

[News and Hot Topics](#) » If Not Your Home Page, Then Where?

## If Not Your Home Page, Then Where?

By [Susan J. Ellis](#)

August  
2000

In all the discussion of the impact of Internet technology on volunteer management, one very important opportunity is often overlooked: making use of your organization's own Web site to foster volunteering.

If I surfed to your agency's home page right now, would I immediately see that volunteers are involved in any aspect of your work? Would I find information on what volunteer positions are open and how to apply if I'm interested? Is there an online application form? Would I at least find the name, e-mail address, and telephone number of someone to contact about volunteering? If not--you have work to do!

Yes, it's useful to register your volunteer opportunities with the online registries proliferating around the Web, but ultimately even those sources will direct prospective volunteers to your organization's own Web site. Will a visit to your site continue the recruitment process or become a dead end with no information?

The beauty of the online environment is that people self-screen their interests. If someone sees the volunteer "button" and doesn't care, fine. But when someone selects the volunteer page, offer further information for those who want to go into even more detail. By the time the person has read all the available pages, s/he will be well-informed and eager to express interest in volunteering. Here's an example of the multi-layered approach:

Home page: Mentions volunteer involvement and has a hotlink button for "more about volunteers."

Volunteer main page: An overview introduction to volunteers at your organization: what they do, who they are, how they are chosen. For each point, offer the choice to "learn more." Further clicking might show:

- actual job descriptions for openings available now
- a wish list of skills or schedules needed

- photos of volunteers at work (showing diversity of age, race, gender)
- data on volunteer achievements
- personal testimonials from volunteers in certain assignments
- specific ideas for students
- specific ideas for groups or teams and more!

Recruitment of new volunteers is not the only reason to design pages on your Web site. Think about the possibilities for recognition! For example, post photographs of volunteer activities immediately after they occur (or during--if you have a digital camera). Not only does this make those individual volunteers feel appreciated right away (why wait until the banquet months later?), but it reinforces the idea of volunteers as active, year-round contributors for any site visitor, including paid staff, donors, clients, and--yes--prospective volunteers. By the way, this changing kaleidoscope of photos also enlivens the site, avoiding the "cobWeb" effect of stagnant pages.

The Web site is also a place to communicate with current volunteers. Ask for some pages to be designated for "volunteers only," either by password entry or at least by specific URL address. Here is where you can post updates to the volunteer handbook, share materials from the last training event, offer tips from other volunteers, etc.

OK. If you feel proud of how you introduce volunteering on your Web site, please respond and give us the URL of your site so that everyone can go take a look. Make sure to tell us what to look for as we are browsing. If you utilize your site for other volunteer-related purposes, share those ideas, too. We want examples! That way, colleagues will have "ammunition" and samples for approaching reluctant Webmasters, executives, or other obstacles to Web visibility for volunteers.

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***Submitted on 2 March 2005 by Julie Sacharko, SPAN, Inc.***

***Web Developer, Denton, TX USA***

As an "accidental" webmaster, I have quickly tried to learn all I can about developing a website. I manage volunteers too, so I want to make the website very accessible to current and potential volunteers. Check out [www.span-transit.org](http://www.span-transit.org) and let me know if you have any suggestions for improving the website or increasing visibility.

*Posted August 28, 2000*

***Submitted by Sallie Davies, Executive Director, Volunteering Western Australia, Western Australia, Australia***

Our web site is designed to reach, in particular, people in Western Australia who want to become volunteers, are already volunteering and those who are working with volunteers. We also aim to bring the rest of the world to communities in Western Australia. The site has attracted many compliments and we welcome constructive feedback. Check it out at <http://www.volunteer.org.au>

August 26, 2000

**Submitted by Deirdre Araujo, Manager Volunteer Services Exploratorium, San Francisco, CA USA**

I spent time looking at other sites before working with a technical writing intern on ours. We went "live" before I was even close to satisfied (woes of perfectionism), but I was delighted that our webmaster was so supportive. Rather than throw mine out there for review just yet, I'd like to share one that I really enjoyed: [The Houston Museum of Natural Science Volunteer Page](#) All the best!

August 21, 2000

**Submitted by Dave Hinchey, DVS, Boston Medical Center, Massachusetts, USA**

Susan, Our website isn't interactive, but take a look.

August 10, 2000

**Submitted by John Walker, Central Baptist Hospital, KY**

I know our's is not the best, but I do think it is a good start. You can apply to volunteer online. Additionally, the summer teens can apply to volunteer at our hospital. The site has an automatic cutoff date to coincide with my deadline. About 1/4 of our teens applied online this year. Having very good luck with college students applying online. Our site is [www.centralbap.com](http://www.centralbap.com) You can find our info under Employment and Volunteer Opportunities. One other idea that worked fairly well this summer was communicating with our teens via email by setting up a distribution group at egroups.com. They were able to use this to try to find a sub, and I used it to quickly communicate to the group. About 90% of the young people had email. Worked well.

