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A Call to Action on Behalf of Our Profession

By [Susan J. Ellis](#)

March
2006

The Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA) is no more. As of this morning (March 1st), it has been dissolved, victim of a missing \$300,000, executive falsehoods, board mismanagement, and member complacency. That's the bad news – and it is bad. The good news, however, is that we collectively now have an incredible opportunity to create a better association that supports the leaders of volunteer efforts with vision and cutting-edge thinking.

I am not interested in rehashing the AVA scandal here. If you were a member, you received the official notice/explanation; if you were not a member or somehow did not receive the notice, [click here to read it](#). It's legitimate to be angry both at the failed leadership and about how poorly the situation was communicated. However, there are some very important things we can learn from the demise of AVA that can guide us in doing things better in the future. I hope that some distance will allow everyone to examine these issues less emotionally in the coming months.

Whether or not you were a member of AVA, please keep reading this Hot Topic. I am strongly asking each of you to DO SOMETHING in response to what I honestly feel is a remarkable opportunity.

What's Happening Now

The following is a recap of what I know to date about what is being done right now to move forward. Nothing is official and everything is being done by interested people in a volunteer capacity. Everyone agrees that from this point on, ANY PERSON considering her/himself part of the profession of volunteer resources management is welcome to come forward and join in! Prior membership in AVA is NOT required.

New Place on the Web for Information

The AVA Web site has closed down. But a new site, largely still under construction, has been opened through volunteered help. It is www.vmweb.org. Here is where information will be posted about the

interim and permanent new homes of *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*, the certification program, and the substantive content of the former AVA Web site.

New Discussion Board to Discuss Next Steps

Most important, the site has a new online discussion board, **VMforum**. This is the best place to hold open discussions about what should happen next. **CyberVPM** will remain in operation, quite rightly continuing its focus on volunteer management issues. Let's all try to separate the two lists appropriately: Have a question about volunteer program management? Post to CyberVPM. Have a thought about professional association reorganization? Post to VMforum.

Updates on new developments since this Hot Topic (VMweb did not fulfill expectations, but other activities have taken over).

Meeting in Seattle in June

Thanks to the hospitality of the Points of Light Foundation, a meeting will be held at the National Conference on Volunteering and Service in Seattle, June 18-20, 2006 (<http://www.volunteeringandservice.org/>). The exact day and time are yet to be announced. The conference registration brochure will describe the meeting this way:

OUR PROFESSION: FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

In the wake of AVA's dissolution many of us are asking, "what now?" This meeting provides an opportunity for any and all to consider some options for continuing to advocate and support our professional identity. The specific agenda will be shaped by on-line conversations prior to the conference, and probably led by an external and impartial facilitator. All are welcome to attend - both former AVA members and non-members. Registration for the entire conference is encouraged, but not required. The Points of Light Foundation has generously arranged the space and time for this gathering.

Further, Points of Light is offering a reduced conference registration fee at the nonprofit member rate of \$500 to any person who was an AVA member when it dissolved, to encourage and enable participation in the meeting.

Everyone to Help Publicize

All of us with relevant Web sites will do our best to publicize both the online discussion group and the Seattle meeting, so as to encourage the widest participation possible.

State and Local Networks to Speak Up

It is hoped that state and local associations/networks of volunteer program managers – both those who had officially affiliated with AVA and those who did not – will put this whole issue onto a meeting

agenda and designate representatives to speak for their groups on VMweb and at the Seattle meeting.

Possible Second Meeting in Philadelphia in September

ASDVS (for directors of volunteer services in healthcare) will be holding their annual conference in Philadelphia in September. This is a potential site for another convened meeting and would offer a chance for people in the east to talk face-to-face, too.

If anyone knows of other actions going on, please post them as a response here and to VMweb – be sure to explain how any interested person can participate and help.

Updates on new developments, 3 August

A Note on International Concern

It's clear that this crisis is of priority importance to American colleagues. Even though AVA dreamt of being international, over 90% of its members came from the US and it was clear that the demands of operating globally far exceeded capacity. Nevertheless, I invite our international site visitors to join in the conversation here. You have so much to share from a fresh perspective, and we are all in this profession together.

