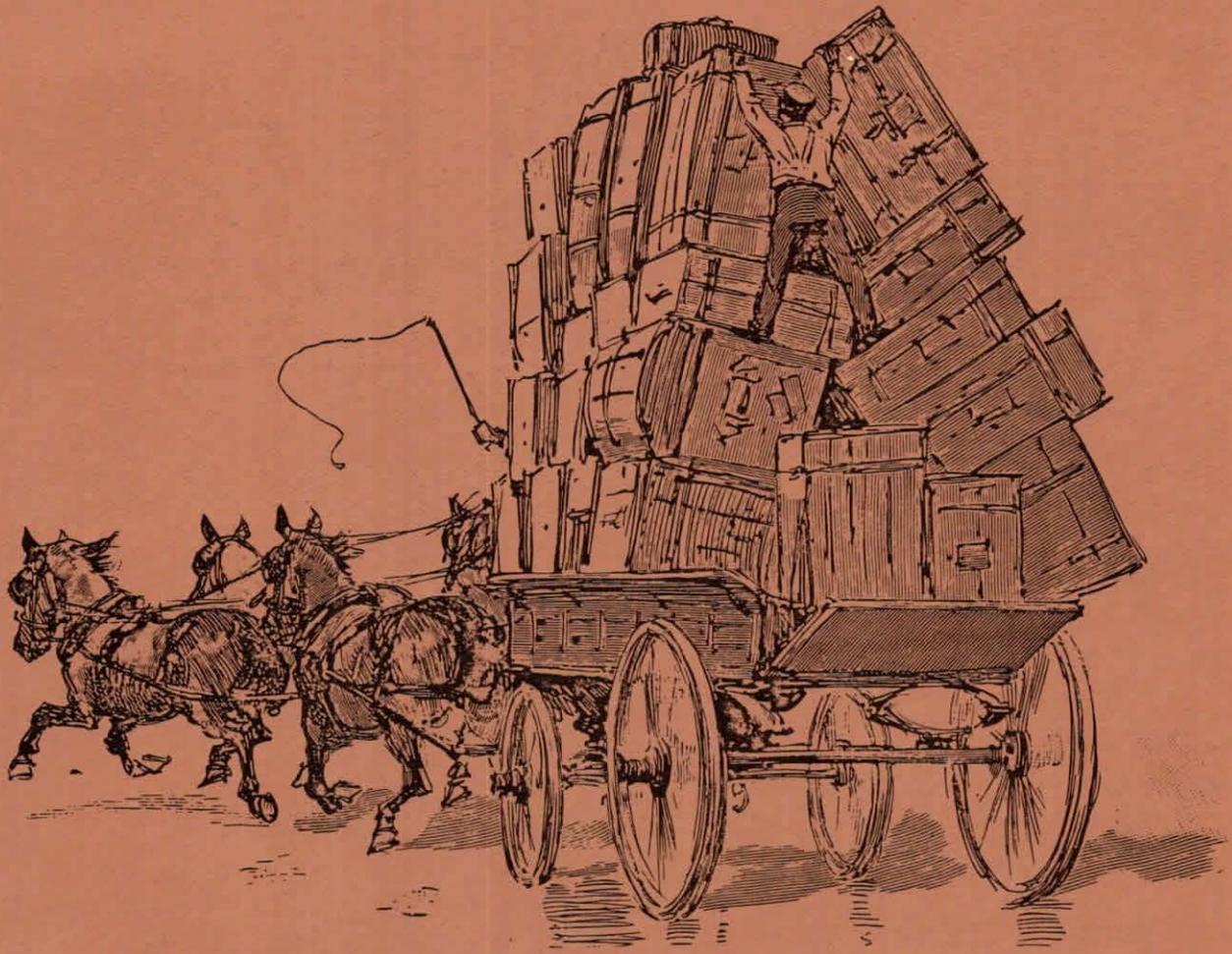


# SCROUNGING



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**  
**Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**April 1980**



# SCROUNGING

Because of low budgets and high need, recreation departments nationwide are learning to use a unique acquisition process; it's called scrounging and benefits both givers and receivers. Now, more than ever, economic realities are forcing park and recreation agencies to make the most of available dollars, and environmental realities require that we reassess what we discard as waste. For these reasons, a scrounging program is an ideal supplement to assist in providing quality recreation opportunities.

