

Light givers

Lightgivers is a collection of prose, poems, and quotes about volunteers.

by
The Linkage Group, Inc.

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Lorraine Jensen is a published author of articles and poems about volunteerism and an advisor to professional volunteer administrators and auxiliaries. Her expertise includes the development and management of community based volunteer organizations, nursing home administration, communications as it relates to listening skills, and workshop and seminar leadership. Ms. Jensen has served on numerous boards of non-profit organizations and has appeared as a guest on radio and television talk shows on issues relevant to volunteerism. She is professionally trained in voice presentation for narrations, records, and promotional tape recordings.

Mary Lawrence is a published author and entrepreneur. She is the president of a human resources development and public relations firm, and publisher of a national bimonthly periodical on volunteer administration. Her distinguished accomplishments include public speaking engagements in the U.S. and abroad on issues relevant to volunteerism, the development and administration of volunteer programs, membership on professional association and non-profit boards of directors, and the design and implementation of public relations campaigns for private corporations. Ms. Lawrence is the recipient of numerous service and leadership awards in the field of volunteerism.

Introduction

An important aspect of administering volunteer programs is recognizing volunteers who give their time and talents to the clients and employees of an organization. In fact, expressing gratitude has become second nature to most of us who work with volunteers.

Sometimes, though, the words "thank you" don't convey the extent of our appreciation for volunteers. If only there were more hours in the day to sit down and put our thoughts on paper, thoughts that express our true feelings and views about these valued colleagues.

Those thoughts don't have to be aimed at showing thanks, either. Occasionally, we just want to sit and meditate about volunteers. We want to put everything in perspective again and rededicate ourselves to the job of providing them with the direction, leadership or support they need.

Lightgivers was written for persons who work with volunteers, and for anyone else who wants to dwell for awhile on the spirit of volunteerism. The authors hope that their sharing of experiences and ideas mirror your own sentiments of admiration and appreciation for volunteers.

Value

To say
I volunteer
For lack of
Something
Better to do

Is to say
My time
Has no value


To say
I volunteer
Therefore
I work
For you
For nothing

Is to say
The work
Is worthless

But to say
I choose
To give
My time
To your work

Is to say
We both
Have value

Lorraine Jensen



*Volunteers are an
organization's
biggest fans
and best critics.*

Mary Lawrence

Legacy

I'm going your way.
Let me help you along.
You seem to be tired
And my arms are strong.

Let me carry your load.
I'm up to the test.
I'll shoulder your burden
And give you a rest.

I was once troubled
With problems and grief
Til a friend held me closely
And offered relief.

And all that friend asked
Before he was gone
Was when I felt better
I pass his help on.

Anne Brandt

It Must Be Monday If You're Here

Did you know I mark the days
Not by their given names
But by your presence in our midst
The pride our work reclaims.

On Monday, Gertrude volunteers.
On Tuesday, Martha's here.
Wednesday splits the week in half
With Thelma's gentle cheer.

And so it goes with each of you
Who works but not for pay.
Knowing that you'll come each week
Helps define the day.

Anne Brandt

Teen Volunteers

I look at these young faces at orientation and in a brief flashback, I remember what it was like to be a teenager. So full of hope one minute and despair the next—never knowing what brought on the change. I remember feeling so old when I was so young, as if I had a special claim on maturity. Until I would make a mess of things and then I wanted to crawl back to childhood, feeling so young when I was so old.

I know these teens have the same feelings. I admire their willingness to take a risk and do something on their own. I know they have other commitments—school, church, sports, parents, friends, work—it's amazing to have them here at all. The work that we require has more structure, more rules, more schedules, more commitments. And yet, they are here, looking for an opportunity to be responsible, to gain experience, to stake a claim on maturity.

I make a commitment to them. To let them know what is expected of them, to hold them accountable for their actions, to assist them in a constructive manner, to enhance their self-esteem, and to thank them for being here. And when it is needed, I hope I will remember what it was like to feel so young when I was so old and wanted to crawl back to childhood.

