we do about it? (Maybe we can make some collective new year's resolutions to try out some of the ideas.)*

Related Topics: [Infrastructure to Support Volunteering](#) | [Profession of Volunteer Management](#)

**Submitted on 5 January 2005 by Rachel Ross, Association of Voluntary Service Managers in Palliative Care, Volunteer Services Manager UK**

A note from the UK Association of Voluntary Service Managers (AVSM) Managing Volunteers in Palliative Care:

I just thought I would share a 'sterling example of a strong professional network'. AVSM (the professional organisation of Voluntary Service Managers working in Hospices and other palliative care settings in the UK) supports its members through an annual national conference, informal mentoring of new members and training based on a Training Needs Analysis of all members. Regional and specialist meetings complete the suite of support.

Three factors make this organisation special.

1. We have no shortage of people volunteering for roles within the organisation.
2. In general, we are well respected professionals within our respective Hospices.
3. Just as it is expected that there is a national association for Social Workers in Palliative care and a national association for Head Nurses so it is expected that Voluntary Service Managers need to take time to attend their professional association.

Although the picture does vary across the country it is usual for VSMs to report to a very senior manager and in many cases the Chief Executive. It is worth noting that VSMs have fought hard for this recognition and it is not as universal as we would like.

The question of strong professional organisations leading to a strong profession is an interesting one. The UK hospice movement is fortunate in that it recruits, as well as young people who 'fall' into the profession, more mature people with a background in training, human resources etc. This ensures that professionalism is expected and high standards are adhered to.

**Submitted on 29 December 2004 by Sarah Elliston, Waycross Community Media, Volunteer Coordinator, Cincinnati, Ohio USA**

A thorny topic, for sure, and one that has elicited eloquent responses.

I think the answer is: all of the above.

In Cincinnati, the local DOVIA is called CAVA (Cinci. Assoc. of Volunteer Administrators) and it was formed by the local volunteer center over 20 years ago. While the center has changed dramatically in the past 5 years, CAVA has grown enough to host the ICVA in 2003. It brought the community of volunteer coordinators together locally and we feel very strong.

The opportunity which interests me, which hasn't already been spoken about, is the working together of the Corporate Volunteer Coordinators and the Non Profit Volunteer Administrators. I know in Columbus, OH the VAN is a membership organization for both and in Cincinnati we are trying to have a meeting where both groups will get to mix and mingle and learn more about each other. We have

much to learn about each other and I believe that merging the two organizations would bring the corporate world into a better understanding of the volunteer administration realities.

***Submitted on 13 December 2004 by Fran Cook, Calvary Lutheran Church, Dir. of Volunteer Ministries, West Chester, PA USA***

Interesting information from Susan. I believe in networking with others in my field. I am a member of a professional volunteer organization --DVA/DVP. I find that lack of time to attend a meeting or a topic that is not relevant to me keeps me from joining the group at times. I think there is strength in numbers and that we should be gathering together. There is much work & less money available for volunteer organizations but that should not stop us.

***Submitted on 13 December 2004 by Jean Lawson, Seniors Association Kingston Region, Volunteer & Fundraising Coordinator, Kingston, Ontario Canada***

One area not mentioned in Susan Ellis' article is time. Managing volunteers takes an inordinate amount of time. Volunteer management often involves you in events, training and activities involving a number of different departments within your organization. There is a tremendous amount of time spent one-on-one with each volunteer - interviewing, training, orienting, scheduling - which leaves little time to further your own skills and abilities.

***Submitted on 13 December 2004 by Nancy Hughes, VON Canada-Durham, Manager, Community Support & Vol. Services Oshawa, Ontario Canada***

I agree that more people need to become certified through college courses in the Volunteer Management, thus increasing the skill sets of those employed in the field as well as ensuring professional standards are maintained. Many organizations couple the volunteer coordinator position with another job, therefore giving the impression that V.M. is secondary. All V.M.s need to push for proper recognition and for dollars to be able to attend conferences as well as pay for local AVA membership. Our day will come when we are all recognized as professionals-but only when we have shown ourselves to be strong, well-educated and valuable assets to our organizations.