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, members of senior and youth programs helped scrounge arts and crafts materials. Stores donating surplus items received tax benefits and favorable publicity through advertising while contributing to the program.

The Bend Metro Parks and Recreation District in Bend, Oregon, provided facilities through their scrounging program that have now become favorites of the local townspeople. A small dory was recovered from a river bottom and tied to its new dock in the middle of a park. Imaginative future sailors are now able to take daily voyages on this mighty vessel. Additionally, a train of out-moded railroad cars was located and is being renovated to provide space for craft classes, lectures, meetings, and movies. Imagination, creativity, and a scrounging program have made valuable, popular facilities from seemingly useless items.

More than anything, scrounging is fun and has virtually unlimited possibilities. Sources and resources are innumerable. Sources can range from utility companies and government agencies to private sector and nonprofit organizations. Resources can be as diverse as old utility poles to discarded stationery from a printing shop; from freight cars to plastic hose material. The keys to a successful scrounging program lie within the people who will implement it: Imagination and action. Use your imagination to create a use for even the most unusual resource. Most important, act on your creative ideas. Implement your own scrounging programs to retrieve the resources and then utilize it in your park and recreation program.

Whether your program is continuous or a one-time effort, the following techniques are applicable.

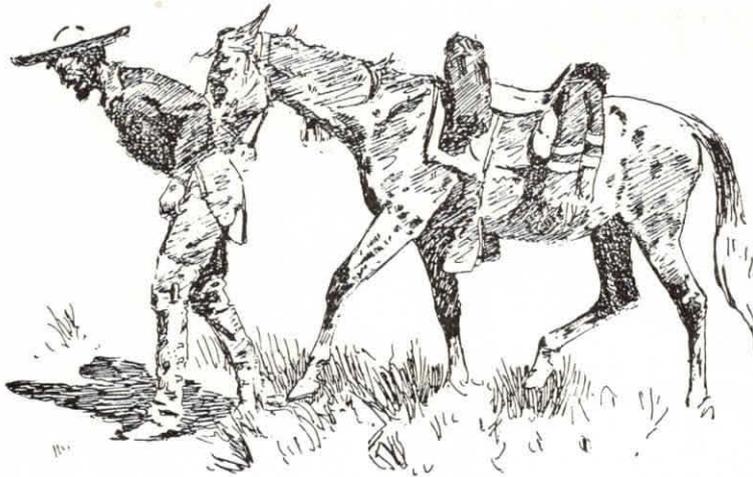
## BASICS OF SCROUNGING

Scrounging requires ingenuity and creativity, but it is simple to accomplish. It generally involves the following steps:

1. Staffing
2. Locating and Soliciting
3. Accepting
4. Stockpiling
5. Recognizing



Economic realities are forcing park and recreation agencies to make the most of available dollars.



Scrounging is fun.

## Staffing

The first resource you need to obtain is a person to take charge and direct the program. Look for someone who can't stand wasting anything, someone who has a certain expertise for recycling things, for bargain hunting, and for getting other people excited. This person may be someone on your staff, a CETA worker, perhaps a volunteer, or you may even want to consider hiring someone for the job. A prime qualification for that

person is that he or she have no qualms about asking for favors.

## Locating and Soliciting

After you've located your scrounger, the search can begin for needed items.

Use the yellow pages of the telephone book to assist you in locating potential materials. If possible, make a visit. If there are other scrounging programs in your community, join forces for a combined solicitation. Potential donors will appreciate the "one gift serves all" aspect of a combined appeal.

Make people aware that there is a scrounging program and that you will be able to use the articles they have to donate. It is essential to fully inform your own agency or organization in addition to potential donors.

Obtain publicity for the program through local newspapers, radio stations, agency brochures, at speaking engagements, and among friends and acquaintances. The success of solicitation can be maximized by focusing on certain types of potential resource holders. For large and/or costly donations, approach local utility companies or large private corporations and businesses. For the small but often invaluable items, print up fliers explaining your scrounging program and distribute them where numbers of people will see them—banks, schools, grocery stores, and senior citizens' centers.

Be aware of chance encounters. If you happen upon a building site littered with potentially useful supplies or come across a piece of idle equipment that could be useful, contact the owner to see if a contribution can be obtained. Do not overlook any potential sources; most people contacted have something to offer. The more contacts made, the more effective your scrounging will be.



Obtain publicity for the program . . . at speaking engagements . . .