Lorraine Jensen

*Volunteerism flourishes in a free society
among individuals who live by
the golden rule, yet see the
need for self-actualization.*

Mary Lawrence



The Quiet Ones

She comes in every week
Always five minutes early
Just enough time for a
Gracious good morning
And perhaps a few moments
Of polite chatter

He comes in every week
Checking his watch with
The clock in the office
And offers to do an errand
Because he's going that way
Anyhow, but I know he's not

They come in every week
Quietly keeping their commitment
Their names are never in the paper
They don't serve on committees
They don't contribute large
Sums of money to the fund drive

They come in every week
Every month, every year
Quietly doing what they
Agreed to do
Quietly doing
So much more

Lorraine Jensen

Devotion

She's one of those rare volunteers. She learned the technical aspects of her job and understands the importance of structure and order. She sees the bigger picture, too, and knows that her contribution benefits the nursing home's bottom line.

But there's more to her involvement. It has to do with her belief that she is truly needed; that indeed, her work has value.

Her success as a volunteer can be attributed to the fact that she knows from experience what people need the most, whether they're sick or elderly or neither. Therefore, she treats everyone with dignity and warmth.

Moreover, she views her commitment as being first to the client and secondly the organization. She considers her absence from work initially in terms of how it will affect the residents, then the staff members. She has discovered that when looked at in this way, she better honors her work schedule.

For example, one day not long ago she was suffering from a pulled back muscle. I wasn't surprised to learn she volunteered in spite of it. When I asked her why she went to work she simply said, "Oh, I thought about those sweet old people and how much they need someone to care about them, and I just had to go."

Those sweet old people, I thought. I've heard about how demanding and insensitive a few of them are, even towards her. Those types don't discourage her, though. She manages to bring out the best in others even on their worst days.

Whenever I doubt that altruism exists, she comes to mind. Partly because she's the way she is, partly because her humility keeps her motives for volunteering a secret from everyone—except maybe me.

Mary Lawrence

Being With You

Being with you is good for us.
Blessed by your generosity,
We are steadfast in our appreciation
Of your service and loyalty.

Sometimes we don't understand
Why you give so much
And ask so little in return.
What moves you to unselfish deeds?


Can we, through knowing you
Be better persons ourselves?
It's the little things you do
That make the difference here.

The warmth of your smile
The soft touch of your hand on tired shoulders
Uplifts the patients, and lightens our load.
What would we do without you?

It is an honor knowing you.
Although we may not always show
How much we care for you
Or how thankful we really are.

Along with us, give yourself much credit
For the good you do here.
Be proud. Carry on,
At our sides, as our Friends.

Mary Lawrence



*Volunteerism is the manifestation of an attitude that
breathes selfless activity into certain lives.*

Mary Lawrence

A Modern Fable

It's a closely guarded secret but before God sends each new bundle of joy to Earth, He asks the baby boy or girl how he or she wants to spread a bit of heaven here below.

The list of ways the baby chooses from is long and varied. It includes, among others, being a blood donor, a tour guide, a Scout leader, a lunchroom mother, a Big Brother, a Red Cross worker, a church canvasser, a campaign manager, a Sunday school teacher, a tutor, a Meals-on-Wheels driver, a Lion, a Rotarian, or an Auxilian.

After the baby picks, God writes the choice in a big loose leaf binder marked *Service to Mankind*.

In time, the baby grows up and keeps the promise made years before.

And that's how the world continues to be populated by volunteers!

Anne Brandt

First Day

Take the time to look this way
Tell me what you see
A volunteer in uniform?
A willing spirit...free?

Can you see I'm scared inside
Despite my friendly face?
A common apprehension,
Being fearful of mistakes.

I think I will remember
What I learned last week
When I had a trainer
To show me the technique.

But now, you see, I am alone
Last week seems like last year.
What happened to my confidence?
What am I doing here?

If you can pause a moment
To help me feel at home
I know I will remember
All that I was shown.

Then I'll be here next week
My apprehension past
Because you cared my first day
To make it not my last.

Lorraine Jensen

What is a Volunteer?

A volunteer is a special human being who helps others get a job done—any job—without being on the payroll.

Volunteers are found among both men and women, the young and old, the large and small, the educated and the not-so-educated. They appear in all races, ethnic groups, social levels, and economic classes.

As children, volunteers-in-training are sometimes called Brownies or Scouts. As they get older, they can become volunteers, Auxilians, Guild members, inservice volunteers, even retirees in such programs as R.S.V.P.

