

VOLUNTEERISM IN A CHANGING WORLD
Challenges and Opportunities

Conversations with National Voluntary Organizations

Convened by AARP

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SOME COMPELLING QUESTIONS FOR NATIONAL VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

- What are most important things national headquarters can do to help their local affiliates?
- How can national headquarters ensure local affiliates meet the organizational mission and at the same time give them some autonomy in the way they do it?
- How do you motivate volunteers and paid staff to accept change?
- How can we build our management capacity so that we can take advantage of volunteer potential?
- Are there still some volunteers who want sustained involvement?
- Can we find flexible, episodic opportunities for volunteers to help fulfill our mission?
- Are all of today's retirees going to return to paid work?
- How do you deal with the competition for people's time?
- What do people want from their volunteer experience today?
- What is the future of virtual volunteerism and volunteer recruitment on the internet?

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WHY THE CONVERSATIONS?

As AARP looked at reorganizing its structure--eliminating its regional offices and focusing on the state offices--they realized they must also reexamine their volunteer programs so that they could continue to make the most of this important resource. They also recognized that volunteerism itself has and is changing, and they wanted to examine trends and evaluate and renew their volunteer programs and philosophy.

Because there are many other national organizations throughout the United States that are experiencing changes in their volunteer force, AARP thought it would be mutually beneficial to come together and discuss the challenges and opportunities all are confronting.

National organizations have affiliates and chapters throughout the country, and the responsibility of the national office to support and partner with them to facilitate high-quality volunteer programs, while encouraging latitude for innovation and creativity on the local scene, presents challenges different from those faced by non profits located in a single municipality. National organizations responded favorably to AARP's invitation and, as a result of the conversations, expressed their interest in meeting again to share information and ideas.

Conversations were conducted in New York City, Washington DC, Chicago and Dallas. Forty-two individuals attended. In addition to national organizations, each session included a few resource people whose major focus was on volunteerism in that particular locality. The names of attendees are included in appendix 1.

Attendees (one person from each organization) answered a questionnaire on their volunteer management procedures, and those responses are included as appendix 2.

HOW HAS VOLUNTEERISM CHANGED?

According to the experts:

Volunteerism in the United States has changed in many ways. People today are extremely busy. They want to do something that is meaningful, shows results and makes good use of their time and talents.¹

Membership in 32 well-established national chapter-based associations has decreased to a level almost as low as that during the Great Depression. Church

¹ United Parcel Service, Community Relations Report, *UPS Study Finds that Poor Management Turns Off Volunteers*, May 1998

attendance and membership has been on a downward trend since the high of the 1960s.²

Episodic volunteerism is a reality with over 41% of the 56% of the population who volunteer acknowledging that their volunteerism is sporadic. However, in spite of this, there is a 13.7% increase in the rate of volunteering since 1995, and the hours volunteers contribute to formal volunteerism in organizations are the equivalent of 9.3 million full-time employees—unarguably an extremely consequential contribution.³

By the year 2030, there will be 70 million people age 65 and older (one fifth to one fourth of the projected U.S. population). Since people are living longer and retiring earlier, there is a significant opportunity to involve older Americans in increased volunteerism. However, more than four in ten say that they plan to continue in the paid work force full or part time. Older Americans see retirement as a stage of life that is filled with meaningful activities rather than a gradual decline. They want to feel valued and needed. Many express interest in a volunteer program that would offer selected benefits, such as stipends or education credits.⁴

Volunteerism among African Americans and Hispanics has increased⁵, and community service and service learning programs in schools and colleges are involving more youth in service. America's Promise⁶ and government supported programs such as Learn and Serve, AmeriCorps VISTA and Senior Service Corps⁷ are encouraging and amplifying volunteerism throughout the nation.

² Putnam, Robert, *Bowling Alone*, Simon-Schuster, New York, 2000, pp 54, 60

³ Independent Sector, *Giving and Volunteering in the United States*, 1999, Washington, DC, 1999 website <http://www.indepsec.org>

⁴ Hart, Peter D. Research Associations, *The New Face of Retirement: Older Americans, Civic Engagement and the Longevity Revolution, A Survey Conducted for Civic Ventures*, 1999, pp 3, 9, 11

⁵ Independent Sector

⁶ Website: <http://americaspromise.org>

⁷ Website: <http://cns.gov>

THE NEW YORK CITY CONVERSATION

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

"Our program relies on retirees over 55 but we are finding a lot of people aren't retiring because of concerns about social security, etc. and we don't have the influx we used to have of volunteers interested in doing the unpaid professional work. They see their worth as receiving a salary for their work."

