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BUILDING  
PARTNERSHIPS



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The President's  
Task Force on  
Private Sector  
Initiatives

# **VOLUNTEERS: A VALUABLE RESOURCE**

**PREPARED FOR POLICY MAKERS**

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The President's Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives

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The President's Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives was established by President Reagan in December 1981 to help encourage more private contributions of both human and financial resources to the progress of America's communities. Chaired by C. William Verity, Jr., the Task Force included 44 members and 11 committees. The Committee on Marshalling Human Resources, Frank Pace, Jr., chairman, set an agenda to encourage increased commitment, recruitment, placement, and management of volunteers in community service, and to enhance the atmosphere for volunteering. The following was prepared by the committee specifically for the use of policy makers. Section six lists the people and the organizations that contributed their valuable time and talents to this project.

The development of this publication was directed by Susan C. Kudlow, on loan from Call For Action, Inc., and was written by Thomazine Shanahan.

December 1982



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**Volunteerism Resource Center**  
at ENERGIZE ASSOCIATES  
5450 Wissaminckon Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19144

# VOLUNTEERING: THE POLICY MAKER'S ROLE

**V**olunteering in the United States is alive, healthy, and growing. Like the democracy it helped to give us, though, volunteering must be actively preserved and protected. It doesn't just happen.

Volunteering grows out of the leadership of creative, committed people who believe that it is possible to solve problems in ways that help people in need become independent and self-sufficient.

Much of this leadership comes from individual volunteer leaders and from those organizations at the local, state, and national levels which seek to promote more effective volunteer involvement.

But there is also an important role to be played by elected officials and those in key decision-making and resource-allocation roles in both the private and the public sectors.

## **Elected officials can help increase public awareness of the importance of volunteering.**

- President Ronald Reagan has chosen to do so through sponsorship of The President's Volunteer Action Awards Program.

- Governor James Hunt of North Carolina spends an hour a week tutoring at a Raleigh high school.
- In 12 states, governors give awards to outstanding volunteers, as do innumerable mayors.
- Many members of Congress help call attention to volunteers through their newsletters, speeches, and insertions in the Congressional Record.
- Most importantly, public officials can help give legitimacy to the idea that it is the right and responsibility of citizens to participate fully in the lives of their communities.

## **Public officials can recognize that volunteering is a legitimate area of public policy discussion.**

- Government can both remove impediments and create incentives for people to get involved.
- Congress is currently considering legislation to increase the tax deduction for mileage expenses incurred by volunteers to a level equal to that given paid workers.
- Bills have been introduced to remove the blanket restriction on volunteer involvement in federal agencies.
- Issues for further consideration include state regulations that re-

strict the volunteer involvement of those drawing unemployment benefits, and the need to alleviate possible liability problems for volunteers.

## **Public officials can understand the role government has played in supporting volunteering and the structures through which people volunteer.**

- The allocation of public resources in support of programs that maximize volunteer involvement—for example, hospices or neighborhood associations—can stimulate people to volunteer.
- Government has funded demonstration and pilot programs, assisted in the replication of successful programs, and supported technical assistance and training programs.
- Government has also been a heavy user of volunteers—through the stipended full-time and part-time programs at ACTION and the Peace Corps, in the National Park Service, in veterans' programs, in counseling small businesses, and in the Department of Agriculture.
- Many states, counties, and cities have established publicly supported offices of volunteer services.

*"The volunteer spirit is still alive and well in America."*

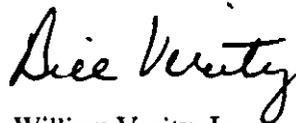
PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN

**Public officials can accept responsibility for helping to maintain and protect the independence of voluntary organizations.**

- Through legislation and regulation, public officials set the pattern for the behavior of government agencies.
- Volunteering could not survive in a hostile public environment in which the desire for dominance by government overwhelmed the urges of people to help themselves and others in the ways they choose.
- If the involvement of Americans as volunteers insures the survival of our democratic institutions, then those institutions must act to preserve the opportunity and ability of citizens to volunteer.

**T**he following is intended as a supplement to your knowledge of the world of volunteering. Included are questions and answers, a fact sheet, quotations about volunteering from American leaders, suggested remarks, and acknowledgments.