When it started, AVA was the only kid on the block. Today there are both strong and fledgling professional associations in many countries, including Australia, Canada, Japan, Singapore, Scotland, The Netherlands, Hong Kong, and other places, including the European Volunteer Centre that links associations throughout that continent. Ironically, the US has become the only major country with a strong volunteer tradition *without* its own association! So my dream would be to start (unapologetically) a new American association and, in a few years, go to the many burgeoning national associations around the world and suggest a "world congress of national associations" – to work together, not to be one organization.

In next month's Hot Topic, I'll spend more time offering a scenario of what a single-nation professional association can do, as well as how many strong national bodies can interact internationally.

What YOU Can Do

So, this is your chance to step up to the plate. Here are some specific actions anyone can take simply out of a desire to be involved in what happens next.

1. Sign up for the VMforum discussion board and share your thoughts! Return regularly and continue to comment. Also offer to serve in any capacity you are able.

1. If you are a member of a local DOVIA or state association, arrange for time at your next meeting to discuss what's happening and how you can respond. AVA was never successful in creating a productive relationship with the local level, but now new organization could get going by working from the grassroots up.

1. If you are an officer or member of one of the field-specific national associations (health care, justice, hospice, literacy, RSVP, government programs, etc.), now is a great time to talk about the problems of fragmentation and to dream up new models of collaboration.

1. If you are part of a national organization serving the field, such as Points of Light, Hands On Network, VolunteerMatch, and others, now is also the time to speak up on your ideas for collaboration with those in the volunteer management profession.

1. Talk about all this with colleagues – including those who have not been well represented in AVA in the past: officers of all-volunteer organizations, national service clubs, alumni directors, captains of volunteer firefighters, people who run youth sports. Our field is so much bigger than nonprofit agency-related volunteer programs.”

1. Think out of the box. What can you envision for the future? What do you want from a professional association? For example:
 - Do you think we should start a new membership association, merge with another association(s), or become part of an existing national organization?
 - Do you think the new effort should be focused solely on North America, even on just the United States?
 - Should an ad hoc steering committee be formed from the meeting in Seattle to get something off the ground? Would you give time and/or money for such a venture?
 - What were the best things about AVA that you'd like to duplicate?
 - What were the things you really disliked about AVA that you'd like to avoid?
 - What has never been done by a professional association in our field that you'd love to see?
 - What do you see as the relationship between a national association and the many local DOVIAs, state associations, and other professional networks already in existence?

There has never been a better time to practice what we preach: volunteer! Get involved. Pay attention. Speak your mind. Offer to help. Look forward, not back. Get the conversation started!

Respond here now, on VMforum throughout the coming weeks, and see you in Seattle in June!

[Updates on new developments, 3 August](#)

Related Topics: [Volunteer Resources Manager, Role of](#) | [Trends and Issues](#) | [Infrastructure to Support Volunteering](#)

Posted on 6 April 2006 from the American Society of Directors of Volunteer Services (ASDVS)

Our profession has recently had a devastating turn of events with the dissolution of the Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA). The American Society of Directors of Volunteer Services (ASDVS) was greatly saddened by this event and has always worked closely with AVA in advocating the power of volunteerism and guiding volunteer management. ASDVS is "The Leader in Healthcare Volunteer Services Administration" and we want to support everyone in the profession. We would like to invite you to join our community for Healthcare Volunteer Management Professionals. We would like to offer you the opportunity to join our close knit community by trying us out as a complimentary E-member for 6 months.

If you're like other healthcare professionals, your day-to-day deadlines leave you little time for professional development. To make the most of your limited time, you need a source for professional information, support, and resources that you know you can trust. Learn more about our member services.

Submitted on 9 March 2006 by Malapro

I find it deeply ironic when Volunteer Organizations who espouse virtues of volunteer leadership fail to take their own dose of medicine. How many organizations do you know offer workshops or training seminars on "measuring the health of your organization" or "The 360 degree evaluation for your Executive Director", yet have not undergone the exact same seminars themselves?

I'm not sure if the AVA could have been saved if they had more scrupulous board members or if they gave their ED a 360 degree review or if they measured the financial success of their books more regularly.

This whole thing just reeks of hypocrisy.

