

THE VOLUNTEER ON A SPECIAL KIND OF TEAM*

by

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I am honored to be your first speaker in this exciting three-day workshop on volunteers and to bring you the view from the Federal perch.

I want to share with you the accomplishments and hopes, the programs and objectives, the philosophy and plans, of the Office of Citizen Participation. I want to talk about orientation and services.

Your chairman has asked me to speak with honesty and candor. I shall not sweep problems and frustrations under the rug, but at this moment I am filled with expectant hope and confidence that volunteers, like shorter skirts, will be in vogue for some time to come.

Whenever a new Administration takes the reins of office, staff in the various Departments of the Executive Branch wait with anxiety for some indication of the probable fate of the programs they have nurtured. The Office of Citizen Participation has been very fortunate. Moments after being sworn into office, the new President said in his inaugural address, "Our greatest need now is to reach beyond government, to enlist the legions of the concerned and the committed."

That was on Monday. Less than one week later, on Sunday, January 26, Washington's leading newspaper carried the headlines, "Nixon Seeks Social-Aid Volunteers." The story was not buried on the woman's pages. It began boldly, on page one, proclaiming, "The Nixon Administration is preparing a Government-wide and Nationwide drive to pit millions of citizen volunteers against the country's social ills. Some presidential aides say this program of government-encouraged 'voluntary action' will be 'a central theme' of the new Administration."

Now both the sun and the spotlight shine on the social agency and the volunteer. The questions now are whether the professional will invite the volunteer to share the stage, and what role the volunteer will play. We can only hope that some professional leaders who have been fearful, unconvinced, and overprotective will begin to work as hard at including the volunteer, as they have worked in the past at excluding him. We can only hope that agency leaders will make an all-out effort to keep the volunteer on board with useful duties and will ease the restrictions and caveats which have encouraged the volunteer to look for the nearest

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debarcation point and to regard his agency captain as a restricting captor.

The theme of this workshop is "Volunteers—On the Sideline or On the Team?" If we are thinking of the team as one thinks of a team of horses, then let the volunteer be on the sidelines, walking, riding his bicycle, or driving his car, for a characteristic of the best team of horses is that each pulls with equal weight and matched step. On such a team individuality and differences are repressed and all must function in the same way. If we are thinking of the team as a baseball team, and if we concentrate on that phase in which each player moves up to the same plate and swings at the same ball, then let the volunteer sit in the stadium and root for victory or hoot for defeat, as his prejudices or whims dictate. But if we can think of that same baseball team in which one is pitcher, one is catcher, one is out-fielder, and one is first-baseman, then make way for the volunteer, because he belongs on that team. The point is that the volunteer has an important contribution to make, but it is a unique contribution. It neither parallels nor duplicates the tasks, the functions, or the methods of the professional. If the professional seeks to make the volunteer over in his own image, he will kill the warmth, the individuality, the neighborliness, the nonprofessional assets which the volunteer can bring to the team effort. The volunteer is not a substitute professional. His task is to complement, to supplement, not to supplant.

Frustration and disappointment can only result if the volunteer is viewed as an understudy or pinch-hitter for an under-staffed office. Neither psychiatrist, social worker, nor psychologist can be pinch-hitters for the other. Yet together, they form a unique team, in which the end product is greater than the sum of its parts.

What then, is the unique contribution which the volunteer can make? First of all, he is of the community. He will always symbolize to the clients of an agency the commitment and concern of the citizenry. He comes, not to be paid in salary, but to be paid in satisfaction and in accomplishment. He hopes that through his efforts, the whole world, or an infinitesimal part of it, will be better because of his efforts to make it so.

We must then assure that his identity as a volunteer is made known to client and staff alike. It is ego-building for clients to know that someone is investing his most precious commodity, time, the only dimension of life, in his behalf. It should be comforting to staff to know that at least part of the community is with them, in a very real and corporeal sense, at least.

The volunteer can make a unique contribution as an aware and vocal citizen, working for the general betterment as he perceives general needs through exposure to individual unmet needs. He can reach his own

particular publics in a personal and effective way. Friends, neighbors, blood brothers and soul brothers, fellow-parishioners and fellow-club members, are more likely to accept what the volunteer says because he is one of them, because he reports first-hand observations, and because he is obviously not paid by the establishment. He is not suspect nor should he be.

