

POSITION TITLE:

Volunteer Probation Officer (V.P.O.).

SUPERVISOR:

Assistant Court Volunteer Programmer.

TIME COMMITMENT:

A minimum of nine months' service availability. The volunteer probation officers must meet with their assigned probationers at least once a week for a minimum of two hours during the first two months. V.P.O.'s are encouraged to maintain the same contact rate after the first two-month service period. They usually serve from six to nine months.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Volunteers must be at least 20 years old, mature, concerned, and a good adult model. They must have no prior arrest and conviction records other than minor traffic violations. Each volunteer is strongly urged to have access to or own an automobile.

TRAINING:

All volunteer probation officers must take six hours of specialized training prior to assignment. Training sessions are held on the first Monday and Tuesday of each month, between 7 and 10 p.m. Active V.P.O.'s are encouraged to participate in the in-service training session on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m.

DUTIES:

Each volunteer probation officer will be assigned to supervise one child on probation with the County Juvenile Court. The V.P.O. will be expected to meet with his or her child on a weekly basis during the first two months. The volunteer will exercise the court's probation conditions.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS are definitions of a person's duties and responsibilities within an organization. They are essential to the success of agency volunteer programs. A good job description clearly outlines the function to be performed, and its development forces a social agency to think through its use of volunteers.

An adequate job description cannot be developed unless there is an actual need for the function it describes. Hence, job descriptions meet the first criterion of a good personnel policy—they define needs to be met by the recruitment and training of new staff.

In developing job descriptions for volunteers or paid staff, an administrator is forced to review the nature of his organization and the interrelationships of his staff. This allows him to analyze his resources, plan for their best utilization, and ultimately to organize his unit to meet his goals.

Recently, the staff of the Office of Volunteer Programs at Michigan State University set out to develop several new volunteer opportunities for students enrolled in pre-medical or other health oriented curriculums.

In our zeal to open up new locations for the pre-med type student, we failed to define the role of the volunteer in the agency clearly. Our staff thought the students we recruited would be able to use their training in a residential health care facility. But the agency staff actually planned to use the student volunteers as visitors for their patients.

Job descriptions

MATCHING VOLUNTEER SKILLS WITH AGENCY NEEDS

JOHN H. CAULEY, JR.

Director, Office of Volunteer Programs
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POSITION TITLE:

Tutor.

SUPERVISOR:

James Elementary School teachers.

TIME COMMITMENT:

A minimum of three hours a week for each tutor during the school year. Five hours a week is preferred.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Tutors must be high school students or adults from the James Elementary School community.

TRAINING:

Tutors will be trained by the teachers to whom they are assigned. Training will take place at the convenience of the prospective tutors and will normally consist of personal interview/information sessions with individually assigned teachers.

DUTIES:

Work with a designated child or small group of children to improve specific skill areas such as reading and arithmetic. Maintain records of activities and progress. Maintain weekly contact with teacher to report progress and plan future activities.

We started with a well-planned and well-received training session, and the volunteers began with great enthusiasm. The initial enthusiasm was short-lived, however, because the volunteers quickly perceived that they would not be involved in the treatment of residents and that on Saturday mornings—the time assigned to volunteers—only a few of the agency's medical personnel were even on duty.

Our failure to develop written job descriptions led to the almost immediate failure of the volunteer program and the creation of a great deal of misunderstanding between the student volunteers, the community agency, and our staff.

In retrospect, our staff realized that if job descriptions had been written in advance, many of the program's problems could have been avoided.

A description should not only detail the functions of the volunteer, but it should also outline the responsibilities of the agency. For example, good volunteer job descriptions will incorporate all of the following elements:

- A job or position title.
- The function and responsibilities of the volunteer.
- Names of supervisors.
- The required time commitment.
- Essential qualifications.
- The necessary training that will be provided by the agency.

The position title should define and identify the role of the volunteer. Volunteer Probation Officer and Child Activity Room Supervisor are two examples of brief but explicit volunteer position titles. A short explanatory paragraph describing the duties and functions to be performed should follow the position title. Alternatively, the duties and functions can be listed individually rather than in paragraph form. The essential point is that duties and functions must be clear, concise, and easily understood.

