

BRIEF SURVEY OF PRACTITIONER'S OBSERVATIONS AND ATTITUDES
ABOUT VOLUNTEERISM IN AMERICA TODAY

Conducted By:

Department of Conferences and Institutes

Department of Independent Study

Extension Service

The University of Michigan

This Report Prepared By:

Dr. Robert R. Wilson
Assistant Director of Extension Service
Director, Department of Independent Study

With The Aid Of:

Dr. Paul Gerhart
and
Beth Tamminen

October 16, 1973

TOTAL QUESTIONNAIRES SENT OUT: 600

TOTAL RESPONDENTS: 200

160 female, 40 male (approx. - some not indicated)

190 paid, 10 volunteer

AREAS OF SERVICE

Hospital/Medical Center: 75

Mental Health/Mental Retardation - Institution or
Community Agency: 45

Social Services (county or state): 45

V.A.C./Community Office: 12

Miscellaneous: 23

PRIMARY DUTIES IN RESPONDENT'S POSITIONS

Respondents listed 56 different primary duties which appeared to group under the following headings (listing only those mentioned several times*).

PROGRAM DIRECTION:

- *Recruitment
 - Interviewing
 - Screening
 - Orientation
- *Training
- *Placement/Scheduling
 - Guidance & Motivation
- *Supervision
 - Recognition of Service
 - Liaison Between Volunteers & Agency
 - Evaluation

*DAY-TO-DAY ADMINISTRATION:

- Writing Job Descriptions
- Keeping Records of Activities, Time, Etc.
- Fund-Raising and Budget Keeping

*LIAISON AND PUBLIC RELATIONS WORK:

- Agency - Community Liaison
- Volunteer - Agency Liaison
- Agency - Agency Liaison (with other agencies using or providing volunteers)
- Coordinating Community Volunteer Resources
- Developing a Community Education Program

*PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:

- Assessing Needs that Volunteers Can Meet
- Exploring New Program Areas
- Updating Existing Programs
- Developing New Social Service Programs Which Include Volunteers
- Interpreting the Role and Use of Volunteers to Staff
- Supervising & Consulting with Staff on Their Use of Volunteers

*Indicated at least 25 times

SPECIFIC SKILLS CONSIDERED MOST IMPORTANT FOR
EFFECTIVELY PERFORMING DUTIES

"Skills" did not satisfy respondents to this question, not "broad enough base" for effective performance. A better word seemed to be "assets" - over 80 of these suggested.

Human Qualities:

- *Sincere interest in & concern about: life-
people - your area of service - volunteerism -
your agency - your job
- *Empathy for all people
- Flexibility
- Creativity
- Initiative, independence

"People" Skills:

- *Interaction skills
Working with all kinds of people, and on all
levels

Two-way Communication:

- *Listening and accepting others' ideas
- *Speaking & writing effectively
- *Public relations
- Teaching and training skills

*Management and Administrative Skills:

- Organizational skills
- Skills for:
 - assessing community needs
 - interviewing
 - screening
 - supervising
 - evaluation
 - budgeting
 - consultation
 - coordination & cooperation among groups

Background Experience and Education:

- Knowledge of community - needs, resources, funds
- Knowledge of your institution or agency

Knowledge of the service area in which you work
(e.g., Health Care)
Familiarity with volunteers and volunteer service
Social work
Group work
Psychology
Sociology

*Indicated at least 15 times

THE MAJOR AND MINOR "TRENDS AND ISSUES"
SEEN EMERGING IN VOLUNTEER SERVICE

This question received the widest diversity of answers which appeared to group under the following:

A. The Emerging "New Volunteer"

Volunteers are now coming from all segments of the community, showing much greater diversity than in earlier times. The only group of volunteers which appears to be on the decrease is married women, ages 25-55, who seem to be seeking more paid work. Groups mentioned most frequently to be increasing include:

- *Retired & elderly people
- *Youth - especially students
- *Minorities
- *Professional people -- who come offering special skills
- Men
- Low income people - especially in projects for "the poor helping the poor"

New Duties & Areas of Service for the Volunteer

- *All kinds of jobs with more responsibility in areas formerly reserved for staff in decision-making positions - as experts & as representatives of volunteer & or the public
- More direct patient contact in one-to-one contacts
- *in community aftercare programs
- Social change agency
 - client advocacy
 - suggesting changes within agencies & institutions
 - legislative action

New Rewards for the Volunteer

- *Reimbursement:
 - out-of-pocket expenses
 - pay (especially for low income volunteers)
 - tax deductions
 - insurance

- *Learning & growth experiences:
 - personal growth toward selfhood
 - career testing
 - better on-going training & education
 - academic credit or field experience
- *Chances to occupy positions of responsibility, to do meaningful work
 - sometimes having a say in institution policies
 - Away from religious & status reasons

B. The Administration of Volunteer Programs:

This appears to be becoming more & more complex, calling for greater professionalization and variety of skills to deal with growing programs and new problems. Key trends, problems and issues mentioned frequently here include:

Role of Volunteer in Relation to the Paid Worker
fear of professional staff & unions of being displaced
clarifying roles of volunteers & staff
volunteers filling in where fund cuts have left staff short