Have we, in our orientation programs, encouraged the volunteer to understand that speaking out is among the valuable services he can render? I think we may wish to consider this point together for a moment.

I have scanned many orientation outlines for volunteers. They all include caveats about confidentiality. It is only right that they should, because we would not want neighbors to point at Mrs. Jones and say that her adopted baby was illegitimate, nor to point at Mr. Smith and say that he really was not away on business but was serving a prison sentence. We are so fearful that a non-professional may gossip or play the game of "Guess Who!" that we sometimes neglect the importance of reporting and of adapting the game of "Show and Tell."

We have long oriented the volunteer to his duties and responsibilities in social agencies by telling him that he must observe well, so that he can report to the caseworker. We have told him he must listen well and attentively so that the client may gain release. But, we have also sometimes immobilized him by overemphasizing that what he hears and sees must be kept in the strictest confidence.

I would have the volunteer understand that he must look well, so that he will also tell what he saw to neighbors and to legislators. I would have him listen so that he will also tell what he heard to his ill-informed brothers. I would have him pay attention so that he can become a link in the atrophied art of communication between people, too many of whom have stopped hearing, even when they listen.

My orientation would be not only to the importance of silence when it comes to identifying any client by name, but also to the obligation for identifying and seeking to correct through citizen action, the social ills he would never have seen, but for his service as a volunteer.

Typically I scan the orientation outlines and look in vain for the part which says, "Take up the challenge, for yours is the right, if not the obligation, to tell it like it is, to communicate to others what your senses have communicated to you." Speak out about the smells of uncollected garbage in the ghettos, the fearsome sound of a rat scratching in a wall, the sight of a mother's anguished face, when she is dispossessed. Do your part as a citizen and with the knowledge gained through service, share your insights with other citizens, so that opportunities may be opened, injustices corrected, and equality achieved.

If we, as the new Administration plans, are to "pit millions of citizen volunteers against the country's social ills," then we must identify these ills. As child welfare workers, we must face them in all their horror, for they are an inescapable part of the world which the maturing child will encounter. The air he breathes is being poisoned. The rivers in which he will swim are being polluted. The cities in which he must live are decaying. Rodents and riots are part of ghetto life. The generation gap has widened to a chasm. Walls of misunderstanding separate black from white, migrant from homeowner, slum dweller from suburbanite, student from trustee. Illegitimacy mounts. Venereal disease spreads. There is hunger in a land of plenty.

It is my unshakeable conviction that these ills are tolerated only because the large majority of the citizenry does not know the real meaning of these evils in a personal, intimate, emotional sense. I can force this captive audience to listen to a recitation of facts, but this will entice few of you to action. I can tell you that 12% of AFDC families, according to a study just concluded, do not have even one sheet and one blanket for each bed and that 30% do not have one bed per child. "Too bad," you say and mean it. I can report to a group interested in preserving family unity that one out of four AFDC families cannot sit down together for any meal because they lack sufficient chairs. "Too bad," you say and mean it. I can tell those among you who pour cream into your coffee or carefully measure the low calorie substitute, that half the AFDC mothers in this nation said they could not always buy milk for their children, because there was no money. Does it stir you who pay \$21 a night for a hotel room to know that the average AFDC payment is \$42.15 per person per month? There were five million, six hundred thousand persons receiving AFDC payments in July, 1968. Five million is a figure that is too large to be impressive. Five million makes less impact than the direct sight of one child measuring his portion of beans against that of his brothers. Six hundred thousand makes less impact than the tears of a single child who cannot accompany his class to the zoo because the 50 cents to do so would mean no dinner. And a hungry child can neither grow nor learn.

I would orient every volunteer by exposure to society's ills. I would require every volunteer to visit the homes of welfare recipients, in home visitation projects, such as have been undertaken with great success, for community leaders, in a variety of cities, because every volunteer must become a community leader in his own way. Many sincere and devoted professionals still recoil at the idea of allowing a layman to accompany a worker into the client's home, fearing that this may violate privacy and constitute a betrayal of confidentiality. I value privacy and respect confidentiality. So does the venerable professional State Charities Aid Association of New York. Yet this voluntary agency lent its prestige to

help in initiating home visitation. Then in its booklet entitled *Is It Safe? Is It Right? Is It Wise?*, it answered all three questions in the affirmative.