Well-developed job descriptions honestly state the actual time commitment required. One of the most

serious mistakes an agency can make is to fail to indicate truthfully how much time the volunteer will need to do the job. Too frequently, agency administrators say, "But I can't really expect volunteers to devote enough time to complete the job." If that is true volunteers should not be involved in that job. Volunteers should be recruited and trained only for positions they can handle. Recruiting volunteers without clearly defining the time commitment will ultimately result in failure of the project.

Too often, the decision to recruit volunteers is made without adequate planning, preparation, and commitment on the agency's part. This leads to difficulties in the successful implementation of the idea, and these lead directly to frustration and, ultimately, the failure of the well-meaning volunteer.

Businesses do not hire people unless they actually need them. But many agencies create volunteer programs and recruit volunteers before they need them or determine that their use will increase the amount and quality of service provided. When social service agencies have small staffs and resource shortages, the volunteer route seems an easy solution. Hence, the most basic personnel policy—that of establishing an actual need for additional personnel—is often violated in the development of social service agency volunteer programs.

In a paid work setting, after administrators and planners determine that a need exists or that there is a function for another employee, they develop a job description to outline the new position's duties and responsibilities. This allows a prospective employee to get a clear picture of the type of job being offered. It also indicates the requirements for the position to the prospective employee. Even before he applies, the individual knows essentially what the job entails and has an idea about whether or not he is qualified.

Another obvious difference between the treatment of paid staff

POSITION TITLE:

Social Work Aide.

SUPERVISOR:

Individual members of agency casework staff.

TIME COMMITMENT:

A volunteer assigned as a social work aide will be expected to serve for a minimum of 12 months. Each social work aide must serve at least eight hours a week and attend the agency's monthly casework staff meetings.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Each volunteer must be at least 18 years old and should successfully complete the Social Work Aide Training Program.

TRAINING:

The Social Work Aide Training Program consists of 40 hours of classroom training spread over a two-week period. Each volunteer will be expected to demonstrate skills in interviewing, peer counseling, and referral at the conclusion of the training session. The training sessions are conducted semi-annually.

DUTIES:

Each social work aide will be responsible for maintaining a caseload of 10 individuals. The aide will be responsible for providing interviewing and referral service in local community centers. Each aide must maintain a good working knowledge of his or her community and its resources. In addition, each aide must keep regularly scheduled office hours and submit monthly reports to the area community center.

and volunteers involves the introduction of the individual to the organization. Management usually provides the paid employee with a general view of the organization and its function. Most important, however, the paid employee is usually introduced to his co-workers and superiors. Where volunteers are involved, this basic essential of most

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successful job performance is frequently overlooked. In too many situations volunteers are simply left to introduce themselves and develop their own friendships.

Organizations hiring new employees provide a substantial amount of time for orientation and training. Depending on the nature of the job and the amount of responsibility, the training period for a new employee may last from a few hours to a few days or even weeks or months. Orientation and training gets the new employee off to the proper start and familiarizes him with the organization's goals and objectives. In addition, the orientation-training period gives the new employee time to adjust to his new environment.

Inadequate Orientation

In the development of agency volunteer programs, orientation-training is the one basic personnel function that is carried out on a fairly regular basis. Most social service agencies recognize that volunteers need to have at least a general idea of their functions, and this information is frequently conveyed through some sort of orientation-training session. But even though agencies usually provide orientation-training, it is usually inadequate. Many agencies provide new volunteers with nothing more than an informal interview.

Too often agency personnel have only a vague idea of how volunteers will be used. For example, last year our campus newspaper ran an article based on an interview with the director of a local day care center. The article contained a clear plea from the director for volunteers to assist at the center, but the secretary on duty at the center knew nothing of the newspaper story. Her method of dealing with telephone inquiries about it was to take names and phone numbers with the promise that she would return the call. Later she learned from the center's director that volunteers were always welcome, but obviously no one had prepared the staff for them. Nor

was there a job description available. It is doubtful that many volunteers found their experience at the center satisfactory. This is indicative of the manner in which many agency volunteer programs begin.