## Accepting

Even before locating potential resources and

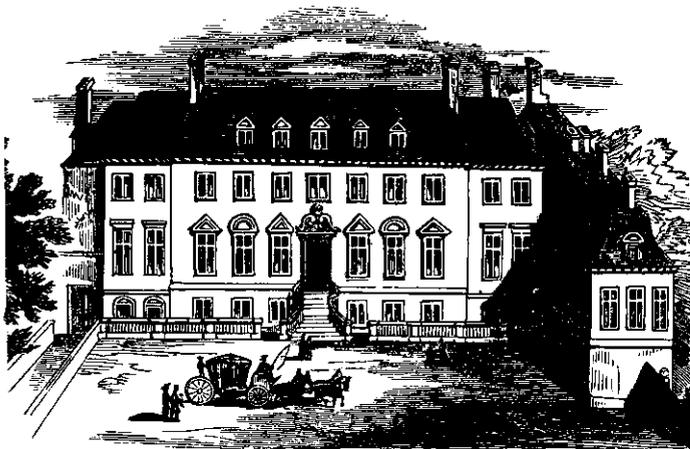
soliciting from potential sources, you should develop a gracious acceptance policy and an efficient pick-up procedure. Arrange to have a vehicle available at all times. If there is a shortage of vehicles, contact a public agency or community organization and request its assistance in picking up donations. Many donations are made impulsively, and speed may be essential.

You will receive calls from donors offering a variety of items. Keep in mind that some people will have different ideas about the kind of material you need. If you arrive to pick up an item and find it is not suitable to your needs, experts advise that you graciously accept the donation and try your best to put it to use. Do not discourage future valuable donations by being too selective in front of the donor; next time, they may have exactly what you need.

### Stockpiling

Once you begin accumulating items, you will need an area or building to store donated materials until they can be used in the development of a facility or operation of a recreation program. Don't forget that this warehouse or vacant area can be a donated resource, too!

Keep the storage area neat and orderly, especially if it is in view of the general public. Creating an eyesore in the middle of town is a sure way to lose future donations. Inventory your materials and store them in logical groupings to increase efficiency and orderliness. When a well-organized scrounging program has been in operation for a few weeks, a well-supplied stockpile area will be a great reward for the time and effort put into the program.



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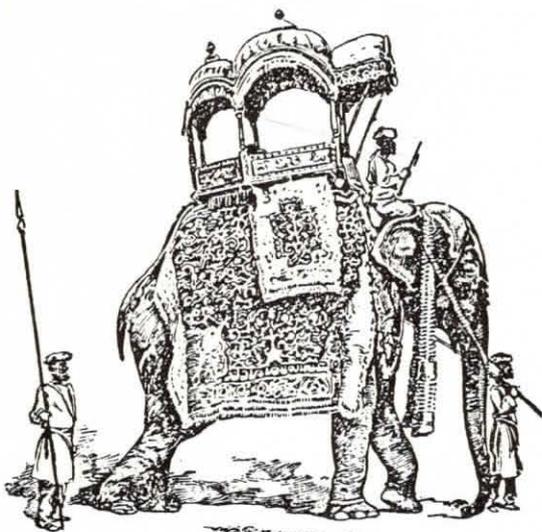
Your center can become a point of community interest. In San Francisco, the SCRAP organization, a well-developed scrounging program, holds classes on the use of recycled materials. The classes are very well attended, and dozens of school field trips were made to the site. People love the scrounging concept. It's economical, useful, and it's "in style"!

## Recognition

The final step in an effective scrounging program is to provide suitable recognition to all donors. Elaborate ceremonies and presentations are usually not necessary; however, as a minimum, donors should receive a note of thanks for their contribution. This "thank you" should come as soon as possible after the donation is made. The good will this gesture creates can only provide positive interaction with the public agency, nonprofit organization, and the general public in future endeavors.

### SCROUNGING FROM THE FEDS

When federal agencies have property no longer needed, they notify all agencies of their department. If these items are not in demand by their department, the property is listed as "excess" by the General Services Administration (GSA). This catalog of excess property is circulated throughout the entire federal system and is reviewed to determine if there is any federal need for the materials. If no government department can utilize the available items, they are designated as surplus property and distributed to the states which, in turn, make them available to the eligible local groups. Much of the equipment provided to public agencies through this program can easily be modified and employed in park development programs.



Be innovative in your approach.

