

*Institute proposed to train nation's volunteer leaders

NPT Staff

WASHINGTON—The nation's two major volunteer organizations are considering the establishment of a national institute to train volunteer administrators and provide more opportunities to do research in the field.

The institute proposal represents the beginning of a new working relationship between Volunteer-The National Center and the Association of Volunteer Administrators (AVA) which have gone their separate ways in the past.

It also comes in the midst of an effort by the White House to start a volunteerism "movement," a campaign that so far has drawn a decidedly mixed reaction from nonprofit leaders, many of whom question how they will absorb additional people without additional funds.

Existing training opportunities "are not beginning to meet the needs that are out there," says Valeria Ogden, volunteer president of AVA, Boulder, Colo., a group that has long operated with a skeleton staff and a large crew of dedicated volunteers.

A first step to creating an institute is to assess the need for volunteer training in a more systematic way than has been done in the past, says Frank Bailey, chief executive of Volunteer, which coordinates the delivery of volunteer services and information through more than 350 centers across the country.

New AVA Executive Director David Tobin says he would like to see the institute offer five-day training sessions that would go into substantially more depth than is possible at an annual conference of either organization.

"Much of the training that currently exists is targeted to the newcomer," says Mr. Bailey, who notes that the alternative is university courses that tend to take an academic approach to the subject.

While several large nonprofits such as the Girl Scouts have developed their own in-house training programs, most volunteer administrators find fewer options than their counterparts in fundraising departments.

Another problem, says Mr. Tobin, is that no one has ever set any standards to measure the quality of the training programs that are offered.

That concern is echoed by Ms. Ogden, who notes that AVA also plans to examine ways to offer accreditation to college and

had not been adequate consultation with the board of directors and other key people.

There now appears to be widespread agreement, however, that the idea is worth pursuing, and Mr. Tobin says he would like to see the project developed over the next 18 months. However, Ms. Ogden says she hopes the proposal will also spark other people to bring ideas to the AVA board.

No decision has been made on where the institute would be housed although initial plans call for training sessions to be offered around the country.

Points of light

Meanwhile, at press time, nonprofit leaders were still waiting for more information about the White House's proposal for the Points of Light Initiative Foundation, which has been conceived as a kind of clearinghouse for promising new ideas about how to tackle community problems.

Speeches by Gregg Petersmeyer, deputy assistant to the president, Office of National Service, at the recent AVA conference in Washington and Independent Sector's annual meeting in Pittsburgh offered few new details.

"The president does not hate government," Mr. Petersmeyer told critics who questioned whether the nation's problems were all being dumped on the third sector. "But if we continue to believe that these are problems for government to solve, we will never solve them," he said, adding that he believes it is counterproductive to debate who is responsible for what.

Mr. Petersmeyer, who stressed that the president is trying to start a movement, not a program, also dismissed concerns that the emphasis on volunteerism would be pushed to the bottom of the president's agenda as other pressing problems surface. ■

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VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Need

It has been documented that there are over one million non-profit, self help and public programs utilizing the energies of volunteers here in America.

People who lead these volunteer programs often begin their work with little or no formal or even informal training in volunteer management. This lack of information creates programs which operate with either a "learn from mistakes" philosophy or else never achieve their potential for full and effective involvement of volunteers.

The training that does exist for volunteer leaders or managers, both paid and unpaid is usually provided through the mechanism of local, state or national conferences. The formal of these conferences with topics presented in small doses of 90 minute sessions, never provide a comprehensive approach to the subjects or allows attendees the opportunity to learn about and actually work through the best solutions to their own situations.

What is needed is a training format in which volunteer directors are exposed to the most current information in the field, enabling them to learn effective volunteer management and to apply these techniques to the design and operation of their own program. Going beyond theory, the format would showcase outstanding programs and leaders in volunteerism who can demonstrate realistic and practical approaches to real challenges and assist attendees as they map out their own plans for action.

THE VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

A Volunteer Leadership Institute is being designed to provide an in-dept educational experience for all levels of volunteer leaders, be they professional directors of large institutional programs or community volunteers charged with running a local project.