The publication was produced by the Committee on Marshalling Human Resources of The President's Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives, assisted by an advisory group comprised of representatives from volunteer organizations, business, and organized labor.



C. William Verity, Jr.  
Chairman  
The President's Task Force on  
Private Sector Initiatives



Frank Pace, Jr.  
Chairman  
The Committee on Marshalling  
Human Resources

# THE WORLD OF VOLUNTEERING: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## Why are volunteers important in the life of a community?

- Volunteers are a cost-effective supplement to paid helpers, enabling both public and private sector agencies and organizations to reach more people with better services at less cost and allowing more paid helpers to better focus their professional skills and energies.
- Although not “free,” in that they require appropriate management and support structures, volunteer programs provide services valued at many times the dollars invested.
- Volunteers are an important way of humanizing services, reducing bureaucratic obstacles between consumers and the help they need.
- Through their volunteer involvement, citizens learn more about community needs and resources, and serve as communications links to the entire community.
- Volunteering enables citizens to meet their own needs and to create those self-help and mutual aid efforts that are most appropriate and useful.
- The sheer number of volunteers is staggering. According to the most recent Gallup study, over 80 million Americans volun-

teered between March 1980 and March 1981.

## How has volunteering changed in recent years?

- More Americans than ever before are volunteering in self-help and mutual assistance efforts.
- Volunteering increasingly is an activity involving those at either end of the age spectrum.
- Volunteering is being seen as an integral part of a person’s life-long work experience, integrating unpaid work with paid work.
- Volunteerism is increasingly being used as a vehicle for mainstreaming into society those individuals who had formerly been perceived as recipients of service.
- There has grown up around volunteering a whole army of organizations, scholars, trainers, consultants, and individual leaders. Volunteer service administration is now recognized as a true profession with ethics and standards.

## What is volunteering?

Volunteering is the voluntary giving of time and talents to deliver services or perform tasks with no direct financial compensation expected. Volunteering includes the participation of citizens in the direct delivery of service to others; citizen action groups; advocacy for causes, groups, or individuals; participation

in the governance of both private and public agencies; self-help and mutual aid endeavors; and a broad range of informal helping activities.

## Are voluntarism and volunteerism the same thing?

Not exactly. When people talk about voluntarism, they may or may not be talking about volunteers, because not all voluntary organizations work with volunteers. However, the word “volunteerism,” now found in dictionaries, refers solely to volunteering.

## Why do people volunteer?

- People volunteer out of a wide range of complex motives. They feel a need to give as well as to receive. And it is the balance between selflessness and selfishness that is essential to sustain the interest of volunteers.
- People volunteer because they see a need and try to fill it—a need for schools, for libraries, for food and clothing, for health and medical services, for beauty and culture.
- People volunteer to satisfy a universal human need for companionship. The satisfaction of working with others on a common goal, and the sense of belonging that such involvement brings, are central to the volunteer experience.

*“And so, my fellow Americans,  
ask not what your country can do for you;  
ask what you can do for your country.”*

PRESIDENT JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY

- People volunteer because they want to help make a change in some aspect of life—a political change, a personal change, a social change, an environmental change. *Or*, people volunteer because they want to preserve what already exists, and to maintain control over their own environments.
- People volunteer because volunteering provides an educational experience available nowhere else.

#### **What does the volunteer get from the experience?**

Besides companionship, volunteers frequently report that they acquire information and skills, a break from the routines of paid work, and a sense of responsibility, of being a contributing member of a community.

#### **Who is a volunteer?**

Almost everyone is a volunteer at some time in his or her life. Volunteers come from every segment of society, and may include:

- The retired newspaper editor who teaches swimming to the handicapped.
- The business executive who serves on the board of directors of a local nonprofit.
- The family that participates in their neighborhood crime watch.
- The housewife who works at her polling place on election day.
- The citizen who circulates a petition aimed at getting the city to put “no parking” signs on residential streets.
- The usher at church or synagogue.
- The teenager who runs in a marathon to benefit medical research.

#### **Do older Americans volunteer?**

Yes, they do. A 1981 survey conducted by the American Association of Retired Persons showed that 30 percent of Americans over 55 were serving as volunteers. Of those not volunteering, 20 percent said they were interested in doing so. In broad terms, there are nearly 25 million potential older volunteers, but at present older Americans volunteer in numbers far less than those of other age groups.