A good job description indicates the kind of training required for each volunteer position and tells who will supervise the volunteer on the job. Knowing who is responsible for supervising the volunteer is essential. Too many times agencies fail to tell both volunteers and staff.

In fact, most agencies fail to provide adequate supervision for the volunteer, and some provide none at all. Usually, an already overburdened staff member simply assumes responsibility for the volunteers and therefore has little time to oversee their activities. This, coupled with other discrepancies, almost certainly results in the failure and the frustration of the volunteer. In contrast, it is unthinkable that a paid employee would not be closely supervised until such time as he was able to assume responsibilities in a non-supervised setting.

The problems created by the lack of basic personnel policies in the design and implementation of volunteer programs are further aggravated by what may be called the agency-volunteer authority conflict. The question of authority is central to the success of the volunteer effort. Failure on the part of the agency to develop essential and adequate personnel policies for volunteers is a part of the confusion surrounding the authority issues. If social agencies recognized true authority over their volunteers, they would develop and refine personnel policies to outline the nature of this relationship.

The authority problem arises primarily from failure by the agency to recognize the volunteer as a staff member even if unpaid. Thus, the agency relegates the volunteer to a questionable status that creates uncertainty and ambiguity.

The final discrepancy between the non-paid volunteer situation and the paid work setting is the volunteer's

lack of opportunity for advancement. In most social service agencies, paid positions are clearly defined and ranked. Each employee knows the requirements and qualifications for advancement. Unfortunately the volunteer has little opportunity for advancement. Too frequently his function has not been clearly defined, and until the agency provides him with at least a job description, it will be impossible to "promote" even the most successful volunteer.

Job descriptions should state exactly what qualifications will be required, and once established, the agency should stick to its written statements. Often agency administrators are quick to waive their own printed statement of qualifications because they do not know how to say no to the well-meaning, over-enthusiastic volunteer sitting before them. This failure to adhere to the necessary qualifications will only hasten failure.

Again, in comparing the volunteer setting to a paid work setting, it is obvious that supervisors normally would not hire an applicant unless he meets the minimum qualifications for the position. The same rule must also be applied to all applicants for volunteer positions. An individual either qualifies or he does not. Agencies definitely must learn how to say no.

Agency Needs

Basically, the agency will have certain needs and expectations. For example, our local probate court expects MSU volunteer probation officers to serve for at least nine months. All agencies expect a volunteer to be dependable. If an agency has developed a well-planned volunteer program, its staff will expect those who accept placement to meet their commitment.

At the same time, when developing job descriptions, agency administrators must keep in mind the volunteer's needs and expectations. For example, a volunteer will want to know specifically what his function

will be, how much time will be required, who will provide the training and supervision, and what qualifications are required for whatever volunteer position is offered. The volunteer will expect to contribute a valuable service, and will be seeking a meaningful and worthwhile opportunity. If volunteers are only offered tedious tasks that are not wanted by the paid staff, few volunteers will even accept a job in the first place. Agencies must recognize that today's volunteer seeks an opportunity to be involved in a direct-service capacity.

On the other hand, volunteers must realize that agencies are limited in their ability to design and implement volunteer programs. Initially, any social agency will be governed by staff and budget limitations. Even though it may be most desirable to hire a full-time volunteer coordinator to recruit, train, and supervise volunteers, most agencies will not have such resources. Many agencies will not even be able to provide other services such as free uniforms or complimentary meals for their volunteers.

Agencies should also be made aware of volunteers' limitations. Many volunteers cannot give more than two hours a week because they have other commitments. Many volunteers are limited by their own lack of resources. If a volunteer must provide his own meals when he is on duty, he may hesitate to extend his service commitment because he cannot afford the extra meals. Similarly if a program requires volunteers to purchase and maintain their own uniforms many will select other, less expensive programs.

Student volunteers often face limitations not encountered by regular community volunteers. The student volunteer must schedule his volunteer participation around his academic commitments. Every student is faced with term papers, exams, term breaks, and new schedules at the beginning of each term. There are realistic factors to be aware of when recruiting college students for

a volunteer program. Both agency and volunteer must honestly assess the requirements and time commitments of all programs.

If a job description is a vital link in the volunteer program development process, how can it be used to the greatest advantage of both agency and volunteer?