"We are a women's organizations and one of our biggest challenges is the number of people who are working outside the home. They like the 'done in a day' kind of project, but sustained volunteer involvement is a harder sell."

"We need to get into more diverse communities, communities where the disease we work to eradicate is most prevalent."

"We need to bring in as many volunteers as we can to work with children, but our challenge is to manage the array of volunteers we have. Many of our volunteers come from poor communities, and we would like to be able to give them a stipend. Other challenges are our structure as a national organization and the national competition for volunteers. How about building a network of volunteers who could serve a partnership of organizations depending on their match?"

"Our challenge now, as a national organization, is to create the tools so that our affiliates can turn to us for help."

"In our office, prospective volunteers are interviewed by volunteers. They probably don't know it; they are perceived as paid staff."

"People are taking a much more consumer attitude toward volunteering. They can pick and choose, and if it's not good, they will pick up their marbles and go home. There has to be 'value added' from the volunteer experience."

"We hope baby boomers will be looking for something more spiritual and less materialistic; but we don't know if they are going to follow the traditional modes of retirement."

"Baby boomers won't hold still for a board experience that is tied up in minutiae."

"We bring baby boomers together to work on a community project for a year and give them an intense leadership experience. We provide a stipend that a little more than expense reimbursement."

"We are working on intergenerational programming."

"Virtual volunteerism is new and we are challenged by it. Telementoring will probably be important in the future."

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

"The leader has to spearhead change. Go with the people who support it:

"When you want to get change through, you go to the 20% who support that change. You will have 60% who are waiting to see what is going to happen and 20% who aren't going to change. The leader has got to help the front 20% win the battle."

"You can't spend a weekend or a month thinking about change; it has to be a constant kind of thing."

"I think the niche of national organizations is training at every level. When we see a change that needs to be made, we educate the members about what we are seeing and work with them to decide what needs to be done (even though we may already think we know what it is)."

"Any change is a change to the entire organization affecting other parts of the system."

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

"Regarding competition for time, we have to make sure we are offering high-quality experiences."

"Volunteer management is definitely an issue. Volunteers want it to be easy, not intensive and fit into adjustable schedules."

"You should be able to walk into an office and not know which people are volunteers and which are paid staff."

"It is a real danger to get to a point where we don't want to involve volunteers but would rather go out and hire another staff member."

"We have to be able to recognize poor performance and even fire volunteers."

"It's important the kind of orientation we give volunteers. People need to know what to expect."

ROLE OF NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

"Some people say that for national organizations process is the most important product. That's not good!"

THE WASHINGTON CONVERSATIONS⁸

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

"Our program has worked with retirees from corporations. However, now with the fact that many people don't stay with a corporation for a long time, we are looking for other ways to reach retirees: retirement communities, companies, universities, etc."

"I don't believe the structures we have today are adequate to address the issue of how you significantly engage larger numbers of people in community service. I think one of the issues today is focus rather than trying to be all things to all people. We need to focus on some specific needs of the community and try to channel members to deal with those issues."

"I highly recommend working with other organizations in any form or fashion. You never know what's going to come of it."

"Our program requires volunteers to work independently. We are looking for groups we can partner with so that our volunteers can have an affiliation."

"People seem to reject the label 'civic engagement'. They say they are 'just helping out'".

"Some people don't volunteer because they don't have enough information. They are afraid they will look stupid. Most don't volunteer because no one asks them."

"We are looking for ways to stay relevant in a shifting volunteer environment. Some of our processes and administrative burdens are increasingly burdensome. We keep asking ourselves 'how can we make it possible for people to be successful in their community without being overburdened with paperwork?'"

"While working with episodic volunteers can be frustrating, it can also give us a little more leeway to accommodate people."

"Volunteers cannot take the place of effective public policy. Take a look at 'Building Capacity for Public Policy' published by the National Council for Nonprofit Organizations."

"Organizations have to have adaptability."

"E-communications are not reaching out to the minority community."

⁸ Because of the number of national organizations in DC, 3 conversations were held.

