

VOLUNTARY ACTION NEWS

MERGER

NCVA and NICOV Form New Organization

VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement was born on July 2, 1979. That is the date on which the merger of the proud parents—the National Center for Voluntary Action and the National Information Center on Volunteerism—became final.

In approving the creation of VOLUNTEER, the boards of directors of the two organizations adopted the following statement of mission and goals:

VOLUNTEER is dedicated to stimulating and strengthening voluntary action and volunteer involvement—those traditions through which responsible citizens, individually and collectively, in neighborhood and nation, seek to build a free society.

VOLUNTEER is committed to:

- The securing of the rights of all citizens to fully participate in seeking solutions to human, social and environmental problems and in making those decisions which affect the lives of their neighbors and themselves.
- The promotion of volunteering and citizen participation as a way for all people to seek their full empowerment as citizens.
- The preservation and strengthening of the voluntary sector as a partner with government and business in charting the future of our society.
- The development of local capabilities to effectively involve citizens in the full life of their community.
- The development of an enlightened and effective leadership for the volunteer community.

The decision to seek merger came almost exactly a year before it became a reality. In July 1978 the NCVA executive committee and the NICOV board of directors, acting on the recommendation of the two executive directors, approved the creation of a Joint Committee on Merger. This committee of eight (four from each organization) was charged with the responsibility to develop the rationale, plan and timetable for the merger.

The committee's final report was

presented to the boards in early February 1979. Seeking to build on the strengths of NCVA and NICOV, the committee proposed a new organizational entity dedicated to becoming an effective, visible advocate for volunteering and citizen involvement. Highlights of the report included:

● **Name:** VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement. The NCVA heart logo will be retained and its use encouraged as the national symbol of volunteering.

● **Location:** VOLUNTEER will maintain offices in both Washington, D.C., and Boulder, Colorado.

● **Management:** The organization will have a unique dual management structure of two executive vice presidents, each responsible for roughly 50 percent of the organization. Dorothy Denny, former executive director of NICOV, will be responsible for all technical assistance, training and constituent relations services as well as business management and publications. She will continue to be based in Boulder. Ken Allen, who had been NCVA's executive director, will be responsible for public policy and public awareness efforts, fund development and research. Each also will have management responsibility for a number of special projects.

● **Governance:** Responsibility for the

organization is vested in a board of directors, which never will exceed 42 persons. The new board was selected from the NCVA and NICOV boards in two steps. First, the merger committee recommended the first slate of officers and members of the executive committee as part of their final report. Second, the Board Development Committee, also composed of equal representatives from both organizations, selected the balance of the slots to be filled. This latter group included four elected representatives of the Voluntary Action Centers and a representative of the state offices on volunteerism.

In addition, the merger committee recommended the election to the executive committee of two persons who had not served previously on either board: Ruth Wilson of Jackson, Mississippi, and Celina Rael de Garcia of Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Representing NCVA on the merger committee were Mary Ripley and Maurice Schwartz, both of Los Angeles, and Diana Lewis of New Orleans. Ivan Scheier of Boulder, Montine Clapper of Washington, D.C., and Jack McClure of San Francisco represented NICOV. The organizations' executive directors, Dorothy Denny and Ken Allen, also served on the committee.

The decision to merge came at a



Volunteer leaders plan merger of NCVA and NICOV. From left, Honorable George Romney, now chairman of VOLUNTEER; Mary Ripley, acting president; Dorothy Denny and Ken Allen, executive vice presidents.

time of strength for both organizations. Merger was seen by the leaders of both as the next logical step toward better serving the volunteer community. Although not unheard of, the merger of national voluntary organizations is relatively rare. In the case of NICOV and NCVA, the rationale for merger can be summarized in five basic reasons:

First, a merger offers the opportunity to improve services to the volunteer community. A major determinant in the decision to merge was the identification of each organization's strengths and weaknesses, the degree of compatibility and complement of the two programs and staffs and the potential for extension of services either to new audiences or into new areas. Together, NCVA and NICOV offer the most comprehensive array of services ever available from a single source in the volunteer community. Together, NICOV and NCVA give leadership to meeting the need to avoid duplication, to sharing resources and capabilities and to building effective programs responsive to new needs.

Second, a merger strengthens the ability of NICOV and NCVA to act as advocates for the volunteer community. Increasingly, each organization is called on to interact with government, business, philanthropy and the media about the issues and challenges confronting the volunteer movement. Increasingly, each organization has sought to participate in collaborative efforts at building consensus around



VOLUNTEER retains the NCVA heart logo as the national symbol of volunteering.

issues. A merger by its very nature brings increased visibility and, ultimately, increased influence. Both NCVA and NICOV believe that positive, dynamic national leadership is

critical to the future of the volunteer community and that this leadership can best be provided by the new, merged organization which will listen carefully to this community.

Third, a merger will strengthen both organizations. Both bring to the merger well-developed constituent relations, active boards of directors, committed staff management and increasingly secure bases of funding. Both have played positive leadership roles in seeking closer collaboration with other national, state and local organizations. But the volunteer community remains diverse and fragmented; realistically, competition is an increasingly important element with which voluntary organizations must contend. Together, NCVA and NICOV are stronger and better able to participate effectively in the marketplace of ideas, constituents and resources.

Fourth, the merger is consistent with the growth and change that has taken place in the volunteer community in recent years. Perceptions of the breadth of volunteering have expanded to include self-help, neighborhood and community-based organizations, advocacy efforts. First steps have been taken toward the reconciliation of these new elements with the traditional agency-based volunteering. Collaboration and sharing of resources and potentials have become increasingly important. NCVA and NICOV have played major leadership roles in each of these developments. It is appropriate that they should now once again demonstrate the feasibility and value of an even closer relationship.

Fifth, and perhaps most important, this is a critical time in our society. The challenges to the viability and even the survival of the voluntary sector are increasing. Personal commitment to service and to responsible involvement is being questioned. It is a time when positive leadership is needed to advocate for effective, widespread citizen involvement. Citizens must be mobilized to voice their concerns with the goal of making an impact on public policy as well as delivering needed service. Together, NCVA and NICOV can more effectively give the leadership that is needed by the volunteer community.

Program Development

Initially, the programs of VOLUNTEER will directly parallel the efforts of its predecessor organizations. But the goal for VOLUNTEER is to develop ongoing program efforts in seven areas:

● **Citizen mobilization:** VOLUNTEER will encourage and facilitate the involvement of citizens in problem-solving in two ways: through assistance to local efforts to match resources with unmet needs, and through demonstration of effective and innovative ways to enable citizens to volunteer in the broadest variety of service, advocacy and decision-making roles.

● **Organizational development:** VOLUNTEER will assist in the development of effective organizations and agencies which involve citizens as volunteers.

● **Leadership development:** VOLUNTEER will assist individual volunteer leaders and administrators in improving their professional capabilities, broadening their horizons and participating in professional and personal development activities.

● **Public policy and advocacy:** VOLUNTEER will further the involvement of the volunteer community in deliberation about public policy, and advocate for those policies which will facilitate the effective involvement of citizens and the voluntary sector in problem-solving.

● **Demonstration and research:** VOLUNTEER will create new models for citizen involvement and pursue those research and study questions critical to the volunteer community.

● **International Development:** VOLUNTEER will take an active role in establishing international networks of citizens and organizations committed to voluntary action and involvement.

● **Broadening bases and reconciliation:** VOLUNTEER will seek to constantly expand the bounds of the volunteer community and to create networks and coalitions that will bring together the various parts of that community.