#### **Why don't more older Americans volunteer?**

Mostly because no one asks them. This may be in part because of mistaken perceptions about aging. It may also be because older Americans frequently live on limited incomes, have reduced access to transportation, and are sometimes reluctant to leave their homes. However, today's generation of older Americans is the largest, best-educated, most physically able, and longest-

lived older population ever known and thus, if they can be reached and encouraged, a potential source of more volunteers.

#### **Do young people volunteer?**

Yes. The 1981 Gallup survey indicates that last year 7.7 million young people aged 14-17, or 53 percent, volunteered.

#### **What kinds of volunteer jobs do young people do well?**

When they are treated seriously as responsible people, and are given appropriate training and supervision, young people can do many of the volunteer jobs that adults can do.

#### **Why is it important to challenge young people to volunteer?**

Volunteering gives young people meaningful work experience and smoothes the transition from youth to adulthood. Volunteering provides:

- The opportunity to explore career options.
- The opportunity to reinforce and apply the basic skills acquired in academic work, and to gain an understanding of effective work habits.
- The opportunity to make decisions.
- The opportunity to interact with adults.

- The opportunity to serve the community and thereby contribute to the welfare of others.
- The opportunity to test values.

Volunteering provides a means through which young people can explore, question, and decide what it is they wish to be. As a training experience in citizenship, youth volunteering becomes a vital investment in our nation's future.

#### **How do neighborhood groups fit into volunteering?**

The biggest growth in recent years within the volunteer community has been in the area of neighborhood organizations. Such efforts include local crime prevention, clean-up campaigns, child-care services, and housing and street repair. Neighborhood-based volunteering by its nature can be flexible and quickly responsive to needs that arise. Ad hoc groups can form to deal with a specific problem and disperse when that project is completed. Self-help and advocacy groups frequently operate on the neighborhood level, as do community partnerships, which combine private and public resources.

#### **Are there volunteers in government?**

Yes, there are volunteers at all levels of government—local, state, and national. While no figures exist on the exact number of volunteers

involved in Federal agencies, the involvement is extensive in those agencies permitted by law to work with volunteers. Such agencies include the Department of Agriculture, ACTION, the National Park Service, the Small Business Administration, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the Veterans Administration. At the local and state levels, people volunteer through extension services.

#### **Do people who have paid jobs volunteer?**

Yes. A 1981 Gallup survey shows that in fact 55 percent of full-time employed people, both *men* and *women*, are volunteers.

#### **But isn't it true that because more women are working at paid jobs, they are no longer volunteering?**

Apparently not. All evidence suggests that working women continue to volunteer. As the role of women has changed, however, so have their requirements for their volunteer work. More flexibility in scheduling, assignments closer to home, and volunteer activities which mothers can share with their children are among the options which allow volunteering to continue to be attractive to women.

#### **Is it true that individuals can receive credit on resumes for volunteer work?**

Yes, increasingly employers recognize the valuable experience that

volunteer work represents. Largely through the work of a single volunteer, Ruth March of Los Angeles, a growing list of employers in both the private and public sector recognize such experience when considering job applicants. Using and extending the concept and basic I CAN materials developed by the Council of National Organizations for Adult Education (CNO), a coalition of national voluntary organizations, working under the leadership of the American Red Cross, has created a special training program to help volunteers identify the skills they have gained. Some colleges are giving academic credit for documented learning from volunteer experience as well.

#### **How can volunteering in the workplace be encouraged?**

In many ways. In fact, both business and organized labor have made significant efforts to increase volunteer opportunities for their workers.

#### **How has business done this?**

More and more corporations, both large multinationals and small local businesses, have sought ways to encourage and facilitate the involvement of their employees in volunteer community service activities. Some 400 corporations have formal volunteer programs which:

- Make information about community volunteer opportunities

available to employees via in-house publications, bulletin board notices, flyers, and clearinghouses within the company which match individual employees with community volunteer jobs.

- Allow nonprofit groups to recruit employees on company premises, as at volunteer fairs.
- Grant forms of released time to employees who wish to volunteer during regular working hours.
- Give recognition to employees who volunteer.