"You can't 'waltz into a community like Lady Bountiful' telling them what to do. You must understand the community and let the program be driven by the community."

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

"There has to be a purpose for change, but it can still take a long time. Our most recent venture has taken 5 years."

"To make people feel comfortable, you first have to acknowledge the discomfort; talk about the direction and talk about the value of what it means. It's going to be uncomfortable."

"Start with your mission statement, particularly when you are discussing change."

"The thought of change is very difficult."

"You develop leadership by first having the volunteers work with staff then back off and let them run with it."

"As Big Brothers and Big Sisters, we have changed. We expanded our traditional modes of volunteerism. We are collaborating with Boys and Girls Clubs and the YMCA. We are going to where the kids are. We offer a menu of opportunities. We let the volunteers tell us what they want to get out of it. Our average volunteer age now is 28."

"I think you have to have people who understand the change process manage the change. And that means re-enforcing the mission and bringing it down to the small groups."

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

"I subcontract out administrative work because it demoralizes the volunteers. I appeal to their ego with something that touches them, and then I can get them involved enthusiastically."

"I think we have low expectations about what seniors can contribute. When you focus on more challenging positions, you are seeing a different kind of person."

"The American Red Cross always refers to volunteer and paid staff. They involve field units in setting strategic directions. They are encouraging more volunteer management training."

"We need to do a better job of training staff to involve volunteers properly."

"There needs to be enough staff to manage the volunteers so that their work has impact."

"Too many local agencies that want volunteers have a limited capacity for managing volunteers. We need to tap the managerial experience in the growing senior population so they can enhance the capacity of the agency to involve greater numbers of volunteers. We need to state expectations clearly and give careful attention to volunteer management."

"We have involved seniors in our Habitat program by hiring a coordinator and having two senior team leaders who are able to unite the seniors."

"Xeroxing and filing don't create that lifelong love of volunteering."

"Young married couples like to volunteer together."

ROLE OF NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

"Capacity and leadership building are important. The locals tend to feel isolated."

"The Red Cross has a re-chartering process, in order to insure that certain standards are met. It includes "must", "should" and "may" categories."

"We say the national office has a lot of administrative 'hoo hah'. We are trying to find ways to get people involved so that they can do so without all the structure that goes with it."

"Every thing we do has to be perceived by the affiliate as value added. If they are paying dues and you are not providing anything back, you aren't partners."

"Several years ago we scrapped our bylaws to allow the state organizations to do whatever they needed to do to make it work for them. This way we can be an enabler and a resource for them."

"The national office has to be entrusted to anticipate change. Somebody has to be looking to the future."

"American Cancer Society requires each division to develop community-based outcomes based on the goals set by the national board."

"It's important to remember in a decentralized system that we must be interconnected."

CHICAGO CONVERSATION

CHALLENGES

“Recruitment is difficult. We find that when we work with volunteers at our site level, it’s difficult to keep them committed long term.”

“We work with retired executives, and computers are a challenge for us. We are looking at collaborating with outsiders who have that competence.”

“The big challenge was having people understand that we want to change while we can rather than waiting until it is too late.”

“We had trouble retaining visitation volunteers until we gave them the same training we give to staff.”

“We are encouraging our own paid staff to volunteer outside of the office.”

“We are looking at a study of volunteer image change. I would like to see our volunteers represent the whole community. You can’t expect people to come in and give every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for the rest of their lives.”

“Some people volunteer just for socialization, and we need to meet those needs.”

CHANGE

“We put together a comprehensive change management program. We came up with the top 10 challenges facing us. We held focus groups and did research. We developed 16 key strategies. We shook up our structure. We went into it knowing we were going to lose some volunteers and we cautioned management not to panic. We brought all of our people together for our training seminars and let them discuss the changes. We found people like change if it is their change.”

“We did our change in phases.”

“Cookie cutters don’t work. We needed to look at the individual communities and figure out what they needed.”

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

“We have found we need to be very selective with our volunteers: more can be less.”

“We do the same thing. We used to recruit them if they were breathing, and that is a dishonor to the volunteers who are dedicated. Now we are looking for leaders.”

"Sometimes we create 'yo yo' volunteers: we ask them to do something and then we take it away and do it our way."

"We found that by providing good training, we were exciting our volunteers"

ROLE OF NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

"You have to articulate how you stand out among all the thousands of organizations. When people know, then they can be passionate about it."