The most important fact to keep in mind when writing volunteer job descriptions is to be totally honest. Caution the agency against selling its volunteer program by using impressive volunteer job titles. The most frequent mistake that agencies make is their failure to describe the duties, responsibilities, and time commitment of their volunteer positions honestly. An important-sounding title will not fool volunteers for long if they can see that the agency does not value their contribution.

The volunteer job description, then, should be used in the same manner as a job description for a paid employee.

FIRST, the description should accurately outline the duties and responsibilities of the job.

SECOND, the volunteer job description should be used early in the recruitment-interview-placement process. If the description is well written, it will state explicitly the required time commitment and qualifications. An agency administrator should use the description to make sure that the prospective volunteer meets the minimum requirements. It is a waste of both the volunteer's and the agency administrator's time if they spend an hour and a half discussing the agency's swimming program for the handicapped without stating early in the interview that volunteer participation in the program requires water safety instructor certification.

THIRD, the volunteer job description should be used as one of the very first training devices in the agency's volunteer training program. Clearly stated, well-written job descriptions will save a lengthy explanation of the volunteer's role in the agency, and the description

should serve as the launching pad for additional training.

FINALLY, the volunteer job description should serve as a clear statement of the volunteer's duties, and this statement should be used in volunteer evaluation sessions. If the volunteer was recruited and trained to perform a specifically-stated function, then his supervisor can use the description in evaluating and guiding him.

A Non-Student Community Volunteer Job Description

POSITION TITLE:

School-Community Liaison Aide.

SUPERVISOR:

Community school coordinator.

TIME COMMITMENT:

Each aide will be expected to serve for a minimum of eight hours a month during the school year.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Each aide must be a parent of a child attending James Elementary School.

TRAINING:

Each school-community liaison aide will be trained by the community school coordinator assigned to James Elementary School. Training will take place at the convenience of the volunteer and the community school coordinator. Training will consist of an outline of the duties and responsibilities of the school-community liaison aide as interpreted by the community school coordinator.

DUTIES:

The aide will serve as a liaison person between the school and the surrounding community, inform parents of school and community services, encourage parent participation in programs conducted at or sponsored by the school, advise faculty about community problems and special needs, and assist the community school coordinator in the development and implementation of special projects and programs.



Designing an effective orientation session

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING often goes by the name of "orientation." Regardless of the terminology, however, leaders of student volunteer programs and community agency supervisors and staff are becoming increasingly aware of the need for a more sophisticated form of job-introduction than the old, "Here's your desk, here's where you hang your coat, and this is Mr. Spelvin, your supervisor." The design offered here for training prior to the actual work experience lays out the essentials of a typical orientation and expands the concept beyond that of a perfunctory lecture session.

In the past, too many student volunteers were assigned vaguely-described jobs in unprepared agencies staffed by strangers who operated in what was for the newcomer a totally alien environment. Naturally, many were frustrated and disillusioned, and some failed completely at their tasks.

Most failures can be avoided if volunteers are given adequate pre-service training. But this type of training requires knowledge, skill, and a supportive attitude on the part of the agency staff. Most of those who undertake the training task will need assistance in designing and conducting effective pre-service sessions. The following design and the suggested techniques that accompany it should help. Its actual implementation should take about two hours and will function best with from 10 to 25 participants.

Preliminary Design

The agency, student volunteer coordinator, or whoever will conduct the orientation sessions should assemble a representative group of people who have a stake in the project—student volunteers, agency workers and officials, and the student volunteer program leader—and prepare a preliminary design well before the first session's scheduled date. By airing their expectations, these people can help him establish general objectives based on the needs of the agency and the volunteers. The general objectives might be expressed as follows:

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

To help student volunteers assigned to this agency to understand who we are, what we do, and how we do it, and to learn what the volunteers can do for us.

This is just a sample general objective. Prepare your own to fit your situation.

Next, translate the general objective into specific, measurable objectives. These specific objectives must be measurable or you will not be able to train or evaluate accomplishments of the training sessions effectively.

Here is how you might write your specific objectives:

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

At the end of the orientation session, the student volunteers assigned to this agency will be able to:

1. List their expectations for the job and what they

think the agency should do to help them achieve these expectations.