#### **How has organized labor done this?**

Organized labor has encouraged its members to volunteer through its community service programs, which include a wide range of human and social service activities, as well as fundraising. Specifically, the AFL-CIO:

- Presents the George Meany Scouting Award.
- Documents volunteer activity through union newspapers, pamphlets, and other publications.
- Provides one-third of the blood contributed to the American Red Cross in the United States annually.

- Is an active participant and contributor to the volunteering and fundraising activities of major voluntary organizations and public broadcasting.
- Provides over 300 full-time community service staff in 196 communities, all of whom work with volunteers and stimulate volunteer activities.
- Volunteer activities take place through local central labor councils and individual local unions.

#### **Clearly, volunteers have a role in both the private and public sectors. How, then, are they actually integrated into formal work settings?**

- In many formal settings, volunteer staffs are headed by a volunteer coordinator, a director of volunteers, or a volunteer administrator. This position may be full-time or part-time, paid or unpaid, but in most cases will include recruiting, placing, training, supervising, and evaluating volunteers, and planning volunteer activity, for any organizations in which volunteers participate.
- Both volunteers and paid staff are important; however, problems arise between them when their respective roles are not clearly defined.

- In volunteer organizations, "professional" usually refers to paid staff. The distinction is made on the basis of remuneration, not of skill or competence. Misuse of the term adds strain to the relationship between paid staff and volunteers, because many volunteers are, both by occupation and by the kinds of volunteer work they do, professional in both their skills and their commitment. An attempt to substitute the term "paid staff" for "professional" would represent a step toward easing what is often an ambiguous relationship.

#### **Is volunteering free?**

Not completely. Except in the most informal ad hoc situations, the volunteering requires some financial backing ranging from small out-of-pocket expenses to formal management and support structures. Nevertheless the dollars spent to support volunteering are returned many times over—volunteers contribute over \$64 billion in service to our economy a year!

#### **Are volunteers the answer to all of America's social problems?**

No. While it's important to recognize the role volunteers *can* play in problem solving—a role which has often been underestimated—it is also necessary to avoid unrealistic expectations.

# WHO VOLUNTEERS? A STATISTICAL SURVEY

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## Fact Sheet VOLUNTEERING IN AMERICA

### 1. HOW MANY VOLUNTEERS ARE THERE?

According to a 1981 survey by the Gallup Organization, approximately 84 million Americans (52% of the adult population) typically donate some part of their time as volunteers. Of this 84 million, about 55 million (31%) donate more than 100 hours of their time during the year. A similar percentage of volunteer participation is found among American teenagers.

The total amount of volunteer time in 1981 is estimated to be about 8.4 billion hours, with an estimated value of over \$64 billion.

### 2. WHAT KINDS OF PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

Almost everyone. Volunteers clearly come from all areas of society; the volunteer population contains diverse people from all areas, ages, races, and income levels. The demographic picture of American volunteers is as follows:

*"It is important to test public officials and candidates about their understanding of volunteerism. Those who don't understand the historic and other values of volunteering are not adequately equipped to serve in public office."*

SENATOR DAVE DURENBERGER

## Demographic Analysis of Type of Volunteer\*

	Volun- teer Percent	Not Volun- teer Percent	Total Percent	Number of Inter- views
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	47	53	100	(808)
Female	56	44	100	(793)
<b>Age</b>				
14-17	53	47	100	(152)
18-24	54	46	100	(205)
25-44	59	41	100	(633)
45-54	55	45	100	(244)
55-64	45	55	100	(237)
65 and Older	37	63	100	(276)
<b>Race</b>				
White	54	46	100	(1406)
Non-White	41	59	100	(195)
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Married	53	47	100	(1081)
Single	58	42	100	(263)
Widowed/Divorced/ Separated	42	58	100	(257)
<b>Employment Status</b>				
Total Employed	57	43	100	(927)
Employed				
Full-Time	55	45	100	(753)
Part-Time	65	35	100	(174)
Not Employed	45	55	100	(651)
<b>Annual Household Income</b>				
Under \$4,000	40	60	100	(91)
\$4,000-\$6,999	36	64	100	(186)
\$7,000-\$9,999	35	65	100	(104)
\$10,000-\$14,999	46	54	100	(278)
\$15,000-\$19,999	53	47	100	(222)
\$20,000 and Over	63	37	100	(711)
\$40,000 and Over	62	38	100	(155)