***Submitted on 12 December 2004 by Tracey Mallen, Providence Continuing Care Centre- St. Mary's of the Lake Hospital site, Coordinator of Volunteers Kingston, Ontario Canada***

I do agree that our professional associations are generally weak. That is certainly the case with my Provincial Association. However, my local association -- Kingston Area Association of Administrators of Volunteers (KAAAV) -- is unusually strong. Our monthly meetings have education, information sharing and socializing. Members who are able to attend conferences and workshops always bring back information for the members who could not attend. As the secretary, I am inn undated each month with information and websites that members have found useful and want me to pass on to the rest of the membership so that everyone can benefit (this month's Energize is the latest!). Last year a group was formed whose members are working towards certification with our National Association, CAVR. Also, KAAAV's connection with our local Volunteer Centre, Volunteer Kingston, is very strong. In fact, it is often hard to distinguish between the two as they are often working side by side on

projects. The planning of the 2005 Provincial Conference for Administrators of Volunteers is a good example of exceptional teamwork. While I recognize the issues, I truly feel lucky to be working in the field in Kingston where there is such a strong commitment to furthering the profession and where there are real efforts being made to educate people about our "profession".

***Submitted on 10 December 2004 by Carol Dixon, Grand River Hospital, Director, Kitchener, Ontario Canada***

I have always belonged to my provincial and national associations because I thought I should support them with my membership dollars. I always send someone to the conferences and would go myself if I had the budget or it was close to me. I agree that sometimes experienced people don't attend because they have heard the basics over and over but if you plan on learning something you can always come home with a new idea or program to try. Professional organizations are weak because we continue to ask what does this association do for me - instead of what can I do for my association. Maybe we should look to the professional fund raisers that are doing well.

***Submitted on 10 December 2004 by Marcia Long, Washington Mutual, Assistant Vice President, Seattle WA USA***

Until women are considered equal in the eyes of the constitution, the world, and the media, and have the ability to control their own destiny with equal pay and control over their own bodies, the mostly female profession of volunteer management will continue to be undervalued by directors, upper level executives and society in general. The same thing happens to nurses and teachers. It's up to us as volunteer managers to continue to push for the respect that we deserve. Push to have the Director of Volunteer position report directly to the ED, and push to be treated with as much respect as the Director or Accounts Payable. Get certified through AVA. Don't allow yourself to be paid less than the janitor. We can move this profession forward because it impacts more people than any other profession in the country. How else would nonprofit organizations be successful if not for the volunteers fulfilling their mission? Cheers to the volunteer managers of the world!

***Submitted on 9 December 2004 by Marge Galla, Southwest General Health Center, Volunteer Services Coordinator, Middleburg Heights, OH USA***

As an eight year volunteer coordinator at a community hospital, I find great support and educational opportunities at the local, district, and state levels. The local group is comprised of volunteer administrators from diverse fields. The district group is an offshoot of OSDVS (The Ohio Society for the Directors of Volunteer Services). Two district meetings along with an annual fall conference offer education, networking, and practical information through OSDVS. Vendors who attend the conference routinely support these educational goals. And, when something comes along on a daily basis, support is only a phone call or email away because of the 135 terrific members of OSDVS. I do not feel alone but instead respected for my experience and opinions and am proud to say I am a volunteer administrator.

***Submitted on 9 December 2004 by Amber Pedraja, CMVP  
American Red Cross, Blood Services, Volunteer Recruitment Manager, Philadelphia, PA USA***

I couldn't agree more with your comments on this issue. However, the biggest chicken/egg problem is this: People, meaning the world at large, really don't understand volunteerism. Sure, they might know the dictionary explanation of what the word means, but do they REALLY understand the meaning of it and what it takes to manage volunteers and activities? The answer, unfortunately, is no. If people generally don't have a good understanding of the subject, how can we as professional volunteer managers understand how to operate successfully within the profession? Only a small percentage of the professional volunteer management groups (including those organizations dedicated to the profession or volunteerism as a whole) across the globe work. That is a very unfortunate place for our profession to be in and it speaks volumes about what people may think of it. Until people understand volunteerism, understanding professional volunteer management groups or associations is "gone with the wind" for lack of a better term.

***Submitted on 9 December 2004 by Sal Alaimo, Indiana University, PhD Student in Philanthropy Studies - / Consultant Indianapolis, IN USA***

My first meeting of the Central Indiana Association of Volunteer Administration is today, so it will be interesting to see what is offered. I joined to stay connected to the community and the field while immersed in my studies. As former membership chair and president of the Council of Volunteer Administrators in Atlanta, I understand these challenges. With tight budgets and choices, associations must offer value. In Atlanta I raised our membership 19% in one event because we schmoozed, fed and asked them what their needs were. Asking people to attend a "(not another) meeting" has negative connotations.