***Submitted on 8 March 2006 by Jayne Cravens, Consultant,
Germany***

Thank you, Susan, for your continued emphasis on trying to share all the information that's available, asking the tough questions, trying to get everyone talking to each other, and being so clear about your intentions and motivations.

For everyone else: if you are engaging in an activity to help move AVA assets somewhere/maintain AVA assets/network former members/build a new organization to replace AVA, please make an effort to not only let former AVA members know about what you are doing, but also WHO you are, who else is involved, what your motivations are, and what your goals are, however fluid those goals might be.

And for those of you who get invited to participate in such efforts: your time and thoughts are as precious as your money, so do some research on the person(s) and motivations behind any effort before you jump in.

Submitted on 8 March 2006 by Hillary Roberts, President

Project Linus NJ, Inc., NJ, USA

Responding as both an active participant and advocate for grassroots initiatives, it is my sincere belief that VM's from all-volunteer organizations, no matter how organic, have much to offer the development of this profession. We are natural team builders. We are sponges for learning.

It was my experience as an AVA & Dovia member that all volunteer organizations were welcomed. However, the subtle but important needs grassroots organization face are not properly identified or addressed with the same vigor. The term "soft program" is an insult to a VM who devotes 40 hours a week to service. The term vigilante volunteer is counter-productive. All volunteer programs and the leadership that resides represents a pool of educated talent on par with large, traditional non profit organization staffed by paid employees. We all need associations that blend diverse approaches.

To those who have posted to various forums and sites discussing the future of a professional association for VM's, thank you. I am aware that the non profit community has published countless reference material on team building skills, recruitment, Board Leadership, community development, infrastructure, funding, partnerships. We can put all of those skill sets to immediate use. Because, if the VM community cannot capacity build, salute visionary approaches...what business do we any of us have selling the concepts?!

Like you, I welcome the development. Before us is the opportunity to create a guidepost that directs our questions, applies our wide range of experiences and sets the stage for highly detailed competence.

Submitted on 7 March 2006 by Stephen C. Nill, J.D., Founder & Chief Executive Officer CharityChannel

With the recent unexpected demise of AVA, the organization for volunteer resource managers, there is a good deal of discussion taking place in many venues over what kind of US professional organization should be created to take its place.

This is a healthy process, representing, as it does, the first real reassessment of what kind of organization would best serve the needs of the US volunteer resource management profession. The challenge, though, is that so many discussions are taking place in so many venues, public and private, that it's tough to know where things stand. So, to build upon what has already been taking place on the various forums, a new discussion list has been created specifically to provide a neutral ground for practitioners and academics to come together to focus exclusively on this important topic in an open, honest and collegial way.

THE NEW LIST:

The list, VRM-ROUNDTABLE, is primarily intended for our colleagues in the US, since the focus of discussion will be on creating a new US organization that will focus on serving its US volunteer

resource manager membership. However, our colleagues in other countries are welcome to sit in -- often, those who are not in the thick of things can bring a perspective that is helpful.

HOW TO JOIN:

The moderated list is offered as a public service by CharityChannel. To join, please send a blank email to vrn-roundtable-subscribe-request@CHARITYCHANNEL.COM. You will then receive an email asking you to confirm your subscription. Follow the instructions to confirm, and you will be admitted to the list.

MORE INFORMATION:

For more information about the list, visit <http://charitychannel.com/publish-or-perish-or-both/?a=9112&z=72>.

NEED HELP JOINING?

If you need help joining, just send me a note off-list and I'll add you to the list. My off-list email address is stephen_nill@charitychannel.com.

Submitted on 6 March 2006 by Sarah Jane Rehnborg, Ph.D. RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service LBJ School of Public Affairs University of Texas at Austin

Clearly emotions are running high given the sad situation confronted by all of and most especially the board of AVA. Perhaps at some point down the line it might be possible to do a postmortem on the situation and truly gain a better perspective on what did and did not happen that brought us to this point in time. Clearly it is too soon. Facts are still coming in.