Volunteers are found helping others in many places. They help children in schools, patients in hospitals, and residents in nursing homes. They help in libraries, churches, social service organizations, community activities, and even industry.

While they are not identifiable by appearance, by their smiles you shall know them. They are also recognized by their willingness to jump into the task at hand.

Nobody rolls up their sleeves faster, uses more elbow grease, and gets the job done better. Volunteers are adept at many things, especially ones the rest of us don't get around to doing.

They can file, stuff, count, sort, collect, distribute, bargain, organize, supervise, manage. Sometimes they have sharpened their skills by years in the labor force, and their experiences and talents represent tremendous national resources usually available for the asking.

Volunteers have the tenacity of mountain goats, the gentleness of lambs, the strength of oxen, the speed of impalas, the dependability of work horses, and the eagerness of new puppies. If we're comparing them to animals, we must also note they are a breed apart.

Volunteers can cram more into an hour with less effort. They can raise funds, lower costs, spread enthusiasm, reduce work loads, ease pressure, and warm hearts. They are pros at soothing, cajoling, explaining, describing, convincing, and adapting.

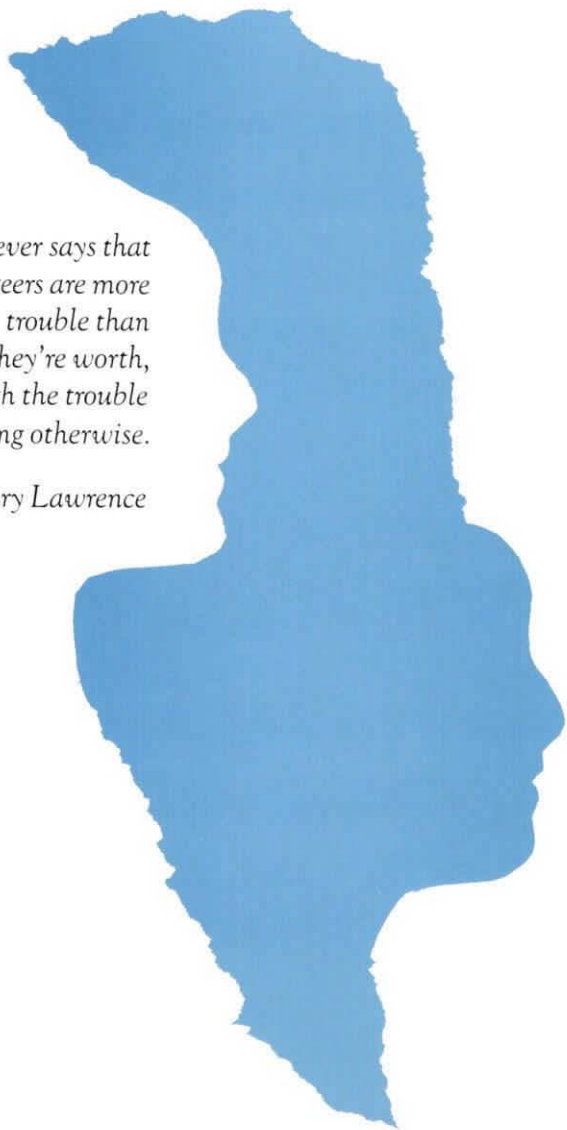
Volunteers often arrive just when the stress is greatest, the moment bleakest, the work hardest, the light in the tunnel the farthest away.

Then when the work is finished, try to say "Thank You" to a volunteer and he or she is apt to say, instead of the perfunctory "You're Welcome": "The pleasure was all mine!"

Anne Brandt

*Whoever says that
volunteers are more
trouble than
they're worth,
is worth the trouble
of convincing otherwise.*

Mary Lawrence



Lightgivers

Dayspring drenches the chamber
Where the frail reside
And to the sleepless, lunar rays
Bring solace in futility.

The fettered are buoyed
In the dint of the watchtower
And near a hearth, the hollow
Find nourishment at dusk.

In an ebony universe
The blind envision hope
And the pale ones brighten
At the sight of a bouquet.

The cumbers of the penniless
Ease before the flesh is spent
And the searchlamp finds
The cherub's tender face.

The taper's speck near breathless
Ignites benevolence
And the spirits of those who meet
The Lightgivers.

Mary Lawrence

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