Membership and money are important, but if you don't offer value, you can't make a case for people joining. I suggest we review American Society for Association Executives' (ASAE) literature on this topic. I also suggest that every DOVIA pay the local ASAE chapter membership for their president to attend the small association topical interest groups where they can learn about these challenges in a peer setting. Lastly, I agree with Ms. Grimaldi's point, as if the advice in [From The Top Down](#) was followed, there might be more career paths that increase retention in our field.

***Submitted on 8 December 2004 by Nancy Gaston, CVA, Gifts Differing, Principal, Vancouver, WA USA***

As a member of a strong local association--NOVAA--with over 200 members, an annual conference and some cutting-edge program topics and position papers, I know such organizations can flourish. And as president of AVA, I see that association beginning to grow instead of just maintaining itself.

What makes for a strong association? One factor is good internal volunteer management. For people who claim this as a profession, we have been very weak in managing our own resources. We make leadership positions too time consuming for busy people and we are not intentional in the development and nurture of new leadership. We have also failed to promote involvement as opportunity for skills development. I am now a trainer and consultant partly because of what I learned in my local associations through training, facilitation and event planning--but no one presented the opportunities to me in that light.

I think credentialing is a necessity for strong professional associations. Our local group made the strategic decision to promote the CVA credential, organizing study groups to prepare for the exam and portfolio. As a result, there are more CVAs here than in any other location, and the level of professional awareness seems higher in the whole community.

The chicken or the egg? It really doesn't matter, if we do what we can in our place and at our level of power, and not waste energy lamenting what we cannot change. As Stephen Covey points out, energy is wasted on concerns over which we have no influence.

***Submitted on 6 December 2004 by Paula J. Beugen, Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration, Public Affairs, Chair Maplewood, Minnesota USA***

Economic and other environmental factors have greatly impacted the field of volunteerism in Minnesota. For example, our State Office of Volunteerism no longer exists. The Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) is stepping up to the plate. We have an engaged public affairs committee, consulted with community and advocacy experts, studied legal aspects of advocacy and lobbying, and established a policy for taking public positions. A Public Affairs Platform and rapid-response process for emerging issues are now in place.

MAVA serves as a resource to policymakers on volunteerism; educates policymakers about the nature, complexity, and impact of volunteer programs in Minnesota, including the significant level of responsibility carried out by volunteer resources managers; and, advocates for new funding streams for volunteer programs. We are educating policymakers about the important role that Volunteer Centers and other volunteer connector organizations play in Minnesota's volunteerism infrastructure.

We advocate that AmeriCorps Members serving in volunteer coordination roles be considered entry-level volunteer coordinators (unless they have prior experience). They require training and support by experts in the field of volunteer resources management. We advocate that AmeriCorps Members in volunteer coordination roles serve a two-year term in order to increase quality volunteer program development and sustainability.

***Submitted on 6 December 2004 by Keith Seel, Institute for Nonprofit Studies, Director, Calgary, Alberta Canada***

I think a big issue is how we think of "profession". Historically, the roots go back to guilds and the protection of knowledge and skills for the purposes of economic benefit (e.g., doctors and lawyers being long lasting professionals with these roots). Professions are designed to be exclusive and protect their professional member's ability to practice. Current political theory suggests that such exclusive kinds of organizations may not flourish in times (or in areas of practice) that are more interested in distributed kinds of knowledge and inclusive kinds of organizations. I think volunteer administration is field of practice experiencing both trends. This suggests that a new definition of "profession" and "professional" may be required.

***Submitted on 4 December 2004 by Rosanna Tarsiero, bipolar dream, VPM, Pisa Italy***

In my opinion, VPMs don't belong to professional associations because they feel they don't need to. Since every situation is so peculiar, VPMs feel they don't need a pre-packaged, anecdotal opinion from experts but some sound, reliable guidelines to build their knowledge onto. Because so rarely evidence in best practices is given (beyond anecdotes), VPM voice is (and will stay) unheard, not even listened to, by those who takes political actions. I think the only way out is to change our practice and accept we have to back up our theories if we hope to become influential.

***Submitted on 4 December 2004 by Andy Macdonald, HVC, Executive Officer, NSW Australia***

I was interested to read about your version of Chicken and Egg. I have been theorising about which came first the Chicken or the Egg, and in the same way the volunteer or the organisation. I resolved that it must have been the volunteer there first, doing something they wanted to do. So for me that's the key, what is there for others to do, what is the framework you have created that then nurtures their involvement.

