

A Sampling from the 1993 International Conference on Volunteer Administration, Little Rock, Arkansas

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Distinguished Member Service Award Acceptance Speech

Carol Todd

Acceptance of Harriet Naylor Distinguished Member Service Award, October 8, 1993

Thank you most sincerely, thank you. I am indeed honored to be selected by the Association for Volunteer Administration for this award and, at the same time, truly humbled. To be honored by you, my professional peers, is the most meaningful recognition a volunteer might ever be granted. I would not be standing here today if it were not for the nurturing support of ever so many of you and for the existence of this professional organization that has played a major role in my personal growth and development.

As you know, I came to this field via personnel training and work, and through 30 plus years of assorted volunteer involvement during the years our family served with the US Army. The encouragement of those around me to "try it, you can do it" helped mightily.

Although I did not know Harriet Naylor, let me join the ranks of those who did in applauding her for her foresight, her clear vision of what our profession could and should become. And for her abiding belief that volunteers must be nurtured and developed so that participatory democracy might be preserved and enhanced. Her writings and speeches clearly call upon us to move beyond managing or leading volunteers. She calls upon us to be proactive in the realm of vision sharing and values development. Her work demands that we inspire volunteers to bring caring and concern as well as skills, energy, and talents to their work. She tells us that "democracy can survive if volunteering does." This may well be the hour when we need this advice the most.

Our field is changing, growing, challenging us to meet the demands of this year, next year, and the future. I think one of the most exciting opportunities ever is right on our door steps.

The possibilities to work in our states with students of all ages, with intergenerational programs, with year-round or summer service corps is ours for the taking. As you know, the National and Community Service Trust Act was signed on the South Lawn of the White House on September 21. Many of you were there to hear President Clinton describe his vision of the difference community service can make to our youth, to our communities, and indeed to our nation.

Carol Todd, Interview Chair for Vermont National and Community Service Commission has served as Chair for Region I of the Association for Volunteer Administration as well as Vice President for Regional Affairs. Additionally, she has received the Harriet Naylor Distinguished Member Service Award. Ms. Todd initiated and managed the first Peace Corps Preparatory Program at the Norwich University and was instrumental in the establishment of the Governor's Commission on Volunteers for the state of Vermont.

Now is time for us as professional volunteer managers to step forward to work with school administrators, community service coordinators, service corps managers, and others to ensure that the values of volunteerism are adopted by the community service programs that are about to become a reality all over this country.

We are the best prepared members of our communities to take a lead in the development and implementation of these initiatives. We have both the managerial skills and the philosophical background and bent to assure that the service rendered by these community service workers is appropriate, truly useful, and meaningful to the participants of the programs as well as to those who benefit from the service. We can and must take our places on the State Commissions that are forming even as we meet. We are the ones who must take the lead in developing the projects that will be funded, for we know where the needs are, we know the most successful ways to deliver service in our communities, and we understand that if lives are to be changed by service, as is the intent of the Act, then values, understanding, and caring must not only be taught but demonstrated as well.

This is not to imply that there will be no problems. Indeed, major issues that will soon appear on each and every agenda are: How do we as managers deal with the concerns of non-paid staff and stipended community service workers working side by side? What changes will have to be made in the expectations we have of our volunteers? How differently will stipended volunteers see us? What supervision issues will have to be resolved? Will new training needs surface? and so on. Meeting these challenges will be worth the effort.

Our communities have come to expect solutions from volunteers. Our volunteers expect enabling leadership from volunteer managers. This is the opportunity the profession has been preparing for.

Holding fast to lessons learned in the past and remaining open to the challenges of the future, we will find ways to promote citizen service in ways that will enrich us all. These are exciting times. I salute you and thank you once again for this honor.