To guard against the possibility that there may still be conscientious objectors to my militant advocacy of this effective method, I have fortified myself with sample testimonials, and offer them here, not only from New York, but from a voluntary agency in Michigan and a public agency in New Orleans.

The Michigan Welfare League, a participating agency of the Michigan United Fund, aided by photographs from the respected Family Service Association of America, produced the pamphlet, *The Inside Story*, which urges each citizen to learn about poverty for himself, "not on sightseeing tours through the slum sections of town, but by accompanying a caseworker" on "regular visits into the homes of the poor."

The Louisiana Department of Public Welfare together with the Orleans Parish Department of Public Welfare published *The Great Untapped Resource*, reporting on results when community leaders were brought "into the homes of public assistance recipients so that they could form their own judgements of the need" and "then try to determine the causes of what they had witnessed and collectively seek remedies."

Says the report, "the visits to the homes transformed images into human beings." It "raised the curtain on a way of living" of which there had only been awareness. It helped the citizen to say, "there but for the grace of God go I." Said one participant, "I could not believe such dire poverty existed." Said another, "I've read about it but I've never seen it." I have heard of no instance in which a client regarded this as an invasion of his privacy, rather he was pleased at the opportunity to tell it like it is to an outsider.

There are other devices I would use for orienting volunteers to the social ills which are the concerns of the social agency. I would ask them to go directly from the wide halls and well-lit rooms, the ample play-yard of a suburban school, which is surrounded by private homes with wide halls and well-lit rooms and play-yards, to an inner city school with its crowded halls and dingy rooms and postage stamp sized play-yards, surrounded by dwellings whose hallways are narrow, whose rooms are dingy and which have no play-yards.

I would have them park their cars near a client's home and by public transportation make their way to the nearest hospital, to the welfare office, and by footpower alone do the day's shopping for their own families, noting well the differences in the quality and prices of their purchases and carrying these purchases without help to the client's front door. I would have them seek housing, by foot, and attempt to stay within the welfare allowance. Then, and only then, will there be meaning in the knowledge that the average monthly AFDC payment for

rent, light, heat, gas, clothing, transportation, recreation, incidentals, and food is less than \$1.50 per day.

I would give honor to necessity for supporting the casework plan, but like the TV networks, I believe I would give equal time to pointing out that millions of casework plans for millions of individual clients have eradicated neither hunger nor rats, have produced neither enough decent and low cost inner city housing units nor inner city day care centers. I would point out that only the citizen's involvement, the American sense of fair play, and the generous neighborly heart which has always been characteristic of Americans, can alter these ills. Americans will respond as they have always responded, if they are given the opportunity to know and the invitation and challenge to overcome specific social ills.

I have spoken of home visitation and of a client's eye view of transportation and shopping, but only as part of orientation. The volunteer has rendered such an endless variety of valuable services with reliability, responsibility, and profit that a mere enumeration of methods and accomplishments could not be crowded into a volume the size of a mail order catalogue.

In our own agencies, the development of volunteer services is best characterized as uneven. No two States and no two counties within any State utilize volunteers in quite the same way. Most, by far, have neither a volunteer coordinator or director, nor even a volunteer program. This, in spite of the fact that the 1962 Amendments to the Social Security Act provided that 75% of all costs of volunteer services could be borne by the Federal Government. A few States did undertake demonstration projects when we agreed to pay 100% of the costs, and some local departments have long had volunteer programs. But five years after the 1962 Amendments, public welfare departments and their child welfare services were still largely closed to citizens who wished to volunteer their services, without cost. Then came the 1967 Amendments to the Social Security Act requiring each State to develop by July 1, 1969, a plan for the use of nonpaid or partially paid volunteers in every one of its public assistance programs. This includes not only Aid to the Blind, Aid to the Permanently and Totally Disabled, Old Age Assistance, Medicaid, and Aid to Families with Dependent Children, but also the children's programs with which you are all familiar, Maternal and Child Health, Crippled Children's and Child Welfare Services.