The Institute will offer in 1990 the following programs:

Essential Volunteer Program Training:

This program is an intensive 5 day course of study encompassing all of the essential elements of effective volunteer program management including planning, organizing, staffing, recruiting, supervising, evaluation, recognizing and empowering. The goal of the course is to provide students with basic information and tools necessary to

effectively and creatively operate a volunteer program. While under the tutelage of outstanding leaders in volunteerism, students will be able to translate this learning into practical application plans for their own program.

Advanced Volunteer Leadership Training:

The Institute will offer an advanced seminar in volunteer leadership. Faculty for the intensive 5 day event will be drawn from national consultants, practitioners and trainers in volunteer and non-profit management. This faculty will share practical application to high level skill building in communication, technology, leadership development, marketing, wellness, conflict management, interpersonal relations coalition building, research and trends affecting volunteerism, organizational politics, problem solving, resource development, organizational climate, customer service and legal issues.

Volunteer Management Trainer's Academy:

The Institute will offer a 5 day intensive seminar aimed at the individual who wishes training as an instructor in volunteer management. The goal of the event is to enable graduates to return to their local communities or programs to equip others with the tools of effective volunteer leadership and program management. Through this program, the learning of the Institute can be extended to every corner of the country and provide practical information for community volunteer leadership efforts.

Faculty for the event will be nationally recognized trainers with many years of experience as practitioners in volunteerism.

Sharing Success: Learning From Excellent Community Volunteer Programs:

The Institute will offer a 3 day event on the site of an outstanding volunteer program that will offer students instruction in program excellence. Trainers will be practitioners with particular expertise in specific aspects of volunteer leadership and program management. Students will be able to learn the secrets of success of the programs and begin to apply the learning to their own programs while consulting with these instructors. The goal of the program is to relieve attendees of the burden of having to "reinvent the wheel" or "learn by mistakes" and to provide them with the latest tools and information to be as effective as possible. All aspects of volunteer and program management will be offered through the curriculum.

Volunteers in Government: Another Dimension in Citizenship:

The Institute will offer a 3 day event focusing on volunteer utilization by local, state and national governmental programs. Faculty will be drawn from outstanding managers of programs in these areas and share with attendees specific, practical information on citizen involvement. Students will be able to immediately apply learning to their own programs with consultation from faculty. Subject matter would include recruiting volunteers for government settings, working with a bureaucracy, evaluation of volunteer programs, economic impact of volunteers on government cost effectiveness, marketing governmental programs to the community, organizational effectiveness, humanizing bureaucratic structures, volunteer/staff relations and gaining administrative support.

LOGISTICS

Enrollment at each level is expected to be 50 to 100 persons. Cost of enrollment is anticipated to be \$150-260 per person exclusive of travel and lodging. Funding will be sought from the public, private and nonprofit sectors to underwrite cost of curriculum and material development, marketing and administrative start up expenses.

Management will be provided by the Volunteer Leadership Consortium, an ad hoc group consisting of leadership of the Association for Volunteer Administration and VOLUNTEER: The National Center, the two leading organizations in volunteerism in America: the Arkansas Division of Volunteerism, this country's oldest and largest State office of volunteer service; the Arkansas Public Administration Consortium, a research and training program operated by the university system of the State of Arkansas, and VMSystems, a private technical assistance organization with extensive expertise in design and delivery of training programs for volunteer organizations.

Institute programs are scheduled to occur in times of the year which are traditionally "lighter" for volunteer leaders/administrators.

Sites will vary annually by expressed community needs and invitation by satellite campuses of cooperative colleges and programs. In 1990 sites anticipated include Chicago, IL, Minneapolis, MN and Little Rock, AR.

Developed curriculum will reflect feedback from extensive needs assessments from the field, written standards and expressed competencies of the profession of volunteer management. All attendees will receive a certificate of completion at the end of each course. This certificate will be provided by VOLUNTEER and the Association for Volunteer Administration.