	Volun- teer Percent	Not Volun- teer Percent	Total Percent	Number of Inter- views
<b>Education</b>				
College	75	25	100	(284)
Some College	65	35	100	(363)
High School				
Graduate	54	46	100	(531)
Some High School	31	69	100	(243)
Grade School	26	74	100	(176)
<b>Child Under 18 in House</b>				
Yes	57	43	100	(716)
No	48	52	100	(873)
<b>Region</b>				
East	51	49	100	(448)
Midwest	54	46	100	(446)
South	48	52	100	(430)
West	57	43	100	(277)
<b>City Size</b>				
Metropolitan	46	54	100	(483)
Suburb	55	45	100	(607)
Non-SMSA	55	45	100	(511)
<b>Religion</b>				
Protestant	50	50	100	(927)
Catholic	52	48	100	(450)
Jewish	64	36	100	(36)
<b>Household Size</b>				
One	41	59	100	(189)
Two	47	53	100	(485)
Three	55	45	100	(330)
Four and Over	59	41	100	(580)

\*All demographics except age are based on adult sample only.

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### 3. IN WHAT AREAS DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

Volunteers are active in all areas of community life. Because many people volunteer in more than one area at a time, the following breakdown of volunteer participation adds up to more than 100 percent:

Of all Americans:

- 23 percent volunteer in Informal Ways or Alone
- 19 percent volunteer in Religion
- 12 percent volunteer in Health
- 12 percent volunteer in Education
- 7 percent volunteer in Recreation
- 6 percent volunteer in Citizenship
- 6 percent volunteer in Community Action
- 6 percent volunteer in Work-Related Areas
- 6 percent volunteer in Politics
- 6 percent volunteer in General Fund Raising
- 5 percent volunteer in Social Welfare
- 3 percent volunteer in Arts/Culture
- 1 percent volunteer in Justice

Source: *Americans Volunteer 1981*, a survey conducted by the Gallup Organization, Inc. for Independent Sector, June 1981.

For more information about the Gallup study, contact:

Independent Sector  
1828 L Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036

VOLUNTEER: National Center for Citizen Involvement  
1111 North 19th Street  
Suite 500  
Arlington, VA 22209

# WHAT AMERICA'S LEADERS SAY ABOUT VOLUNTEERING:

## SELECTED QUOTATIONS

### GOVERNMENT

"The volunteer spirit is still alive and well in America."

President Ronald Reagan

"A volunteer is a person who can see what others cannot see; who can feel what most do not feel. Often, such gifted persons do not think of themselves as volunteers, but as citizens—citizens in the fullest sense: partners in civilization."

Vice President George Bush

"I shall never fail to be amazed at the innate goodness of Americans. They have only to read of a tragedy, of a need, of someone crying out for help, and they immediately offer a hand."

Nancy Reagan

"And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

President John Fitzgerald Kennedy

"It is important to test public officials and candidates about their understanding of volunteerism. Those who don't understand the historic and other values of volunteering are not adequately equipped to serve in public office."

Senator Dave Durenberger

### THE PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVES

"I believe that the future social needs of the United States will depend on a rekindling of a sense of community in our nation where people from all walks of life address the economic and social development of their communities in a coordinated way. More than ever before, this will require the time, talents, and money of volunteers."

C. William Verity, Jr., Chairman,  
President's Task Force on Private  
Sector Initiatives

"It is important that makers of public policy understand and reinforce the idea that volunteering is an essential part of the fabric of American society. While we can improve our recruiting, training, placement, and evaluation of volunteers, we cannot replace their contributions to this country."

Frank Pace, Jr., Chairman and  
CEO, National Executive Service  
Corps.

"The uniqueness of this nation's voluntary activity rests on more than an accumulation of individual actions. It is an organized cooperative effort by the public sector and the private sector directed at solving or alleviating social problems at the community level."

William Aramony, President,  
United Way of America

“Traditionally, we have spent enormous energy exhorting the individual to act responsibly and very little energy designing the kind of society in which he *can* act responsibly. A society built to man’s measure will not just be one that serves but one that gives him the opportunity to serve.”