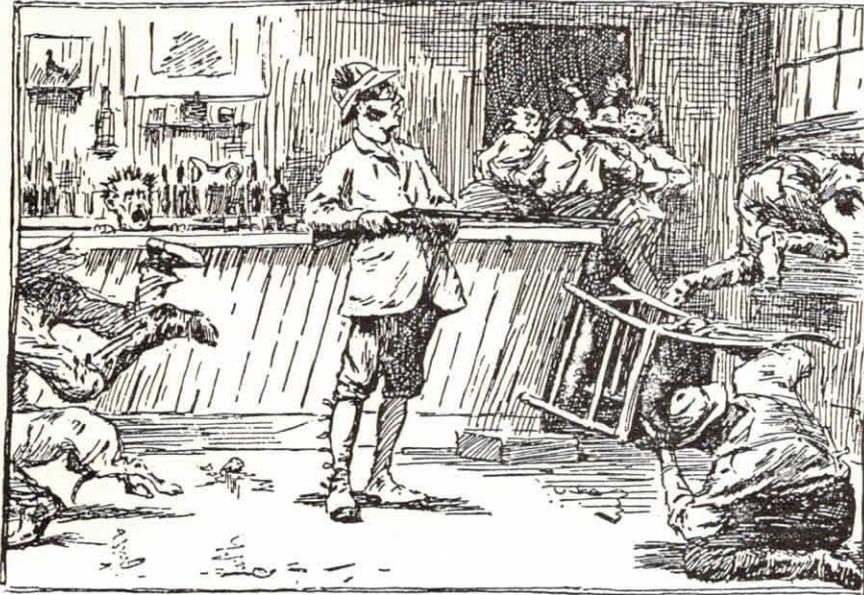


As a minimum, donors should receive a note of thanks.

Annually, approximately \$400 million worth of surplus federal property is allocated to qualifying organizations and local governments. Few restrictions are placed on the use of these purchases. These restrictions are discussed in further detail, as is the entire surplus property program, in the forthcoming HCERS publication dealing with that topic.

### OTHER SCROUNGING IDEAS

Imaginative ideas for uses of scrounged materials can be found on page 6 of this booklet as well as in Paul Hogan's *Playgrounds for Free*, published by MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142. The second printing, November 1975, costs \$9.95. A primary reference for uses of



Get people excited!

tion. An old bathtub was padded with carpeting scraps and is a favorite "thinking tank" for the children. Many more scrounged materials were collected and made child-proof, adding to the uniqueness of this popular playground. These inspiring articles appear in publications throughout the country and can be helpful and motivational to those persons involved in scrounging.

A successful scrounging program can be exciting, challenging, and most important, it can be budget-boosting! Have fun with it and remember these points when instigating your own program:

- Get people excited!
- Be polite and appreciative that donors are doing you a favor.
- A personal contact or visit tends to generate more willingness to donate.
- Don't refuse an item just because you don't have a specific use in mind.
- Keep the stockpiled materials neat and orderly in appearance.
- A simple "thank you" and a handshake are appreciated gestures.



A personal visit generates more willingness to donate.

junk or surplus materials for development and construction of park and recreation facilities and programs is your local newspaper or favorite house and home magazine. For example, a two-page story found in *The Denver Post* told of an outstanding playground designed by the Parent-Child Center of LaSalle, Colorado. Once a weedy vacant lot, the area is now criss-crossed with a tricycle highway complete with discarded road safety signs and unused gas pumps serving as a filling station.