"Don't create new programs; collaborate with those who are already doing them."

"People are confused by name changes. We changed our logo, and after a strategic plan, we went back to where we were."

DALLAS CONVERSATION

CHALLENGES

"The biggest challenge we have are background checks for volunteers working with children. It takes time to get them back and really holds up the program."

"There are lots of people who want to volunteer but they can't volunteer during traditional hours."

"I have a volunteer who puts our newsletter together and mails it back to me. She never comes into the office."

"Sixty year olds today aren't like 60 year olds 30 years ago. We have started a special retired professional group."

"Our biggest challenge is educating professionals about what senior volunteers can do. The staff are sometimes quite ageist."

"We are having trouble getting good information on the impact of volunteers. There is a greater demand for showing the financial impact of volunteerism."

"I know my Mom volunteered for the hospital for 25 years, but people today don't have that kind of time. We try to find a special event or project they can do in the time they have."

"One time when I was in charge of a race for Mother Against Drunk Driving, I had 300 people come up to me at the last moment asking to volunteer. That's hard to manage."

"Saying 'we need volunteers' is like a store saying 'we need you to buy our stuff.' We need to show what the benefits are for the volunteer."

"Transportation, particularly for older volunteers, is a challenge."

"The YMCA is working with a lot of youth volunteers. They are also encouraging their members to volunteer in the Y or the community."

"Lots of organizations seem to be concentrating on youth volunteerism. That's good, but we mustn't forget the other generations."

"We have a lot of young staff who have probably volunteered themselves but they are not able to relate to volunteers and may even feel they are a threat to their job."

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

"We need to get out in front of change instead of just reacting to it."

"People who fear change need to read 'Who Moved My Cheese'. Let's stop fighting change."

"I think when you are working through change with volunteers, peer-to-peer training is important. Hearing it from peers who have accepted it is better than hearing it from staff."

"We poll our constituency about changes."

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

"Staff needs training in volunteer management and how to work with all age groups."

"Retention of volunteers is just as important as recruitment. If we lose them, they don't come back"

"AmeriCorps Vista volunteers can be very helpful in heading up and implementing long-term projects."

ROLE OF NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

"You don't want to be perceived as 'big brother', looking over the affiliates' shoulder."

"Building trust is the most important thing."

"Collaborations can be important in fund raising."

QUESTIONS, PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS CAN DO TO HELP THEIR LOCAL AFFILIATES? HOW CAN THEY ENSURE LOCAL AFFILIATES MEET THE ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION AND, AT THE SAME TIME, GIVE THEM SOME AUTONOMY IN THE WAY THEY DO IT?

American Red Cross, keeping its focus on its corporate commitment, states there are those things that the chapter "must" do (services that must be provided throughout the United States); those they "should" do (services that Red Cross believes should be widely available to people) and those they "may" do (services that may be performed when they address local needs). The Red Cross has a rechartering process for its chapters based on this system.

The AARP national board determined in November to permit states to design their own involvement of volunteers that they believe will best meet their state plans. They will require that each state have a leadership group (a five-person executive council to which three additional members "may" be added). The board approved four categories of volunteer deployment to aid the states in placing volunteers effectively: governance (Board of Directors); state leadership, specialists (working on AARP strategic activities) and community.

The American Cancer Society requires its affiliates to develop community-based outcomes based on the national goals.

The American Association for University Women has taken a flexible stand, allowing the affiliates freedom to determine locally how best to implement the mission of the organization.

Many organizations provide training and materials. The National Multiple Sclerosis Society is working to provide local chapters with materials on computer discs that they can individualize and use to facilitate their volunteer management system.

Most national organizations sponsor national training conferences for their affiliates and include volunteer management as a topic.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Headquarters organizations have an obligation to set major goals for the organization through the planning process. However, to be effective, this process must have participation from the local affiliates. In addition, they must have some flexibility in how they meet the goals, in the light of local situations and resources. A "one-size fits all" implementation approach seldom works. National organizations can allow the affiliates some implementation latitude as well as the freedom to venture into areas of local concern and local collaborative ventures that are clearly within the scope of the organizational mission.