2. Identify rules of behavior and appearance expected of them.

3. Describe the specific jobs for which volunteers are required.

4. Describe the work standards of the agency, indicating acceptable and unacceptable levels of work.

5. Identify their supervisors by name and title and describe how the supervision process affects them in their work.

6. State precisely work time schedules and the extent of their commitments in hours and weeks.

7. Show evidence of enthusiasm for their volunteer commitment and a sense of belonging to the agency. (This objective will probably be a matter of alert observation on the part of the trainer.)

Again, write your own specific objectives, making sure that they are the measurable as well as specific. Keep in mind, however, that these are preliminary objectives. At the start of the session you will want to adjust or change them to get goal agreement among the participants.

The Learning Climate

Provide an attractive, informal environment in the agency, away from general traffic. Remember, you are offering group participation, and you want the volunteers to be actively involved in the learning process.

Be sure everyone has been informed of time and place. Have all your materials ready before the session starts, and arrange for refreshments to be available during breaks. Prepare name tags for everyone, including yourself.

Arrive early and greet the participants personally, handing out name tags to each. Introduce them to each other and enlist help in greeting others.

Finally, start on time.

Training Session Techniques

Every trainer has his own techniques, and whether you are a professional trainer or strictly an amateur, you may have techniques that you are most comfortable using. The techniques described for the several activities or sections of these orientation sessions are only suggestions. If they don't work for you, develop your own methods.

First Activity (about 10 minutes)—Convene the group and greet them collectively, cordially, and informally. Introduce yourself and share your role. Start the session with the idea that it is intended to orient new volunteers to their jobs.

Introduce the agenda in this vein: "We think this information will be useful to you, however, we are happy to answer any additional questions you might have."

Second Activity (about 20 minutes)—Unless you are positive that everyone in the group knows everyone

else, provide a context in which volunteers can get acquainted with one another.

New volunteers like to know what kind of people they are going to work with. One way of offering people an opportunity to learn something about each other is to convene small discussion groups of five to seven and suggest that the participants introduce themselves and share some of the reasons they are volunteering or some of the benefits they will receive from the experience. Fifteen minutes should be sufficient for a group of five—a little longer if the groups are larger (six or seven).

Third Activity (about 10 minutes)—The participants' comfort will be increased if the student volunteer coordinator also shares some information about himself. For instance, he can tell about the personal benefits he is receiving from working with student volunteers.

After these introductions, proceed to the objectives of the orientation.

OBJECTIVES 1-3

The first three objectives fall together naturally. Again, they are:

1. List student volunteer work expectations and ways in which the agency should help them achieve these expectations.

2. Identify rules of behavior and appearance expected of student volunteers.

3. Describe the specific jobs for which volunteers are required.

These fall into categories of expectations and requirements. Each party to the contract (the volunteer and the agency) must make expectations unequivocally clear. Part of that process is an assessment of tasks and capabilities. It is counterproductive to ask for volunteers without specifically detailing what they are required for. So, for purposes of this design, we'll assume that the agency has adequately written job descriptions. (See "Job Descriptions—Matching Volunteer Skills with Agency Needs," an article by John Cauley, page 36).

Who comes first? Should agency people immediately tell the volunteer their expectations or should the volunteer have the first chance? Most orientations follow the first alternative. We'd like to suggest that you follow the second because:

- You can avoid answering questions that volunteers are not asking or questions for which they do not need answers at all.

- You can get a clear sense of the group's concerns and start building presentation priorities on that basis.

- You will reaffirm the climate-setting phase of the orientation by seeking volunteers' opinions and doing so in a considerate manner.

- You will be alerted to concerns that you had not thought about.

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Keep in mind that the volunteer is vulnerable. He is new to the environment. He may believe that he doesn't have the right to voice demands and expectations. If that's not a problem, the volunteer may assume that the agency knows what his expectations are, or assumes that all the volunteers have similar expectations and that the agency knows them. Finally, some people have no expectations at all—or at least none that they can articulate. In any event, do not assume that people will voice their expectations in an orderly manner just because you ask for them.