John Gardner, Chairman,  
Independent Sector

“Volunteerism is the price of freedom. To be free we must individually refuse to take without giving, and through voluntary caring and sharing, blend our individual good with the needs of others and the public good, thus improving the common welfare.”

George Romney, Chairman,  
VOLUNTEER: National Center  
for Citizen Involvement

“The time for the volunteer is here. The energy, the excitement, the dedication, and the skills that he or she brings to the job are vital if we are to make this nation and its services more responsive to the needs of every citizen.”

Ellen Sulzberger Straus, President,  
WMCA Radio

“Now, more than ever, our country needs the selfless concern—and the time and talents of volunteers of all ages. We must reach to build

new partnerships between citizen groups, local agencies, religious organizations, business and local government. We must find ways to mobilize new resources and talents to solve local problems. This is not a time for critics and cynics. This is a time for positive thinkers—for doers.”

Thomas H. Wyman, President and  
CEO, CBS, Inc.

## THE VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY

“Volunteering is a basic ingredient of our democracy. . . . An elevated sense of identity would do more for the volunteer movement than anything else.”

Arnold Barach  
Retired Editor of *Changing Times*

“History teaches that Americans care enough to get involved. As volunteers they identify problems, seek solutions and, above all, act. This is the legacy and the future of participatory democracy, or rather ‘initiatory’ democracy.”

Susan J. Ellis  
*By The People*

“Volunteering is the rent that is paid for occupying the privileged posi-

tion of free men and women in this democratic society.”

Martin L. Koehneke  
Aid Association for Lutherans

“Some people say it is not stylish for women to do volunteer work anymore. They say women now have to be paid. But if you look at women in high-level decision-making positions, almost all of them started out with very active volunteer jobs.”

Mary Helen Matlick  
Director of Community Services  
New Orleans, Louisiana

“Volunteerism is a focusing force of the conscience of people. Volunteers, through their actions, concentrate attention on crucial values, unmet needs, and growing problems. It is the free conscience of a pluralistic society.”

Wayne D. Rydberg  
Aid Association for Lutherans

“The beauty is that we have volunteers on both sides of every issue. . . . If we ever lose that, we’ve lost what makes America great, because I have a right to put my effort, my time, my energy, without pay, for or against any issue.”

Marlene Wilson  
Trainer, Management Consultant

Minnesota Office on Volunteer Services  
500 Rice Street  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

## THE CORPORATE COMMUNITY

"Corporate responsibility is more than a social obligation or a luxury that business can or cannot afford. It is a necessary commitment in our own interest. Contributions alone will no longer suffice. Corporations will have to exert their influence, and their people must become personally involved."

Archie R. Boe  
President, Sears Roebuck

"The prosperity of the corporation is directly tied to the well-being of the community. To solve today's social problems, we need corporate involvement as well as the efforts of individual employees."

James L. Ketelsen  
Chairman and CEO Tenneco, Inc.

"Employees at all levels can be tremendously effective in seeing that all our private sector institutions stay healthy."

Robert McClements, Jr.  
President and Chief Operating Officer  
Sun Company

"We all recognize that today's challenges are greater than those of the past and that they call for even greater contributions. There is a

long list of the ways we can respond—in contributing funds, in volunteerism, in personal and corporate involvement in how we develop the criteria for corporate investments."

Richard R. Shinn  
Chairman and CEO  
Metropolitan Life Insurance Company

## OTHER VOICES

"The voluntary association of free men and women in organizations of their own choosing for mutually beneficial objectives lies at the heart of our democratic society."

AFL-CIO Convention, 1969

"Volunteerism is not only beneficial to society, it is absolutely essential—in fact, it is our best hope for the future."

George Gallup, Jr.  
Vice Chairman, The Gallup Organization

"One of the sectors has money, one has power, and we have people. . . . The money and the power can't do much without the people."

Sydney J. Harris  
Journalist

"History afforded no other example of so great a work of usefulness

extemporized by the spontaneous self-devotion and organizing genius of people altogether independent of the government."

John Stuart Mill  
Philosopher

"These Americans are the most peculiar people in the world. You'll not believe me when I tell you how they behave. In a local community in their country a citizen may conceive of some need which is not being met. What does he do? He goes across the street and discusses it with his neighbor. Then what happens? A committee comes into existence and the committee begins functioning in behalf of the need."