As a past president of the association -- and a past president with some seniority given my terms was nearly 30 years ago (1979-1981), I would like to offer a longer perspective on this situation. I truly don't know what was known, what wasn't known, where things went wrong, etc., but I can offer this. I do believe that everyone on this board and the most recently departed board assumed their office fully intending to do their very best for the Association, for their profession and for themselves. It is equally true that hindsight is always much more perceptive than the focus we are able to muster when looking forward into a complex and difficult world with multiple events impinging upon us and our Association. I feel equally certain that those in command in the last few years are likely regretting decisions made and not made, and hopefully all of us have learned a lot through this, including how important it is to make your comments heard, to ask your questions and to raise concerns. But this is also the point at which I would like to jump off...

In the early 1970's when I joined AVA (then ASVCS I think) membership meetings were major events. There was no decision made by the organization that wasn't vetted by the membership at great (and sometimes nauseating) length. The meetings lasted for hours and a Parliamentarian was a required

guest from start to finish. Some meetings were even known to have the doors locked so that members couldn't leave depriving us of a quorum! Some meetings were pretty awful and sometimes we did stupid things like amend the bylaws so that once a member always a member without paying dues again. (Fortunately a board caught that before the members did!)

But we also did good things too. We took stands on policy issues and wrote to legislators. We knew which regions were holding good meetings and bringing in the money and which regions were asleep at the wheel. We taught young professional, such as myself at the time, how to articulate issues important to the field so that we could knowledgeably convince our bosses that what we were doing mattered. And this learning came from doing -- from the experience of arguing for something that mattered to you, not from just attending workshops and regurgitating canned presentations.

When it was my turn to take the helm, I did so several months ahead of schedule because we had just adopted a new set of bylaws. I went into my first annual meeting with fear and trepidation -- a fully scripted set of notes and fists clenched in abject fear. Somewhere between then and now, we moved gradually away from what I consider true member involvement -- somewhere we ended up with absolutely sterile, bland meetings that became purely ceremonial (and yes, even more nauseating!). Somewhere we lost touch with being a membership association where the members truly owned what was happening... the good and bad of what was happening. Somewhere in this history, we changed. In the end, no matter what the postmortem shows -- we somehow lost touch with our Association in the interests of order and niceness, and somewhere along the line, an ED was able to move in and do us in.

As we look to the future I hope: - that we can finish our email exchanges looking forward to what we would like to have come next - -that some great younger people will emerge, but if we want that to happen, we have to become people that other people will want to be around. - that we can all learn the importance of advocacy and that we can see that listening to our critics seriously is very important business. - that we learn from what has happened here and apply it at our local, county, state and national governments.

I am extremely concerned with what is happening in the US and I strongly feel that we need to be equally vocal as we address the realities of a country at war with a deficit that exceeds any in past history, with an entire section of our country in ruins following a hurricane, and with a health care system that serves virtually no one well. In short, may we take this as a wake-up call for not only our work as professionals, but for the importance of our profession as people that should be helping people to reclaim their voices and make their opinions heard. If we lose this association of states - this democracy - we are in true and serious trouble.

Submitted on 6 March 2006 by Debbie Rogers, CVA, President local AVA affiliate, PBAVA

A question for AVA: I am the President of a local AVA affiliate and a CVA. We believe that credentialing matters. Is there any other organization out there that would honor our CVA's? We have a candidate pursuing CVA. Should I encourage them to continue?

To my colleagues of local AVA affiliates: What are you doing with your candidates? Are you changing your local name? To what?

Submitted on 6 March 2006 by Barbara Bradley, CVA

As a member of AVA since its second year of existence, I am very sad about the dissolution of the organization. Although I am retired from the profession, I still participate in DOVIA and care about the creation of a new association to support and advocate for volunteer resource managers. I am willing to help behind the scenes in any way I can – perhaps by helping to maintain a database if no one else comes forward.