More efficient & Complete Use of Volunteer Resources
increasing staff acceptance of volunteers as reliable & important
integrating volunteers into the service team
coordinating use of volunteers by different agencies
scheduling flexibly to fit time schedules of volunteers
promoting the expanded use of volunteers in all areas of service

Attracting & Keeping Volunteers
finding minority volunteers
women's movement is saying women should be paid for their work
volunteers shop around to find the most meaningful experience
offering a "professional" career ladder within volunteerism

Education of Volunteers & Volunteer Coordinators
volunteers need more in-depth training
programs for college credit, and other forms of advanced training for coordinators, are needed

C. Society and the Volunteer

People now have more time, it seems - due to shorter hours and earlier retirement - and they are interested in volunteering as an opportunity for meaningful human involvement. TWO TRENDS THAT NEED TO BE DEALT WITH ARE:

people make shorter time commitments
men's and women's roles and expectations are
changing

RANK YOUR LISTING OF TRENDS IN ORDER OF THE
IMPORTANCE THEY SHOULD BE DEALT WITH IN CONFERENCE

Almost every trend mentioned in the preceding question received a vote for number one or two ranking on this question. Those specific trends and issues which received several votes for "Number One" were:

The New Volunteer:

paid or reimbursed volunteers
student volunteers
poor and minority volunteers

Using Volunteer Resources

providing the meaningful, responsible work
volunteers want
using the special skills and talents volunteers
are bringing
offering enrichment to volunteers
on-going training
opportunities for personal growth
new areas for service
community aftercare
clarifying relations to paid staff
what are the roles of respective members
educating staff in best use of volunteers
integrating volunteers into staff teams
coordinating and improving community re-
cruitment of volunteers
maintaining and supporting volunteers

Examining Societal Trends

changing roles of men and women
rapid growth of volunteerism
shift away from experts to community involvement

OTHER TOPICS WHICH RECEIVED SEVERAL VOTES
FOR LOWER RANKINGS WERE:

"The New Volunteer"

men
retired people
people coming individually, rather than through
group affiliation

Using Volunteer Resources

volunteering as career testing
new areas for service:
 service procurers & client advocates
 involvement in program planning
 legislation
training volunteers - for specific jobs
screening and assigning volunteers
showing appreciation for volunteers

Managing volunteer programs

gaining funds
public relations
keeping records

LISTING OF TRENDS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE
TO A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY LIKE OURS

The majority of respondents either did not answer this question or said "Same order as in previous question." Among new priorities or new ideas, there was very little overlap. Listed below is a sampling of the responses:

Expansion of Volunteer Service

the "volunteer community"
great diversity of programs
more in-community programs calling for
volunteers (halfway houses, etc.)

Involving the talents and resources of all segments
of society

poor helping poor & clients helping clients
building new community improvement skills into
neighborhoods
accepting clients & volunteers as necessary to
responsive policy formation
overall increase in interest in serving people

Increasing people's self-esteem and growth through
volunteerism

decrease in negative social behavior as person
does good for society
beginning in youth, so people will continue to
volunteer
trend to serving humanity and oneself, together
providing second career to the retired &
handicapped

Volunteers as creators of social change

see volunteerism as their chance to do a small
part toward changing our society
banding together to affect public policy,
legislation, politics
questioning established practices within agencies
more aware of the Establishment

Person-to-person contact

one-to-one relationship involves volunteer per-
sonally in societal problems
community is bettered by actions of people aiding
people
enrichment from the volunteer can aid a client's
growth through difficult times
people come individually to volunteer, not as part
of a church or social group
volunteerism needs to retain the "good neighbor",
non-professional element

Importance of volunteer work

fill vital roles

do work where paid manpower is short

problem: what is the relationship to paid staff positions?

problem: volunteers should be doing rewarding, not routine work - that should be paid

need for increased recognition and reward - probably monetary - for volunteers in our society

Government involvement in volunteerism

as little government control as possible

red-tape of government programs (like Action)

may be too much

volunteers serving in government & public agencies

IMPLICATIONS OF THESE TRENDS FOR MANAGEMENT
RESPONSIBILITIES OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE COORDINATORS

at the LOCAL LEVEL

Respondents saw their local responsibilities falling into the following areas. The sub-headings indicate specific duties which were listed several times:

- Develop recruitment - to obtain volunteers from all segments of the community
- Improve intake and selection and placement
 - help agencies & departments to determine where volunteers are appropriate, and how best to utilize them
- Improve and expand training of volunteers
- Supervise volunteers
 - give volunteers meaningful placement, with increased responsibility
 - establish more open communication with volunteers
 - help volunteers in their personal development through volunteering
- Work with departments, agencies & the community
 - enlist the understanding of top administrators & lower level staff
 - work directly with local government and boards
 - coordinate more closely with other groups & agencies in use of volunteers
 - establish closer coordination between local needs and volunteer programs
 - consult with staff of use of volunteers
- Management tasks:
 - improve organization & management
 - clarify ways of recording & accounting for programs
 - more planning & goal-setting
- Expansion of director role in the agency & the community
 - develop new roles for volunteers
 - develop ways to show recognition of volunteer's service & worth
 - action oriented role in programming