Keeping paperwork to an essential minimum is also helpful. Some reporting and support systems are necessary in order to keep in touch with the locals and share successes and suggestions for improvement. However, massive "how-to" books and huge national-office originated policy binders can be overwhelming, stifle creativity and dissipate energy. The relationship of the headquarters organization to the affiliates must not be a top-down relationship but a partnership through which headquarters and affiliates can grow and meet their mutual mission more effectively.

The entire organizational structure must be supportive of volunteer involvement. This means a board of directors and paid staff that truly believes that volunteers are necessary to the vibrancy and democratic spirit of a nonprofit organization. Volunteers started almost all nonprofit organizations, but as the organizations grow and prosper, this is often forgotten.

Integral to this is the organization's obligation to articulate its philosophy of volunteerism. Some time should be spent with volunteers and paid staff discussing the significance of volunteerism to the particular organization and then articulating a statement that expresses these values. Philosophy statements should and will differ among organizations depending on their values and purpose. AARP, a membership organization, recently issued the following philosophy statement after numerous meetings and draft statements.

AARP believes

..that volunteer service is a unique and valuable contribution which benefits both the volunteer and society

...that AARP volunteers, working in partnership with paid staff and community colleagues, are a necessary and vital force in achieving the Association's vision, mission and strategic goals

...that volunteers contribute to the Association's goal of attracting, developing and maintaining the diversity of people and programs which reflect our communities and their needs

...that it is crucial to match the skills, abilities, interest and availability of volunteers to the tasks and opportunities that advance the Association goals

...that volunteering for AARP is one of many paths by which members can become connected, involved and engaged with their Association.

...that a strong commitment to supporting and recognizing volunteers is essential in helping them reach their potential for service.

Such a statement can serve as a touchstone for the organization as it evaluates its current efforts and envisions new ways to involve volunteers in meeting its mission. Most important, the process of writing it reminds the organization of the reasons for volunteer involvement, an involvement that is too often taken for granted and neglected.

Integral to all philosophy statements of organizations that have paid staff and volunteers is the understanding that paid staff and volunteers must regard each other as partners in developing and fulfilling the organizational mission. The organization needs, if it regards volunteer involvement as important, to include working effectively with volunteers as part of staff job descriptions and evaluate staff on this aspect of their performance. Organizations need to

recognize paid staff for their success in this area. Too often, recognition is confined to volunteers but should include the staff that fostered the volunteer relationship.

HOW DO YOU MOTIVATE PAID STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS TO ACCEPT CHANGE?

Organizations like Big Brothers-Big Sisters have adapted their traditional program to meet today's needs. While they still have their one-on-one match, they are taking their program to where the young people are: e.g. Boys' and Girls' Clubs and Ys.

Aid to Lutherans revised their volunteer program, knowing they might lose some people who were not comfortable with the changes, but understanding that they needed to build leadership in their volunteer force.

Habitat for Humanity doesn't complain about episodic volunteers but welcomes them because they can call upon individuals only when they need the specific building skills they can bring to the construction work.

Girl Scouts is involving younger women who do not have children as leaders, understanding that this is a value-added experience for both the scouts and the leader.

The Junior League is providing "done in a day" opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The volunteer world has and is changing, and if organizations are to implement their mission, they must recognize and even anticipate changes. Clearly volunteers today want experiences that are meaningful to them, have a tangible impact and offer some personal flexibility in terms of commitment. They want experiences that add value to their lives, and they do not have time to waste.

The pool of potential volunteers is expanding with baby boomers retiring, seniors living longer, families volunteering, workplace volunteering, youth service learning and the resources, perspectives and talents of an increasingly diverse population. Older seniors want contractual assignments that allow them time for travel. Families want to volunteer together evenings and weekends. Workplace volunteers want to volunteer in one-time, large group activities. Young people want volunteer experiences that suit their schedules and fulfill a specific service learning or internship requirement.

In addition, there are more federally subsidized AmeriCorps/VISTA members involved in volunteer programs today through the Corporation for National Service. These members enroll for a year and receive a stipend for 20 to 40 hours of work per week. Since they frequently work with unpaid volunteers, there can be some resentment on the part of the unpaid volunteers because they do not receive a stipend.

Programs that involve AmeriCorps/VISTA or other federally stipended volunteers need to explain the stipend requirements and obligations of that program to their unpaid volunteers to avoid ill will. Many organizations do pay the expenses incurred by their unpaid volunteers (carfare, parking and/or lunches).