Ultimately it is about how the individuals within the system act that will define where things go and if there will be others around to make organisation. What you are taking about is a culture and there must be in the right environment for it to thrive and survive.

***Submitted on 4 December 2004 by Andrea Grimaldi, American Red Cross, Director, Community Volunteer Services, White Plains, NY USA***

I do agree that there is a great deal of weakness within the growth of our professional associations.

I believe that many Volunteer Administrators do not realize that this IS a profession and not just an assigned task. Because of this lack of recognition there are many administrators of volunteer programs who do not realize that there actually are associations available to help them with the ever daunting task of volunteer administration.

Many have come to this field in a 'round about way and the turn over rate is very high.

There is also within the not for profit world a great deal of hypocrisy with regards to volunteer administration. While many organizations sing the praises of volunteers and continue asking for increased recruitment efforts the volunteer administrator is low man on the totem pole when it comes to staff support. This lack of support includes encouragement of the volunteer administrator's professional growth, i.e joining associations such as AVA. Because of this many volunteer administrators or those responsible for volunteers are not more proactive in seeking out professional associations related to the field of volunteer administration.

As a board member of a local Association of Volunteer Administration I can say that we are working on many exciting programs to help volunteer administrators in our area find useful resources to help them with their programs as well as fostering a camaraderie that will bring more positive energy to this very exciting, rewarding and worthwhile profession. Because of our positive outlook we are seeing an increase in those interested in our association.

All I can say to each of you is keep plugging along, and reach out to other volunteer administrators even on a casual basis. Before long you will find within this new network the beginning of a established local volunteer administrator professional association.

Best of luck!

***Submitted on 2 December 2004 by Hillary Roberts, Project Linus NJ Inc., President, Keyport, NJ USA***

For me the chicken/egg dilemma is this...Do associations seek quality or quantity? Quality services, member opportunity, healthy consistent solution-based dialogue and important follow thru or do associations seek the greatest number of members and call that success?

What I've experienced is a lack of communication between meetings, checking in with members, using the information produced thru survey, board members working on common goals. Professional comfort levels often dictate networking, resource inclusion and board appointments. A board can be out of touch with its members. Experienced professionals in the field of nonprofit need to share their expertise not convey an atmosphere of "been there, done that."

If associations assume (and they often do) that members do not want to participate at board level or contribute to the overall betterment of the group, it hurts the strength of any well-intended association.

If individuals with limited time offer their services and are not given the chance to participate-they won't offer the next time so freely.

Associations can inspire collaboration, team work and solidarity when individual members are given equal footing. When associations are dictated to they falter little by little and the irony of "scratching ones head" need only be answered by reading through a years worth of minutes....was it quality or quantity that your association focused on...

I realize this point of view might not be the most popular side of evaluating association policy and growth but at what point do we as members of a "undefined" club stand up for progress.

***Submitted on 2 December 2004 by Jeanne Tapp, CAVS, Baptist Health System, Director Volunteer and Guest Services, Knoxville, TN USA***

I agree our professional organizations could use some improvement, but I don't agree they are as weak as Susan proposes. Our national organization, ASDVS does a good job with professional advancement and program. The problem is the expense. Those of us in healthcare have had budgets cut so many times that typically only one third of the membership attends national conferences. We have a regional organization staff by DVS's as volunteers - Southeastern Directors of Volunteer Services in Health Care Organizations (SDVSHO) and they do a fabulous job providing affordable conferences and professional advancement. One thing left out by all - many of us are responsible for multiple areas, so much make a difficult choice where to spend our education and advancement dollars.

***Submitted on 2 December 2004 by Nancy Renick, Speed Art Museum, Assistant Director of Education, Louisville KY US***

This is a great discussion. I think many of us do volunteer coordination as part of a range of job responsibilities, and it can be difficult to sort out which professional organizations to participate in and where to allocate our resources. I see professional volunteer management organizations as important as those for personnel managers, but not every organization sees volunteers as that valuable or that there are particular skills and training for volunteer coordinators.

***Submitted on 2 December 2004 anonymously from Ohio, USA***

Volunteer administration is my second career. I do not feel the same level of professionalism as in the field of education. The local volunteer administrators are willing, encouraging, helpful, positive people who focus on their immediate duties.