Alexis de Tocqueville  
French Statesman

"That best portion of a good man's life, his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love."

William Wordsworth  
Poet

# SUGGESTED REMARKS

## THE HIDDEN FACE OF VOLUNTEERING

### WHAT . . . LIFE WITHOUT VOLUNTEERS?

The following suggested remarks, "The Hidden Face of Volunteering," and "What . . . Life Without Volunteers?," are sample speeches. They were written by the staff of the Committee on Marshalling Human Resources, and have never been delivered. They are included simply to provide inspiration.

#### THE HIDDEN FACE OF VOLUNTEERING

All of us would agree that volunteering is a good thing to do. If someone asked us why, we'd probably answer "because it's a way to help other people," or "because it's a way to solve problems." Both these statements are true. Volunteering *is* a way to help other people, to feel useful, and to help solve many kinds of individual, community, and national problems. But there's another side of volunteering, a hidden side that no one talks about. In fact, it's a very well-kept secret. Everyone who volunteers knows about it, even if no one will say so.

The secret is this: volunteering is good for the volunteer.

Volunteering is good for the volunteer because of the contact it provides with other people—the companionship, the friendship, the

fellowship of working with others on a common goal. No one knows this better than the young mother at home with small children, or the newly-retired worker who no longer goes out to an office every day. Both share a sense of isolation from the world outside. And both are among the most likely segments of our society to volunteer—for reasons that may be as simple as that need for companionship that we all share.

Volunteering also offers a way to exercise skills, talents, and experience not used in regular paid jobs or in other areas of life. Many of us who have found that paid work doesn't meet all our needs, do find that volunteering offers an opportunity to pursue personal goals and delve into areas of personal interest. The computer programmer who spends her days working with machines may welcome the change of pace that coaching a girls' soccer team provides. The accountant who juggles numbers may find an outlet for his love of art by serving as a tour guide at the local museum on Saturdays.

Volunteering offers a chance to learn new skills as well. Many a woman can attest that the skills she acquired through years of volunteering when her children were young—skills in organizing, managing, and fundraising, for example—were exactly the skills that got her

hired for a paid position once those children were grown and she was ready to resume an interrupted career or to begin a new one.

Someone said recently that volunteering is a form of continuing education. That certainly can be true for the volunteer who consciously chooses to volunteer in ways that provide opportunities for learning throughout a lifetime. Most of us discover that learning doesn't stop when our formal schooling comes to an end. Indeed, the healthiest, most active adults continue to learn until they die. One of the best ways to insure this is to volunteer intelligently—that is, to choose the areas we want more knowledge about, and then to immerse ourselves in volunteer work relating to that subject.

The possibilities are endless—volunteering on a rescue squad teaches us emergency medical techniques, working for our political party at the polls expands our understanding of how the political process works, the training given those who staff emergency "hot lines" provides a wealth of information about counseling and human relations. Many museums give intensive training courses for their docents or guides—in a large city the subjects available could include history, architecture, art, science, transportation. Serving on a school

*"The voluntary association of free men and women in organizations of their own choosing for mutually beneficial objectives lies at the heart of our democratic society."*

AFL-CIO CONVENTION

board keeps us in touch with the changing field of education. Volunteering truly is a path to life-long learning.

We live in a mobile society. Americans move more than anybody—it's in our blood, starting with our immigrant and pioneer ancestors. Moving can be tough—even within the same country. In many ways it means starting all over again. Volunteering can ease that transition. What better way to get to know new people and a new community than by making a phone call, offering your services, and getting involved in a volunteer project? Again, this is something that people rarely talk about, but all volunteers who move frequently know.

The last way that volunteering is good for the volunteer is perhaps the hardest way to describe. It is that when you volunteer, you begin to claim power over your life. That is, through thoughtful, serious volunteering, people gain the information, the skills, and the relationships needed to understand how the world works, and to participate in making decisions. Particularly when people volunteer to work on issues of deep concern to them, on problems that touch their own lives, volunteering is an empowering experience.

No one is trying to suggest that the only reason to volunteer is because of what it can do for you. We've just said goodbye to a period in our history some have called the "me decade." No one wants to go back to that, nor to recommending narcissism as an approach to or a rationalization for volunteering. But when it is perfectly clear that volunteering *is* good for the volunteer, and when some people don't know that, or are embarrassed to admit it, it's important to point it out, to remind ourselves.