Incidentally, the recitation of mutual expectations is not very interesting. If it goes on very long, volunteers will get bored. So will you. Communicate as quickly and as interestingly as possible. Here's one technique:

Fourth Activity (about 15 minutes)—Present a brief introduction to the subject: "Before we can work together productively, you have to know exactly what legitimate expectations are going to be made of you and we need to know the expectations you have of us. None of us is clairvoyant, so these mutual expectations should be expressed and shared before we can decide whether or not we belong here and are building a good working relationship."

Hand out the job descriptions and add any clarifications that seem necessary. Ask each person to read the description and be prepared to answer questions or give reactions.

After sufficient reading time has elapsed, form discussion groups. Again a group of five to seven participants is about right. Ask for questions and reactions. Answer the questions fully and honestly. Listen to the reactions and comments.

Fifth Activity (about 20 minutes)—It is not only important that the volunteer know what is expected of him but the agency should also be aware of his resource area talents. You could begin by mentioning that the agency still doesn't know precisely what you can contribute. When they do, they will be able to match your talents with the jobs to be done. The purpose of the following discussion topics is to help you identify and be ready to share your abilities with people at the agency:

1. Think about the talents you have that may be useful on your volunteer job.

2. What things do you need to know that will enable you to do a better job?

3. How can the agency help you learn the things you need to know?

You may want to write down the answers to these questions so you can refer to them later when you get on the job. Take about five minutes to think of the answers, then talk about them.

By this time, you have:

1. Helped volunteers get acquainted with each other.

2. Helped them assess their expertise.

3. Facilitated the process of stating their backgrounds, talents, and needs.

At this point, it is time to be more specific about the job structures.

OBJECTIVES 4-7

Objectives 4-7 focus on performance standards and relationships within the organization:

4. Describe the work standards of the agency, indicating acceptable and unacceptable levels of work.

5. Identify volunteers' supervisors by name and title and describe how supervision affects them in their work at the agency.

6. Precisely state work time schedules and the extent of volunteer commitment in hours per week and weeks per year.

7. Be able to identify co-workers by name and appearance and relate at least one conversation with each.

Sixth Activity (about 45 minutes)—Take 30 minutes and tell the volunteers what they should know about job standards, their supervisors, work schedules, and any other information they will need during their first months as volunteers. One important caution: Don't overload. Tell the volunteers only the things they really need. It doesn't matter how significant or insignificant the information may be. If they need it, tell them. But don't talk about the history of the agency or people who have "gone before." That information is interesting and they will appreciate it more after they have been on the job a while.

When the presentation is over ask for questions and wish them well.

A PRE-SERVICE TRAINING SESSION

Activity	Time Allotted	Objective	Methods
1	10 minutes	Introduction Share agenda	Presentation Answer questions
2	20 minutes	Participants get acquainted with each other	Small group discussions
3	10 minutes	Participants get acquainted with volunteer coordinator	Presentation
4	15 minutes	Job clarification	Read job descriptions Share expectations Answer questions
5	20 minutes	Background and talent identification	Write talent descriptions, skill and benefit expectations
6	45 minutes	Identify job standards, supervisors, work schedules, other basic data about job	Presentation Answer questions



DR. ALEC DICKSON, Director, Community Service Volunteers, London, England

LONDON—Recently 20 representatives from universities—most of them African—conferred at the Haile Selassie I University in Addis Ababa, to discuss the ways Ethiopian students are bringing about change—change in the university structure, change in themselves, in the rural areas, and in the society at large.

Ethiopia's University Service—EUS for short—is one of those Third World programs that require students to

work for a year in rural areas as an integral part of their degree course. Had EUS not been introduced, Ethiopian schools would have continued to be staffed by imported teachers using textbooks written in an alien cultural idiom. More negatively still Ethiopia's university graduates themselves would have tended increasingly to have become virtually foreigners in their

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own countries and ignorant (or fearful) of real conditions in the remoter parts of their own nation.