August 8, 2000

**Submitted by Amy Mayfield, Community Services Manager, Girl Scouts, WA, USA**

Our page is quite simple but it is used quite often. <https://www.girlscoutsww.org/en/for-volunteers/ways-to-volunteer.html>

August 8, 2000

**Submitted by Michelle Hendricks, Manager, Volunteer Services, WITF, PA**

I hesitated in forwarding our Website address because the Volunteer Services page is still "under construction". Our photo scrapbook is not up yet, but we think the page will prove to be a valuable tool in our recruitment, recognition and communication efforts. One of our most important factors was to ensure that there was a message from our President/CEO on the volunteer page. We wanted volunteers and prospective volunteers to know that they are respected at every level in our organization. You can check it out at <http://www.witf.org> (There's a Volunteer Services link to the left-hand column) I'm thrilled that so many new volunteers have been welcomed because of our Website, and the current volunteers love it as well. There are a lot of enhancements needed and coming forth, but I'd like to think we're off to a healthy start.

August 8, 2000

**Submitted by Michelle Jokic, Manager Geelong Volunteer Resource Centre, Victoria Australia**

I love surfing the web and have found some terrific volunteer agency websites. Your feedback and

hints for a better website are so timely. We are looking to refresh our site and log our database on the net for easier access for potential volunteers. I am hoping to also add a send a card section. Please visit us at <http://www.volunteeringgeelong.org.au/home/> and we welcome all feedback. Michelle Jokic Manager Geelong, Australia (Go Olympics 2000)

August 8, 2000

**Submitted by Jessica Hickman Schneider, Program Director, Compeer of Suburban Philadelphia, Pennsylvaniam USA**

I think that an organization's website is an integral part of the recruiting toolkit. We at Compeer of Suburban Philadelphia are very happy with the success of our site at <http://www.compeer-subphilly.org>. We have had many potential volunteers come to us through our site. We are an organization made entirely of volunteers, so we are always looking for innovative ways to attract people to our mission. I would welcome any comments or suggestions that people have for our site. Thanks!

August 8, 2000

**Submitted by Lori Hoffert, Volunteer Services Manager, Senior Friendship Centers, Inc., Sarasota, FL, USA**

I am pleased to have the opportunity to post volunteer positions on our web site at <http://www.friendshipcenters.org/>. I should mention that the volunteer opportunities page is updated monthly by a volunteer who works from home so other than the initial set up it's been no additional burden on the volunteer office.

August 5, 2000

**Submitted by SM Cheng, National Volunteer Centre, Singapore**

The National Voluntee Centre in Singapore recognizes that the web is a potentially powerful volunteer recruitment tool. Our website: [www.nvc.org.sg](http://www.nvc.org.sg) not only provides information for volunteers and volunteer host organisations, we have also specially build a search engine called Volunteer eMatch, that enables aspiring volunteers to search for volunteer opportunities and for organisations to look for volunteers based on factors such as interests, time commitment, activities, locality etc. We warmly invite you to browse through our website and try out Volunteer eMatch. We certainly welcome your feedback and suggestions.

August 4, 2000

**Submitted by Tom Carlson, Volunteer Coordinator, Trinity Medical Center, IL, USA**

One difficulty a Volunteer Services department faces (or any other ancillary department, for that matter) in a larger organization is being able to stake out some prime space near the top of the Home Page. One estimate says that only a paltry 10% of websurfers even bother to scroll down any given page they arrive at! Luckily, our webmaster makes regular changes so that the initial "screen shot" is always evolving and everyone gets a chance to be "featured", if only for a short time. For example, our department updates our current volunteer opportunities monthly. When I submit the new page, the webmaster puts a link under a banner reading "Recently Added or Updated Pages" which one sees immediately upon typing in the main URL (which is [www.trinityqc.com](http://www.trinityqc.com) by the way). Statistics for our

home page show that when a link or element is moved up the page from further down, the number of hits increases. Given the lack of scrolling going on out there, this seems natural. Again, I feel lucky we are offered this opportunity-I am sure that many others in my position fight a constant battle to gain visibility. Those folks can only keep up the good fight with what Susan calls "the reluctant Webmaster" to try reaching that wider audience of potential volunteers you know is out there. Cultivate your relationship with the Webmaster-you can bet that other departments do! By the way, we do have a permanent link to our Volunteer Services Home Page listed down the lefthand column under "Programs". From there we have lots more information with definitely more to come-check it out!

August 4, 2000

**Submitted by Kathy Cunningham, Manager, Volunteer Services, The Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, MD**

The Johns Hopkins Hospital has a special website for volunteer activities - <http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/>. We have added a junior page to the site this summer. It is a sort of summer newsletter with pictures and quotes from the student volunteers. We were even able to use the website for the staff to do volunteer evaluations by adding /evaluation.html. The sky is the limit for the Hopkins volunteer program. We've finally jumped with both feet into the 21st century and love it!

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