We have already required each State to establish a position for a State director of volunteer services with July 1 of this year as a deadline. We have asked each of our nine Regional Offices to designate a person who will serve as liaison with the HEW-SRS Office of Citizen Participation, in Washington. The gates are about to be opened. We hope for no less

than a million persons, rich and poor, young and old, men and women, to become members of a VOW Corps, as Volunteers of Welfare.

I am often asked why the "carrot before the horse," which the 1962 Amendments offered, was not hungrily devoured. I think it was partly because so many carrots were offered at once, that even a famished horse would have wound up with indigestion. The biggest carrot was certainly the offer to raise the Federal share of salaries from 50% to 75% if casework services were added. The homemaker services carrot looked very attractive; so did social group work, home economics, services to alcoholics, services to the retarded. Another possible explanation for the withered carrot designed to encourage volunteer programs is that the welfare horse was so exhausted from the tremendous load he was carrying that he could not muster up that 25% of energy necessary to claim his 75% prize money.

Fortunately, however, thanks to the few demonstration projects, thanks to the many, many local stimulants provided by the independent sector, and thanks, too, to the foresight and conviction of some leaders and innovators within the ranks of public agencies, we now have a smorgasbord of effective services for communities to sample. All are valuable. All are proof that volunteers bring a plus quality to client services which can be obtained in no other way.

So wide is the gamut, so varied the contribution, that ours is truly a before the cradle to after the grave operation, in which volunteers help to disseminate birth control information and leave in their wills body organs as well as funds for those in need.

We set no age limits. The very old have served well. And even infants play their part as decoys and icebreakers. It was an infant in the family to family program who broke an awkward silence in the first meeting between a recipient and non-recipient family by reaching out to a responsive toddler. And I was amused to note that one of the national winners in the recent Lane Bryant Volunteers Awards was a young suburban mother, who with others, did her bit in crime prevention by using her baby to avoid suspicion. Wheeling her carriage, ever faster and faster, she tracked down the leaders of an organized crime ring. Of course, one could argue that technically her baby was more a draftee than a volunteer.

Let me single out, merely because one must give body by example, the services offered in the District of Columbia to institutionalized children. These are well-developed and continually expanding. Leaders in child welfare have long deplored the practice of placing infants in institutions, pointing out that a child must have the stimulation which comes from personal interaction. At Junior Village, as in many other large institutions, the public payroll provides no time for hard-pressed staff to hold and cuddle a tiny baby. The difference that volunteers make is the

difference between the arrival of an impersonal bottle at feeding time, and a volunteer's soft arms to hold an infant when he nurses and a volunteer's encouraging hands to help the baby expel his elusive burp. Volunteer service makes the difference between the unnatural and frightening silence one often finds in a ward full of babies who have learned that crying brings no response and the chorus of cries which signify trust and reliance on the outside world. In Children's Village, volunteers find the time to click and coo, and to cuddle society's rejects. In Children's Village, babies cry. Volunteer service knows no barriers and one may see white volunteers holding black babies in a reversal of the long-familiar Mammy role.

At Children's Village, college students are among those who invade the quarters of the preschooler, sparking them to life with countless diversions. They swing them round and round till they are dizzy, throw them into the air, roughhouse with the energy which only the young possess, tell stories, read, count, identify colors, play games, and replace monotony with growth and proof that someone cares.

Summer-time which is often a time of institutional doldrums, with schools closed, is an exciting time at Junior Village because hundreds of volunteers serve daily, transforming the institution into a summer camp. They organize regular trips to expose the children to the cultural resources of a great metropolitan center. Adult volunteers are joined in the summer by an army of youngsters. Their presence makes the difference between the prison pallor one so often sees in institutionalized children and the sparkle of the toddler who is wheeled outside for fresh air and sunshine, the difference between the vacant look which comes from staring at blank walls and the alertness which comes from watching a robin tug at an earthworm. There are dramatics, swimming, an arts and crafts program, trips to the zoo, the aquarium, the public buildings. There are picnics and competitions. There is tennis taught by a pro. There are even discussions on politics to emphasize the exciting potential of life in a capital city.