It was after I heard Susan Ellis speak at a convention (Kiwanis International) that I even thought about volunteer administration as a profession. There will be strength and growth in unity.

***Submitted on 2 December 2004 by Sabrina C. Clark, CAVS, Department of Veterans Affairs, Voluntary Service Specialist, Washington, DC USA***

While the solution to this problem lies with the DVS, I don't believe the "chicken or egg" question can be that clearly distinguished. There are issues on both sides that have affected our current state of affairs. I have had the wonderful opportunity to have visited many DOVIAs that have been extremely committed to professional development, in addition to finding tremendous support and resources in my home state association of Maryland. The critical piece of this issue for me is "accountability & credibility." If organizations are going to hire "professional" volunteer administrators, why don't they demand that they have the credentials? We come to this field from many different career fields and that's terrific, but if anyone can become a DVS, what makes us stand out? If the position is not just a set of tasks, than advertise it as such. Identify professional standards in job announcements. I don't see much of that. Finally, you mentioned that some other female-dominated professions have been successful in creating powerful associations, we have to remember that it did take a while---and perhaps that more men becoming involved in those professions pushed it along a bit. Who knows?

***Submitted on 2 December 2004 by Laurie Eytel, CVA, Fairfax County Dept. of Family Services, Volunteer Manager, Children, Youth and Family Division Fairfax, Virginia USA***

I can't speak for other associations, but my local chapter of AVA is the Northern Virginia AVA, and currently we have what I consider a strong group. We have several informational workshops several times a year, and the topics range in scope, so they can appeal to new and seasoned professionals in the field. We also are involved in a variety of other areas. However, maintaining and increasing membership is an on-going challenge.

*I feel the profession struggles for numerous reasons: not being "recognized" or taken seriously by employers overall (there are notable exceptions), lack of resources, and, as mentioned in the "Hot Topic", not enough "rallying" for our cause. This may be partly due to the type of people attracted to*

this field. I for one, enjoy being involved and helping others, but do not consider myself a politically active person who would be a good "lobbyist".

*What we can do to change things:* continue developing strong networking and training opportunities. Recruit to attract more who are "politically" inclined. Be persistent in engaging with our organizations to more actively support volunteerism - by relating HOW it benefits the organization AND them as individuals. A very real fact of life is salary - work proactively to have salaries more evenly match the skill set required for the work.

It won't happen over night, but persistence pays....

***Submitted on 1 December 2004 by Flynn Filler Davis, Clear Creek Care Center, Volunteer Coordinator, Westminster CO USA***

I'm a brand new volunteer coordinator for a long term care facility and I was very excited to find your website. If anyone would have some ideas of volunteer manager associations or other support networks in Colorado, I would love to hear about them. Thanks!

*Note from Kristin Floyd, Energize webmaster:* Energize maintains a [DOVIA directory](#) on our site and there are listings for Colorado. This directory depends on visitors posting information so we can't guarantee that all the organizations in any state are listed. We encourage everyone to help maintain this directory!

***Submitted on 1 December 2004 by Marjorie Moore, Minds Eye Information Service, RISE Project and Volunteer Development Coordinator Belleville, IL USA***

The St Louis CVD has been wonderful in teaching me what I need to know to be a volunteer coordinator. Yes, some of the topics of our meetings tend to focus more on skills that a newcomer to the field might find helpful, but we've also done meetings about HIPPA and other new topics in the past year. Its also the place that I can find the people in my area that have the years of knowledge to answer my more difficult questions.

Part of it is having the drive and desire to really get involved with the group. In the past year, I became a member of the Program Committee and then the Board. This may have made me feel easier about asking my cohorts for more information. Its hard to ask something to benefit you if you don't go out and make it a benefit to you.

Though I can't speak to any other group, I can tell you that the St Louis group is strong and growing.

***Submitted on 1 December 2004 by Tracy Nordbak, Downey Regional Medical Center, Director, Volunteer Services, Downey, CA USA***

I belong to a local organization that is very helpful. I can turn to the membership, via email or phone, with questions about anything and be confident that I will get multiple, helpful responses. My own participation at meetings is limited because, as has been noted many times before, most departments have limited staff. I myself am a one-person, part-time director. Available time out of the office is my

limiting factor.

Additionally, as a hospital DVS, budgets are shrinking. I am fortunate to still be able to attend conferences, but each year at budget time I hold my breath.

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#### PRIVACY STATEMENT

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