The questions raised by the concept of requiring university students to undertake a year of service in rural areas as part of their course—introduced similarly within the last few months both in Nigeria and Nepal—are many. Should the year of service be somewhere in the middle of the university years, or after graduation? Should the students be administered by the university authorities, treating the years as an educational experience, or administered by the ministries that are using the students as part of a national development program? Is there an essential difference between “field work” (as it is normally understood by many faculties) and “service?” Should students undertake tasks that will meet the immediate needs of villages, or should they be involved in work more related to their own fields of specialization? What is involved in making provincial governors, district agricultural officers, and local headmasters aware of how to get the best out of town-bred students?

Many more questions were asked at the conference. Should faculty members accompany students just as army officers, having trained their men, serve alongside them in the field rather than remain back at headquarters? How is demoralization to be avoided when an engineering student finds himself given an assignment to teach Amharic in a provincial school? As more and more governments in the Third World enact legislation that requires a student to undertake some kind of service, the need to find answers to these questions will become increasingly urgent.

Involuntary Volunteers

It is a long way from Addis Ababa to the renovated tenement block on the Pentonville Road, London, which houses my own organization, Community Service Volunteers. But we, too, have our involuntary volunteers. They are easily recognizable as they sit in our outer office waiting to be interviewed. It is not just the neatness of their clothing and the well-trimmed hair that reveal their identity. A faint look of martyrdom may be discernible on their faces, and they are likely to tell the receptionist that they are reporting for their “course.”

They are, in fact, police cadets, 18-year-olds undergoing the last stages of their training before induction into the force at the age of 19. Their particular constabularies have decreed that all cadets shall undertake three or four months of full-time community service, away from their home areas, under our auspices. How do you justify this enforced voluntarism? One is frequently asked: “Isn’t it contrary to all experience that people can be compelled to care for others?”

Our chief constable has answered, “I don’t ask our recruits whether they’d enjoy learning to swim. A policeman must be competent in life-saving. Similarly, I don’t put up a notice in the canteen, ‘Will those inter-

ested in first aid please give their name to Sergeant Brown?’ It’s part of their job to know what to do in accidents.” Why, then, when it comes to this most vital part of a policeman’s training—becoming aware of the community’s problems, learning how human beings react under stress, discovering what he himself can do to meet social needs—should it be left to individual inclination? The two or three most likely to apply may do so for reasons quite unconnected with idealism. They may want to visit London or just to get away from the training sergeant. It is not easy to fault this logic.

More than logic, however, is required to turn a young man acting under orders into a committed person, convinced of the value of what he is doing, and exercising to the utmost his latent capacity to care for others. Our experience is that there are three factors that count. First, within a framework of compulsion there should be a number of options, with the participant feeling free to choose the field in which he can serve. Second, he should sense on arrival that he is wanted. Third, the relevance of the project to his own professional future should be clear.

“Pure” Volunteers

These truisms, it may be argued, are equally valid for “pure” volunteers. But those who have come of their own free will may be readier to go where the need is greatest. Also they are probably in a better position to use their own intelligence and imagination to develop some alternative niche on their own initiative. And they may welcome the opportunity to plunge into some problem area that has nothing to do either with their course of study or their intended career.

It is not what is said in the interview that brings about conversion of the cadets, but the skill we demonstrate in arranging the right placement. If a few days later the cadet enters a hospital ward and finds himself confronted with a dozen spastic kids to bath, lift into pyjamas, and be told a bedtime story, he discovers what it is to be needed. The probability is that within days, if not hours, his attitude becomes indistinguishable from that of the most strongly motivated or spontaneous student volunteer. Before his project comes to an end, he is likely to be writing to us semi-clandestinely asking for an extension of his assignment.

The impact is no less great when cadets are attached to juvenile detention homes and reformatories. Not only has the initial apprehension of the home office—that mayhem would ensue once the cadet’s identity became known—been proved wrong over and over again, but the cadet soon recognizes that the experience of working with juvenile delinquents is obviously relevant to his future career. Sharing responsibility for the happiness or unhappiness of youngsters not so far removed from his own age evokes a readiness to care. Dealing with young people provides a strong contrast with his situation in the police, where he is treated as a junior.