It is hard to count all the gains, but we know that more than the children profit. The volunteers, recruited from the ghetto schools as well as the high income areas, swim with the children, and learn crafts even as they teach. Rich and poor, black and white teenagers, learn to know each other as partners, without the artificiality of busing, and with a common goal of giving and sharing talents.

And what of the staff? Well, of course, there were resistances. There always are. In discussing the "*Professional and the Volunteer in Corrections: Truce or Consequences*," the Volunteer Courts Newsletter of February 1969 states, "The big block to Court Volunteerism today is not volunteer recruiting; it is not training of volunteers; it is not lack of communications or poverty of funding. It is the corrections profession-

al, the one who has not yet tried volunteers." I am a professional myself, and I know that when you care you fear that someone else may not do the job as well as you might. When you are overburdened, you are reluctant to add to your responsibilities, knowing that planning, and supervision, and availability are essential ingredients to a successful volunteer program. We have gone through resistances to volunteers with the trained nurse and the trained teacher. Why should the trained social worker be any different? We must simply accept this as a fact of life, a difficulty to be overcome. It is worth the struggle. Let me tell you about one worker who had grave professional doubts about the advisability of promoting the family to family program, because she feared volunteers might do more harm than good. One year later, she still had professional doubts about the program, but the new doubts were because it did not seem quite fair to offer this wonderful service only to some clients, because it could not yet be made available to all clients.

And in passing, I cannot help but observe, that unlike the accused criminal, the volunteer seems to be regarded as guilty until proved innocent, and to welcome a long period of service once his innocence is established.

Volunteers have proved their value at Junior Village for years and the staff sings their praise. But there was great resistance to the idea of including fourteen and fifteen year olds in the recent summer volunteer program. There were special and valid reasons for their inclusion. The long, hot summers in Washington are dismal. One must be at least sixteen to participate in work programs, including the Youth Opportunity Campaign. Yet, fourteen and fifteen year olds are successful junior counselors in private camps. The Junior Village staff, reluctantly agreed to try and found that these youngsters can indeed be patient, helpful, reliable, and devoted. Staff has now invited them, along with older volunteers, to help to plan next summer's activities.

Many of the Children's Village volunteers are from AFDC families. They could never have served without help to pay their carfare. As volunteers, they accumulate valuable experience. They are exposed to the world of work. They develop the confidence which comes only from successful doing. And because careful records are kept on their contributions, they can give a reference, often the only reference, which will help them to obtain paid employment in the future. They have proof both for themselves and for the world that they are capable of contributing to society. And a person who is allowed to play his part in building up will be less inclined to tear down.

Let us agree that giving service is ego-building. Let us agree that the persons who are in financial need require proof of their worth as much as, if not more than, others. Let us agree that it is the privilege

and right of every person to serve and that the expenses necessary to giving service should not constitute a bar to the opportunity to serve as a volunteer. By July 1, 1969 we require that State plans make provision for partially paid volunteers, so that the poor as well as the affluent may serve.

I am often asked how one can distinguish between a sub-professional and a partially paid volunteer. I would call attention to profound differences in three areas at least. The sub-professional is an employee. He receives a salary based on the position he occupies. A beginning homemaker is paid a fixed sum for beginning homemakers, which may be different from the fixed sum paid to a translator-interpreter. The volunteer, on the other hand, receives a sum which is based not on the job he occupies, but on his costs of giving service. The retired teacher living on an inadequate pension would receive the same reimbursement for carfare as the needy student.

The sub-professional enters a career ladder. After a stated period of service, he will receive additional pay based on longevity. He will also look forward to promotion to a position requiring higher skills, which also carries a higher salary. The volunteer advances in skill, but he is rewarded not with higher payments but with a greater challenge.

The sub-professional performs duties which the agency has recognized are a part of its basic responsibility. The volunteer performs duties which are not now, or not yet, a recognized obligation of the agency. Thus babies must be fed by staff but not necessarily held while being fed. Children must attend school, but not necessarily given individualized coaching.

And of course, the volunteer, who represents the independent sector, is freer in exercising his independence because he is not dependent on salary for his very existence. This means that the volunteer will remain only when his service is satisfying, and to be satisfying, it must be realistic.