Nor should it really come as a great surprise. After all, it is an age-old truth of most of the world's religions that in giving we receive and in healing we are healed. But somehow, volunteering has been surrounded with such a halo, such an aura of do-goodism, that we tend to forget that it's not a one-sided experience.

It's time to show the other side, to share this secret. It's time to let people know that volunteer work is and can be a significant part of their life experience which deserves to be taken seriously, to be protected and strengthened. Volunteering is not just a means of getting things done—it is itself a valuable, enriching experience.

## WHAT . . . LIFE WITHOUT VOLUNTEERS?

**M**ost of us take volunteers for granted. We know, of course, that the teenager wheeling flowers down the hospital corridor is a volunteer, as is the neighbor who rings our doorbell asking for a donation for birth defects. We may even have done some volunteering of our own at one time or another. But mostly we give little thought to volunteers, or to volunteering, we just accept them as a natural part of American life.

Just for a moment, imagine what would happen if, *tomorrow*, all volunteers in America went on strike. Of course this is an unlikely prospect, given the commitment and conscientiousness of most American volunteers. But just for a minute imagine what a walk-out by all volunteers would do to a typical day in a typical American community.

Let's begin close to home, at your community hospital. In the lobby, the gift shop, run by volunteers, is closed. At the desk, there is no one to greet and direct visitors. On the upper floors, things are worse. Not only are the candy-stripers gone, but those patients in need of blood transfusions are out of luck—with-

out volunteer blood donors, the shortage would be felt at once.

Down the street, at the home for the elderly, it's even quieter. No one there to read to the blind, talk with the lonely, or wheel the chairs out into the sun.

Church is quiet, too—no choir. No flowers on the altar, no one to pass the collection plate. At the synagogue, much of the warmth and closeness is gone. Many museums are closed—without volunteer tour guides, there is no one to run the programs.

At the end of the day, after school or after work, there's very little to do. No community soccer games—how could there be, without volunteer parents to coach, and organize, and drive? No scout meetings—who would lead the troops? The alcoholic facing temptation has no AA meeting to turn to; there are no Parents Without Partners meetings for the newly divorced or widowed. Not even the usual choice of television programs is available—without volunteers, the public stations would be off the air.

The point is clear. American civilization as we know it is based, absolutely, on the efforts of volunteers. Trying to imagine doing without those efforts is truly a nightmare. *And that's the way it should be!*

The tradition of people helping people is as old as our nation itself—in fact, we would not exist today were it not for the volunteers who won our freedom from England in the Revolutionary War. The spirit of volunteerism flows like a deep river through the history of our nation. It's what the American dream is all about.

All of us together can keep that dream from turning into the kind of nightmare just described. If you are not already a volunteer—and more than half of all Americans are—ask your neighbor how you can help. Think back on the institutions that have made up your personal universe, and ask them how you can best serve: the hospital where your children were born; the library where those children enjoyed Saturday story hours, or where you borrow books; the church or synagogue where you were married.

Contact volunteer organizations in your community and ask how you can become part of an established volunteer program. Call your local voluntary action center and ask for a list of volunteer opportunities. You'll be amazed at how many organizations are looking for people like you. Everyone has a skill to share, a gift of time he or she can give to the community.

Ask your neighbor to volunteer, too. Get the people in your neigh-

borhood together to stage a community spring cleanup of that vacant lot, trashed park or creek that's been an eyesore in your town. That's the American way—people helping each other to solve the problems close to home.

Don't take volunteers for granted. Imagine what life in America would be like without them. Don't let that nightmare come true—**VOLUNTEER!**

*NOTE: For another perspective on this subject, see an article by the columnist Erma Bombeck. Field Newspapers Syndicate, Copyright June 25, 1975.*



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*"It is important that makers of public policy understand and reinforce the idea that volunteering is an essential part of the fabric of American society. While we can improve our recruiting, training, placement, and evaluation of volunteers, we cannot replace their contributions to this country."*

FRANK PACE JR., CHAIRMAN AND CEO, NATIONAL EXECUTIVE SERVICE CORPS

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