Respondents also commented on what coordinators need to perform their expanded responsibilities:

- increased awareness of:
 - human interaction skills
 - social realities - for minorities, youth, aged, etc.
 - national social trends
- increased professional skills and education

at the STATE LEVEL

Respondents indicated the following responsibilities which they would like to see taken by a state-level organization:

Coordinated training programs for volunteer directors

Clearinghouse functions, especially:
information about local efforts
information on national trends and new ideas
& philosophies

Coordination of local volunteer efforts

Support for local programming, especially:
consulting & advising
provision of sufficient funds so local programs
can encourage volunteerism as community develop-
ment
credit & recognition for volunteers throughout
the state

State-level leadership, especially:
provide a State Coordinator, for leadership
liaison work with state departments, agencies, &
groups
gather grass roots opinion on the goals, objectives
& needs of volunteerism
know and advocate pertinent legislation
benefits for volunteers
health care & delivery systems
publicize volunteerism via the news media
develop and upgrade the position of Volunteer
Coordinator
have a role in developing educational programs for
volunteer coordinators at educational institutions

Cooperative research and study

at the NATIONAL LEVEL

Respondents suggested a broader range of responsibilities that should be performed at the national level than at the state level. They include the following services (all of which were mentioned several times):

Information & idea services:

Coordinate information about programs
Study & research new ideas for using volunteers, developing programs, etc.
Seek local input into ideas & trends
Publicize and spread ideas on what's happening in volunteerism, new philosophies, etc.
Create forums - conferences or a journal - for sharing ideas

Building Volunteerism:

Advocate for volunteers - especially through support of legislation allowing benefits like tax deductions, insurance, etc.
Publicize volunteers through the national media
Recognize and gain publicity for the importance of volunteerism
Support local programs - work with them according to their needs
Provide a national organization to speak for volunteer directors

Training Functions:

Provide experts - teams to train volunteer coordinators & trainers or coordinators
Develop educational opportunities for volunteer coordinators
Set up workshops in smaller metropolitan centers & outlying areas, to be accessible to everyone
Finance the training of coordinators

Relations to Federal Government:

Be aware of and support appropriate legislation
Obtain funding for training and programs
Beware of: loss of independence of volunteer programs
involvement with changing politics

Respondents added a wealth of additional comments to their questionnaires, some including speeches, programs, etc. which they had found helpful. The following is only a sample of these remarks (paraphrased for the sake of brevity):

ABOUT THE VOLUNTEERS & VOLUNTEERISM:

Government should keep to the sidelines, and let volunteerism remain one area in which people give solely for the need to give, be useful, and feel valued in themselves.

Nine out of ten volunteers are still middle class, anglo - the traditional volunteer - and they are the backbone of most programs.

The elderly and lonely can, with patience, become the most dependable volunteers for consistent humanistic services. They realize the needs of others.

ABOUT THE JOB OF VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS:

The Volunteer Services office needs adequate supplies & space and full support of the institution's administration to be successful - and so administrators have to come to see the full value of volunteers.

The Director of Volunteers in a hospital is respected by volunteers and helps them - but staff have little use for the Director, tending to see her as one more boss.

The Volunteer Coordinator in hospitals is being asked, like other directors, to set objectives & establish criteria for evaluation. This is very difficult in something as transitory and flexible as volunteer service.

Coordinator needs to use volunteers' talents and skills in organizing the volunteer program if it is to grow - coordinators must learn to share leadership and develop leadership skills in others.

The big changes going on in the mental health system require flexibility on the part of state hospital volunteer directors - programs may wane until things are more settled.

The greatest problem in hospitals is liking things "the way we have always done them".

Volunteer Coordinators need to be more aware of the political situation and its ramifications on all levels.

Personality is only the beginning for volunteer coordinators - they need organizational skills and management training!

Salaries for Volunteer Coordinators have been insulting for too long!

ABOUT EDUCATION FOR VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS:

Clearly established training and career ladder guidelines are needed for the emerging profession of Volunteer Coordinator.

College courses are needed specifically for training volunteer coordinators - both on-campus and through Extension and Independent Study.

There may be some danger in Extension Services taking on the training for volunteer action - academia has its tendency to be bureaucratic.

Small, outlying areas need educational opportunities - done through local colleges or national TV.

The profession needs a "Trends and Issues" publication, in addition to the AAVSC Newsletter.

Volunteer Coordinators need training in:

- innovative programming - management of human resources - community development and organization - government & business power - public relations - psychology - groups

Volunteer coordinators need more opportunities to share problems and concerns with staff from other agencies.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:

Skills development would be more useful than discussion of trends - broad skills in "hearing with new ears" & "thinking with new minds" narrower skills in group relations, obtaining feedback, staff relations, techniques of supervision, delegation of authority, motivation, decision-making, planning in management.

A chance to share with others who coordinate similar volunteer programs would be very helpful.

Would it be possible to make written reports or a "tape library" of the conference available?