A cadet from Devon writes of his attachment to the largest juvenile detention home in London:

"Whenever possible I joined in their physical activities, much to their delight. There is nothing they like better than cornering 'Sir', when he has the ball in the gym, but it is all in good fun. During my second week there I was asked if I was a policeman. I replied yes, and at first they were disappointed, but gradually they accepted me for what I am, a person. They were soon asking me why I became a police cadet, and sometimes some very interesting comments came out. I tried to point out to them that a policeman had a lot of things to do besides catch villains. In fact, they became interested in the varied work we do, not realizing before how much work is involved in an accident and sudden deaths. I soon became a walking advice bureau, always having to explain charges and police procedure. One day while out on the yard playing football, a police van came in view with new boys. My group all ran over to the van shouting 'meat van' and throwing abuse at the police officers. I went over to pull them away, expecting the same treatment, but they just did what I told them.

"On my time off I sometimes take out boys who have been in a long time. One had a record of absconding from other institutions, so he needed close observation. However, everything went okay, and walking back into the remand home he said to me, 'You know sir, when I went into that toilet at the bingo club, I could have got away because there was another door there, but I didn't want to let you down, seeing you gave up your afternoon and evening to take me.' His saying that made me understand just how normal these boys are."

Cadet's Dilemma

The real problem is not in converting a conscript into a volunteer. It is, rather, the situation that faces the cadet on return to his constabulary, eager to talk about his experience of community service. At once he meets the withering cynicism of an old hand at the station. "Look, son, you're in the police, not the Boy Scouts." Immediately he becomes aware that his experience, perhaps the most vivid in his life, is regarded as sentimental claptrap by older men who constitute the hard core of his profession. It is of little avail to him (or us) that the man at the head of the force, the chief constable, wants cadets to be exposed to this process of sensitization, if the lower layer of authority views it with scorn. In business studies, this is known as "the middle-level management syndrome." It can be encountered just as often in mental hospitals. A superintendent welcomes the presence of student volunteers in the hope that they will bring a new atmosphere into the wards. Yet all that the volunteers try to achieve can be short-circuited by middle-level manpower.

It took some years of persuasion before penal authorities would agree to the temporary release of young offenders towards the end of their sentences, but today

there is a growing interest in this approach. The difficulty now is to persuade other institutions and projects—children's homes, schools for the handicapped, hospitals, and other institutions—to accept the services of a young person with a record of delinquency or crime. Asked where they themselves would like to serve, many young offenders indicate a somewhat pathetic preference for working in a home for delinquents or a reformatory because they are familiar with these places and because they feel that they have a special message to convey. But it is precisely such institutions that are most reluctant, for understandable reasons, to accept volunteers from that background. One young offender, placed in a school for autistic children (who experience great difficulty in communicating or forming any close relationship) has written:

"I did well because I'd been in reformatories and similar places for the biggest part of my life, and I know the way the kids feel. I knew how I felt when I was inside, and I wanted something and I couldn't do it, and I just tried putting my mind back again into the position of the kids."

Another has written:

"I felt a sort of lost feeling early on. I suppose it's because I've not got the protection of the prison . . . I took the kids from our house to see and hear (some are deaf and some are blind) a choir sing, and they really loved it. One little girl here said to me today, 'Excuse me, Mr. Smith, but why does everyone here like you?' I never had an answer, but it made me feel that I am doing something good."

Yet another has written:

"On leaving the prison it felt strange to think that I, who had only recently been looked after, was going now to look after others, and to help mould their future. It was quite frightening. . . . I have been working with the kids now for three days and find maybe I am too soft with them. I think this is because of what has happened to me, and I feel sorry for the children, because I know what it's like to be in a home of one sort. But I must forget this if I am going to help the kids. . . ."

It would never have occurred to any single one of these youths, before they "went inside" to volunteer to care for those in need. Now, through the instigation of others—ourselves and the penal authorities—they have cared. And now a significant number of them want, somehow or other, to do this for life. Hitherto it has been assumed that generous action is the consequence of conscience. But for some young people today, conscience may well be the consequence of involvement in generous action. Biblically, the transfiguration preceded the healing of the epileptic boy. For lesser mortals the care of an epileptic child may lead to transfiguration. If some experience of responding to human needs becomes an integral part of educational courses and training programs, the concept of the involuntary volunteer may not, after all, be a paradox.