

A Brief History of DOVIA

In major cities throughout the United States, volunteer coordinators have joined together in associations called Directors of Volunteers in Agencies (DOVIA). In the early 1960's few non-profit organizations had full time, paid volunteer coordinators. Volunteer administrators often had to develop the skills of volunteer program management on the job without written guidelines or resource materials.

They often experienced resistance from staff members who were fearful of volunteer expansion within the agency. Volunteer coordinators began to seek each other out for mutual self-help and support.

Although the volunteer coordinator position in agencies was a barely recognized profession in the early sixties, hospitals were placing an increased emphasis on their volunteer programs. Evelyn K. Davis, then executive director of the Los Angeles Volunteer Bureau, helped found a coalition of volunteer coordinators from the hospital and health care area now known as the Southern California Association of Directors of Volunteer Services. Meeting monthly at the Los Angeles Volunteer Bureau (one of the first volunteer bureaus in the United States) and in local hospitals, this initial group was joined by volunteer coordinators from community based organizations to share professional information. After several months of meetings, it became apparent that the hospital coalition had interests and concerns unrelated to those of volunteer coordinators in non-profit organizations. By 1962, the Southern California Association of Directors in Volunteer Services had decided to close their meetings to non-hospital agencies.

With the support of the Los Angeles Volunteer Bureau, a nucleus of volunteer coordinators from non-profit agencies continued their monthly meetings. The leadership for this group was provided by Randy Andersen of the Los Angeles Volunteer Bureau, Ann Rosenberg of the Heart Association, Phyllis Summers from the USO, Kitty Morris of the Braille Institute, and Lilly Essin of the National Council of Jewish Women, Los Angeles Section.

According to Randy Andersen, the group meetings were so successful that other volunteer coordinators asked to join. With this growth in attendance, the organization became more formalized. Meetings became structured around specific topics. The topic of the first general meeting was one that is still appropriate today: "Interpersonal Communi-



cation Skills - Clearing the Lines of Communication Between Volunteers and Staff".

The original membership of DOVIA came from the Los Angeles area, but as other areas learned of the organization, interest in starting similar organizations grew. As a result, members of Los Angeles DOVIA assisted in starting new groups in the San Fernando Valley, Pasadena, Orange County, and Riverside areas. At volunteer confer-

ences and seminars throughout the country, word of the new association spread. In most instances, local associations began with strong support from their volunteer bureau. Today, many DOVIAs continue to meet in volunteer bureau offices, with various support services offered to them through the bureau.

Los Angeles DOVIA incorporated in 1974. The bylaws and articles of incorporation developed by Los Angeles have been the model for other DOVIAs when they, in turn, incorporated.

DOVIA groups remain local organizations devoted to the needs and interests of volunteer coordinators and persons concerned about volunteerism within their own area. Currently there is no affiliation between one DOVIA and another, and networking between DOVIAs is informal, usually occurring when DOVIAs in adjacent regions co-sponsor meetings and workshops.

While some DOVIAs have a formal structure (with elected officers and appointed standing committees) others are very informal groups of people meeting to share information and fellowship. Some, such as Los Angeles DOVIA, are independent associations that provide for their own continuity. In other cases, the organization is sponsored and maintained by the volunteer. In one area, DOVIA is supported and staffed by the local United Way. In every case, however, the organization provides an opportunity for volunteer coordinators to support one another and share resources with other volunteer professionals in the community.

A Daily Primer (excerpt)

Terry L. Paulson, Ph.D.

*Build new self-messages to support your increased effectiveness.
Take care of yourself. There are no replacements.
Either choose to change or wait to be changed.
Avoid mind reading - clarify requests and refusals.
Care enough to confront quickly.
Be a problem solver, not a problem evader.
Have a sense of humor; the crisis of today is the boring history of tomorrow.
Winners lose and win more often than losers because they play the game more often. Stay in the game.
Be your own best friend; catch yourself being effective and allow yourself the mistakes you allow others.*

DOVIA/LA wishes to thank

Data & Communication Services

for computer typesetting this issue.

Please see their ad on page 5 of this newsletter.