

2001: The International Year of Volunteers

On November 20, 1997, the General Assembly of the United Nations formally passed the resolution declaring the year 2001 to be the International Year of Volunteers.

The concept of an International Year of Volunteers (IYV) had many parents, including Margaret Bell of Australia during her eight-year term as World President of IAVE. It was formally proposed to the United Nations by the Government of Japan in February, 1997. In July 1997, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations officially recommended adoption of the resolution. In the General Assembly, the resolution was supported by 123 countries.

United Nations Volunteers (UNV) has been officially designated as the focal point agency to give leadership to the year for the United Nations. Under the leadership of its Executive Coordinator, Sharon Capeling-Alakija, UNV has begun a series of consultations with governments and international NGOs to determine how best to stimulate interest in the year. UNV has recognized that the years leading up to 2001 are a unique opportunity to gather new information on the nature and scope of volunteering in the world and to build the interests of governments and NGOs worldwide.

Official information on the International Year of Volunteers is available on UNV's web site—www.unv.org. UNV may be contacted at its headquarters in Bonn, Germany: Postfach 260 111 D-53153 Bonn, Germany; Phone: (+49 228) 815-2000.

What YOU Can Do to Celebrate the International Year

In its deliberations, the United Nations made clear that the International Year of Volunteers should *not* be supported by a large United Nations expenditure of funds or expansion of its own bureaucracy. Rather, its declaration of the year was intended to create a framework within which every country—indeed, every community—can celebrate the year in its own way.

This framework offers all of us a tremendous opportunity, both during 2001 itself and in the more than two years leading up to it. We can use the occasion of the year to build support for volunteering and to plan ways that we can make volunteering more visible and more available to more people.

Here are just a few ideas to start your thinking about how you can give leadership to the celebration of the International Year.

- ♥ Become a member of IAVE as a demonstration of your solidarity with volunteers worldwide.
- ♥ Stimulate creation of a “national committee for the International Year.”
- ♥ Encourage your national government to declare its support for celebration of the year.
- ♥ Organize a local committee to plan activities for the year.
- ♥ Share your plans through IAVE's web site.
- ♥ Begin planning and fund-raising *now* to attend IAVE's world conference in 2001.
- ♥ Organize local and national celebrations of International Volunteer Day (December 5) in 1998, 1999, and 2000 to build interest in the year.
- ♥ Tell all of the volunteers you know about IYV.
- ♥ Recruit at least one new member for IAVE each year.
- ♥ Seek endorsement of the year from “VIPs” in your country.

- ♥ Tell your local and national media about the year.
- ♥ Publicize the Web sites of IAVE and UNV as sources of information about the year.
- ♥ Encourage research on the nature and scope of volunteering in your country.
- ♥ Invite ideas on how to celebrate the year from NGOs, government, business, education, religion, foundations, the media—and, most of all, from volunteers!
- ♥ Organize a “poster contest” so that children can depict their understanding of the value of volunteering.
- ♥ Seek active support for the year from major NGOs and NPOs in your country.
- ♥ Organize a national volunteer conference in your country during 2001.
- ♥ Establish a national or local awards program to celebrate the accomplishments of volunteers.
- ♥ Organize an international exchange through the IAVE network, helping volunteers share experiences and resources.
- ♥ Monitor IAVE's and UNV's web sites for current information on the year.
- ♥ Encourage adoption of formal government policies that encourage and support volunteering.
- ♥ Find ways to interest young people in volunteering, building a “habit of helping” into their lives.
- ♥ Sponsor a local conference on volunteering during the year.
- ♥ Identify key issues affecting volunteering in your country and organize groups to discuss and take action on them.
- ♥ Organize a “day of service” in your community.
- ♥ Encourage business to actively support the year, through the volunteer involvement of their workers and their cash contributions.

IAVE's Plans for the International Year

IAVE was an early and enthusiastic supporter of the idea of an "international year." Throughout 1997, members of IAVE's international board of directors worked closely with United Nations Volunteers to build worldwide support for the resolution before the UN. On July 14, Jacqueline Couste, IAVE's First Vice-President, spoke before the Economic and Social Council of the UN in Geneva, the only NGO to be given the opportunity to speak there on behalf of the proposal.

IAVE's board of directors has declared its leadership for worldwide celebration of the International Year of Volunteers to be its top priority. To that end, it has agreed to the following plans:

- ♥ Rescheduling the 16th biennial World Conference to January 2001 so that it may serve as the first global event of the International Year—to be held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, under the leadership of Nederlandse Organisaties Vrijwilligerswerk, the Dutch Volunteer Centre;

- ♥ Creating a Web site with the capability for people all over the world to directly share their plans for celebrating the year—visit us at www.iave.org

- ♥ Encouraging each of our five regions to plan their regional conferences for the end of 2001 or the very beginning of 2002 as a fitting way to close the year;

- ♥ Encouraging our members to lead the way in creating "national committees" to plan celebration of the year;

- ♥ Exploring with the people of Japan the possibility for a worldwide convening of youth volunteers in the summer of 2001.

About IAVE

IAVE was created in 1970 by a small group of volunteers from throughout the world who shared a deep belief in the importance of volunteering and the value of international exchange as a way to build bridges among people.

IAVE is the only international membership organization solely dedicated to promoting, strengthening and celebrating volunteering worldwide. It is a network organization, with individual and organizational members in over 65 countries. It is governed by an elected international board of directors.

IAVE's primary activity is the biennial world conference, first held in 1970. Since 1990, it has been held on each of the five continents: 1990 in France; 1992 in Argentina; 1994 in Japan; 1996 in South Africa; and 1998 in Canada. The 16th world conference will be held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, in January 2001.

IAVE also encourages its members to come together in regional conferences. In 1997-1998, regional conferences were held in Korea, Côte d'Ivoire, and Venezuela; regional meetings were held in France and the U.S.

Membership in IAVE is open to any individual or organization which wishes to show solidarity with the worldwide volunteer movement. Membership dues are \$US 30 per year for individuals and \$US 100 per year for organizations. Members receive three newsletters per year, a membership directory and discounts on registrations at world and regional conferences.

IAVE's secretariat is housed by the Points of Light Foundation, the national volunteer center in the United States, with IAVE's World President, Dr. Kenn Allen:

IAVE

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CELEBRATE!

The International Year of Volunteers 2001



IAVE
The International Association
for Volunteer Effort

Promoting, strengthening and celebrating
volunteering worldwide