Let me give you an example of a highly realistic program, which was undertaken under Red Cross auspices by a Mennonite group of volunteers. They offered a specially-tailored course on infant care to those who were actually caring for the babies of migrants. Their students? Children as young as six. Said the director of the very successful project, with great modesty, "We were only being realistic. It is these young children who care for the babies while the mothers work in the fields." Now lest there be any misunderstanding, my strong endorsement of these volunteer programs means neither that I favor institutional care for children nor that I believe it is right for a first or a third grader to be responsible for the day-long care of an infant, but until such time as we close down our institutions and provide more suitable

provisions for migrant children, we must do everything we can to promote the physical and emotional health of children.

It is not only the young who should be liberated from institutional confinement, but the old as well. In a project supported by our rehabilitation service, young volunteers from both Harvard and Radcliffe take up residence in a half-way house, helping psychiatric patients, many of whom have been confined for more than a decade, to return and to adjust to the outside world of reality. In Boulder, Colorado, a project supported by our Office of Juvenile Delinquency has sparked a national movement for volunteers in every phase of court work, so that youngsters and adolescents will not have to be sent to correctional institutions. We know that in many areas caseloads of astronomical proportions make probation a mockery. We now see the difference in lowered rates of recidivism when volunteers bring their efforts to bear on correcting the causes of crime, and take a day-to-day personal interest in the juvenile who has run afoul of the law, sometimes agreeing to serve as foster parent, in the face of knowledge that the child has been adjudicated a delinquent. In Utah, a fraternity "adopted" a delinquent. In Kalamazoo, Michigan, the welfare agency recruited college volunteers for youngsters who are returned to AFDC families after discharge from training schools. The college students have less difficulty in establishing rapport than do adults because the age difference is not great and it is easier to make a beginning while you pitch ball and go on hikes.

Foster family care offers a less explored area for volunteers, although they are used in such activities as recruitment, shopping, transportation for medical and dental services and observation of child behavior. There are two projects in Chicago which I wish every community might copy. They are Operation Talent, in which a volunteer undertakes to help a child in foster care to develop an identified talent. The volunteer provides both the enriching exposure, for example, by outings to museums, to the theatre or ballet, and also arranges for special lessons to develop the child's talent. In the other program, as I understand it, every child in foster care who enters the senior class in high school gets a special volunteer who helps him with career planning. It is recognized that most foster parents, who are really partially paid volunteers themselves, have enough to do too in providing for the physical needs of children placed in their care, and lack the capacity for the painstaking exploration essential in the selection of a college, or trade school, in filing for scholarship aid, or in choosing a career. Any parent who has helped his own child through this process knows that it almost assumes the proportions of a full-time job, a job which cannot be done by the high school advisor nor by a caseworker responsible for an entire caseload.

I have mentioned only a few of the services provided for children who are institutionalized or in family foster care. There are also outstanding

volunteer programs in AFDC. Many waiting rooms now contain a children's corner operated by volunteers. Sometimes the volunteers are students as in St. Paul where they run a free soda bar. Sometimes the volunteers are recipients, as in Kingsbridge, in the Bronx, and sometimes they contain a mix representative of the community. All have one characteristic in common. They provide a growing experience for children who would otherwise sit and fidget. They provide scissors and paste for a child who might otherwise cut up. They provide paper and bright paints for a child so that the world will not have to color him an angry or frustrated red. There is indeed no limit to the services youngsters give. In Cincinnati, Ohio, junior high school students work alongside adults preparing and delivering meals to aged persons living in their own homes. In Pennsylvania, teenagers paint and repair the homes of aged recipients.

I have deliberately avoided mention of the volunteer who serves on the traditional team, taking part in staff conferences, providing increased insights about the client, and giving supportive therapy to the client because I know that later speakers will do so.

I want merely to indicate that we will conquer social ills only when we give the volunteer the chance to know social ills and when we encourage his participation in eradicating social ills. Remember that the volunteer cares and works only because he cares. Remember that his only reward is success. And because he is that unique citizen who works only because he cares, we must count on him to attack our nation's social ills with vigor and success. Let's welcome him to the child welfare team.