The changes in volunteerism require organizations to be more imaginative, empowering and less traditional in the way they involve volunteers. Even today when episodic volunteerism is a reality, many organizations only think of involving volunteers during the weekdays and on an on-going basis. In addition, many organizations give volunteers menial tasks rather than getting to know the talents of their volunteers and making maximum use of what they have to offer.

National organizations need to acknowledge the constancy of change and the need for continuing evaluation and renewal. Planning for involvement of volunteers must be part of a regular strategic process. Volunteer assignments should focus on the priorities of the organization, and the "right volunteer" should be sought for an assignment just as the organization would seek the "right paid staff member" for a vacancy.

Organizations need to analyze each task to determine if they really need sustained volunteer involvement (and there are still volunteers who will accept such assignments) or whether the task can be done in a day, a month or a few months or can be shared by two or more volunteers on a rotating basis. They also need to consider whether the task can be done outside by someone willing to work at home or in their office. Job sharing, out sourcing and flex time are not just for paid staff members, but can also be appropriate for unpaid volunteer staff members.

Most people do not welcome change. As a wise person said, "people want things to get better, but they don't want things to change." Both staff and volunteers can feel threatened by change.

Change, therefore, is not a quick process. People, staff and volunteers, must be involved in discussing the changes and how they impact on the organizational mission. Effective change managers realize that not everyone will embrace change, but lead through those who do understand the need for change and involve them in helping reach others in the organization.

The most important factor in revitalizing volunteer programs is their congruity with and impact on the mission of the organization. This is where sound volunteer management is paramount. Inviting "warm bodies" into an organization, simply because someone suggests it, is not right for the warm bodies or the organization. Volunteer program must have a mission, there must be a plan, there must be policies and risk management, and there must be position descriptions, targeted recruitment to make the right match for the assignment, orientation, training, support, recognition and evaluation that includes an analysis of the outcomes of the volunteer program. Organizations

that are successful have high expectations of their volunteers. They worry more about programmatic impacts than numbers of people, and, therefore, their volunteers feel appreciated and rewarded because they know they are making a difference

HOW CAN WE BUILD OUR MANAGEMENT CAPACITY SO THAT WE CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF VOLUNTEER POTENTIAL?

In most affiliates, one staff person (volunteer or paid) is tapped to do the job of coordinating the volunteers. This person has, as a minimum, the job of developing volunteer task descriptions with the paid staff and then recruiting the right volunteer for the task. Depending on how the program is managed—i.e. whether the volunteers are supervised by the volunteer coordinator or by individual departmental staff members--the coordinator of volunteers may also have the additional tasks of orienting, training, supervising, recognizing and evaluating the volunteers. In a volunteer intensive organization, the job of the coordinator of volunteers is a big one.

Today's organizations and communities have many needs, and the conscientious organization and coordinator of volunteers feel the urgency of involving as many people as possible who have the skills to help meet those needs. However, with the competition for and the multiplicity of potential volunteers today, recruiting volunteers one by one is a time-consuming job that does not always produce the ideal number of people.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Organizations need to develop leadership among the volunteer corps itself so that the tasks of volunteer recruitment and supervision can be decentralized and achieve maximum synergy. Some people find delegation hard to do, but it is the answer, if done properly, to building organizational capacity.

In New York City the RSVP program is targeting seniors, gifted with leadership skills, to lead programs. This is an idea that can be replicated in organizations with a member of any age group who has leadership abilities. The concept could be particularly appealing to retiring baby boomers who are innovative and mission driven. Many organizations are looking forward to involving baby boomers in their programs, yet we are told that many of these young retirees will return to paying jobs if they do not find stimulating volunteer work.

Another way of building synergy is through inter-organization collaborations. In most communities there are organizations that share interests. Strategic alliances--relationships among and between organizations with shared interests--can be extremely rewarding. It is usually wise to start small—perhaps a joint day of service project where volunteers and staff get to know each other and explore ways to cooperate in the future. Collaborations can succeed when getting things done is more important to the organizations than getting total credit for the accomplishment!