SOURCE	POSSIBLE RESOURCE	POSSIBLE USES
Automobile wrecking companies	Steering wheels	Dramatic play, playground apparatus
Bottling companies	Wooden soft drink crates	Substitute for hollow blocks, remove slats and cover with screen for spatter painting
	Sturdy fiberboard beer cases	Storage, dramatic play items
Camera repair shops, film developers	Old non-repairable cameras, equipment, and film containers	Dramatic play, sound cylinders, smell bottles, manipulative toys
Carpet stores and rug companies	Carpet roll tubes	Constructions
	Carpet remnants	Resting mats, mats for library corner, floor covering, bulletin board, wall hanging
Construction sites	Felled trees	Climbing trees, stepping blocks, outdoor seating
	Excess fill dirt	Earth mounds combined with culvert pipes on playground
	Lumber	Woodworking
Contractors and building supply companies (many sites have scrap bins or piles)	Lumber, pipes, wire, linoleum, tiles, molding wood, sawdust, wood curls	Constructing, woodworking, investigations
Electronics manufacturers	Styrofoam packing	Art projects
	Discarded components	Investigation in science
Floor companies	Scrap linoleum	Work surface coverings, crafts items
Floor covering firms	Tile samples	Color matching, constructions
Garage or tire shop	Automobile tires	Swings, climbers, used with boards for balance, series of tires can be a tunnel, artwork
Garment factories	Wide variety of materials, yarn, buttons, decorative tape	Art projects, doll clothes, dress-up clothes
Ice cream stores	3-gallon ice cream containers	Storage, space helmets, constructions
Leather goods manufacturers	Leather and lacing scraps	Art projects, drums or other musical instruments
Moving companies, appliance dealers	Large cardboard boxes, smaller boxes	Dramatic play, rocket ship, house, fire station, etc., Art projects, cardboard construction
	Styrofoam packing	Easy for initial practice in carpentry, art projects, sculptures
Plastic companies	Trimnings, cuttings, tubing, scrap plastic, plexiglas	Sand and water play, constructions
Plumbers, plumbing supply companies	Wires, pipes, tile scraps, linoleum	Constructions, experiments
Printing shops	Assorted sizes, colors, weights and textures of scrap paper	Art projects, tickets, grocery slips
	End rolls of paper	Murals, group art projects, making life-size figures, giant paper sculptures, etc.
Salvage companies	Large wire, heavy rope	Climbing
	Miscellaneous small parts and machinery	Tinkering with machinery, taking apart and seeing how it works, using parts in mechanical experiments
Sewer contractors	Sewer pipes	Tunnels, trains, planters, seats
Small appliance repair shops	Miscellaneous non-repairable small appliances, such as toasters, blenders, mixers, etc., made safe for children	Good for investigative tinkering, taking apart, then putting together, using parts for other mechanical projects
Supermarkets	Boxes in many sizes	Dramatic play items
	Cardboard displays	Housekeeping
	Fruit crates	Storage
Surplus and salvage stores	Furniture	Furnishings for recreation programs
	Machinery	Discover what makes it work, playground apparatus
	Railroad ties	Sand or earth retainer, playground fort, outdoor stage, short and taller ones for climbing
	Large nuts and bolts	Manipulative toys
	Used scales, hanging balances	Measurement comparing weights
Television repair shops	Older TV cabinets	Take out all parts, use the case for children to put on own TV shows or puppet shows
Tile stores	Ceramic tiles	Mosaics, color matching, counting games
	Excess colored wire	Art and science projects
Utility companies	Telephones and switchboards	Dramatic play and learning how telephones work
	Utility poles	Playground apparatus (balance beam, benches, log fort)
	Wooden cross arms	Sandbox or retaining wall
	Wooden cable spools	Climbing apparatus, tables
	Wire	Sculpture, experiments, art projects

# Here's Help In Providing Recreational/ Cultural Opportunities

*introducing*

## The HCRS Information Exchange

### Here's How It Works

The HCRS Information Exchange depends on an informal network of contributors to continually expand its collection and contribute to the improved delivery of recreational/cultural services in the United States. In order to provide first class up-to-date information, we ask members to contribute materials which we will announce in *Technical Assistance NOTIFICATIONS*. These materials would include:

studies	surveys
journals	brochures
newsletters	reports
handbooks	films

audio-visual aids  
publications  
program evaluations  
training manuals

### Here's What You Get

You will receive our publication entitled *Technical Assistance NOTIFICATIONS*, which includes:

- Abstracts and Order Forms for Free HCRS materials.
- Abstracts and ordering information for materials produced by Federal, State and Local Government Agencies; private organizations, educational institutions, etc.
- A Calendar of Events listing upcoming conferences, workshops, training sessions, meetings, etc.

### Here's What It Costs

A first-class postage stamp to mail-in the Membership Form below.

### Membership Form

Mail to: HCRS Information Exchange  
Heritage Conservation & Recreation Service  
440 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20243

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

The HCRS Information Exchange is a service provided by the United States Department of the Interior, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

This handbook was prepared by the Division of State Planning and Technical Assistance in the Mid-Continent Regional Office as part of the Recreation Technical Assistance Program. A complete list of publications in this series is available upon request. We welcome your inquiries and suggestions for additional resource material.



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