Wise organizations examine all the possibilities for expanding their capacity. Virtual volunteerism—assignments that people can complete on their computers and send to the organization—is a growing trend. There is an excellent website www.serviceleader.org that can provide interested organizations with ways to involve people through the web. In addition, websites such as www.volunteermatch.org are helping organizations to recruit volunteers on line.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AARP:

The Association for Volunteer Administration (the professional organization for those who lead volunteer programs) and the Points of Light Foundation provide yearly national conferences on volunteer management and community service. However, many representatives of national organizations say that these conferences are not as helpful to them as they are to local grassroots organizations. They feel that it would be of more value for them to get together with other national organizations who also work through a headquarters-affiliate structure.

AARP's luncheon meetings were an excellent start to bring national organizations together. Many participants said they would like to meet again.

I recommend that AARP work with national organizations to set up national, regional or state conferences on volunteer involvement. These meetings should, of course, be attended by the coordinator of volunteers, but, in addition, it should be required that the coordinator be accompanied by the board president or the executive director. Organizations that have effective volunteer programs are supported by their boards and top executives, not in a passive way, but in an active way. Volunteer involvement should be part of the mission, goals and plans of an organization, not an afterthought. AARP could move national organizations a giant step forward by presenting training that promotes this type of organizational culture.

In addition, AARP could encourage its states involved in community volunteer programs to collaborate with organizations that share mutual interests. AARP can provide some of the leadership volunteers necessary to increase capacity and produce results.

Appendix 1

Attendees AARP Conversations: Volunteerism in a Changing World

NEW YORK

Carol Anastasio, Director of Program Support, Save the Children
Deborah Brittain, President, The Association of Junior Leagues
Christine Franklin, Vice President of Volunteers, Multiple Sclerosis Society
Carol Friedland, Deputy Director, Mayor's Voluntary Action Center
Eleanor Holtzman, CEO, National Executive Service Corporation
Sharon Hussey, National Director for Membership & Program, Girl Scouts of the USA
Susan Kintner, Director of the National Foster Grandparent Program, Save the Children
Dorothy Millines, Recruitment Specialist, National Urban League
Alina Molina, Director, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
Jane A. Silverman, Executive Director, The Association of Junior Leagues

WASHINGTON DC

Jennifer Roberts, Director of SERVENet.org, Youth Service America
Mike McCabe, Vice President of Programs, Youth Service America
Ruth C. Herman, President and CEO, Women In Community Service
Amy Swauger, Association Director, American Association of University Women
Jeffrey E. Hough, Director of National Retired Volunteer Coalition, Volunteers of America
Cheryl Graeve, Director of Field Support, League of Women Voters of the U.S.
Susan Au Allen, President, Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce
Jerry Lapham, Director of Agency Development, Big Brothers/Big Sisters
Jane Maloney, Associate Director, National Programs, Habitat for Humanity International
Donna Anderson, NRVC Consultant, Volunteers of America
Ana Gomez, Communications Director, Joint Action in Community Service
Joseph Montgomery, National Project Director of NSSC, Catholic Charities
Dr. Patricia Hoge, Chief Mission Officer, American Cancer Society
Irv Katz, Group Vice President for Community Impact, United Way of America
Alex Vazquez, Executive Assistant to the President, Independent Sector
Nancy McKelvey, Office of Nursing, American Red Cross

CHICAGO

Nancy Brown, Director, Department of Volunteer Administration, American Hospital Association
Carolyn Cronin, President and CEO, Prevent Blindness America
Laura Eilts, Executive Director, Chicago Cares
Tina Green Rounds, Manager of Volunteers, American Red Cross of Greater Chicago
John Rosenheim, Project Manager, Executive Service Corps
Steve Schultz, Director of Fraternal Support, Aid Association for Lutherans
Cynthia Stringfellow, Prevent Child Abuse America, 200 South Michigan Avenue,

DALLAS

Molly Bogen, Executive Director, Senior Citizens of Greater Dallas
Bonnie Detrie, Volunteer Coordinator, Alzheimer's Association
Diane Dynis, Agency Relations Director, Volunteer Center of Dallas
Sue Ann Gilman, Board Member, Susan G. Komen Foundation
Kathy Hamilton, Vice President of Operations, YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas
Lance W. Hood, Jr., Volunteer Development Coordinator, Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Rosie Mauk, Chair, Texas Commission on Volunteerism & Community Service
Karen Johnstone, Special Events Coordinator, Alzheimer's Association
Pamela Sybert, Director, Educational Consortium for Volunteerism, University of North
Texas