Submitted on 2 March 2006 by Dave Gynn, Coleman Professional, Organization, Volunteer Coordinator. Kent, Ohio USA

Negative publicity about any volunteer organization has a negative effect on all volunteer organizations. Use the AVA experience to remind everyone in this industry to operate with incredible ethics as your actions reflect on all volunteer services

Submitted on 2 March 2006 by Merle Walker, Lake Metroparks, Volunteer Program Manager, Concord /Ohio USA

One door closes and another door opens up. Often when we lose something we think what if or if maybe. Looking at the events of volunteer leadership and volunteer organizations we continue to struggle to define who we are and where we are going locally and nationally. What a great opportunity to start fresh, being renewed and defined in a commitment to take this profession to a new level. Today's organizations must be as diversified as the community it services. Committed to the profession and the professionals. The every growing profession of volunteerism is as vast as only the mind can image. I love this field. It is molded by need and bound by only by what we think. The challenge is for each one of us to evaluate the impact and forge ahead. I will not be in Settle but I am here in Ohio to support and work with those of you so believe volunteerism, volunteer administration, volunteer organizations have endless possibilities and are worth renewing in a national, local, and global way.

Submitted on 2 March 2006 by Morrison, NA, Treasurer, Morganton, N. C. USA

As a member of AVA since 1966 I am saddened by the loss of the organization. I am assuming the organization sought legal advice in this situation. If not, why?

I am truly concerned that the board of directors, and the treasurer had no better hold on the budget and spending than they did. I am sure that none of them would have been allowed a 6 months lag in responsibility which is apparently what was given the executive director. The Treasurer should have been writing checks and keeping up with the finances, not giving that responsibility up to an executive director alone. I know that may be done in large corporations, however I have never considered AVA a large, wealthy corporation.

Now, let me say that I will be willing to help in any way I can. I have ideas and will be working on them. By the way, who will be taking the leadership or the responsibility for facilitating the collection of ideas and bringing people together to work toward a future organization. I think we need a leader. What do you think?

***Submitted on 2 March 2006 by Ann Bain, SAVM, Executive Director
Stirling Scotland UK***

The Scottish Association for Volunteer Management - as an affiliate organisation to AVA shares the shock at the sudden demise of AVA. We learned so much from them when we started up 10 years ago and would like to pay tribute to the help we have received in our growth - particularly from Katie Campbell and Paige Tucker. I had the privilege to attend two of their conferences in Denver and Phoenix and found them to be really energising and thought provoking. These led to us having Katie, Susan Ellis, Anthea Hoare, Arlene Schindler, Rick Lynch, Steve McCurley and Mary Merrill over as trainers to great acclaim. Mary was to return to address our coming conference - we were so saddened to hear of her loss.

Whatever does evolve, SAVM wishes to keep open the international 'doors' so that together we can build a worldwide network to share skills, expertise and recognition of the role of VMs.

***Submitted on 2 March 2006 by Rob Jackson, UKVPMs, Founder
Grantham England***

Here in England, AVA had little relevance to most volunteer managers due to it's predominantly USA membership and focus. I heartily endorse Susan's suggestion that whatever phoenix rises from AVA's ashes should be focused on the USA before it seeks to build stronger links with emerging bodies elsewhere in the world.

Yes, it is a shame AVA is gone and I commend you all in the USA for taking such proactive steps to move on, learning the lessons from this experience. However, whilst you guys pick things up, others around the globe will continue to fly the flag for our field with passion and commitment until we can welcome a new USA agency into the growing international community of professional bodies for volunteer managers.

Submitted on 2 March 2006 by Ann Hymel, Perrysburg, OH

In chaos comes opportunity, I agree. Please consider me on board for this new adventure. My thoughts and energy are with you. Grass root growth can expand dramatically in this new outreach.

***Submitted on 1 March 2006 by Christopher Mitchell, Barrington School Volunteer Program, Director,
Barrington, Illinois USA***

Thanks for pushing us beyond our comfort zone. We need to think of all the possible options--this misfortune can be viewed as a gift to create a new perspective for volunteer managers in this country. I am especially intrigued by your suggestion of a type of international congress--I believe the

successor to AVA needs to build from the bottom up in the U.S., and not try to be all things to all people. We need to aim high, but make sure we have the fuel to reach our goal!

Submitted on 1 March 2006 by Fiona Dawson, Bering Omega Community Services, Director of Resource Development, Houston, Texas USA

This is sad, but as you say Susan, a tremendous opportunity. I'm thrilled that some key people are jumping in and having an immediate recovery effort. Let's make sure that all of us then strategically work on a long-term plan.

Personally, I would like to see a 'fresher' look to a national volunteer administration association - particularly with more networking and association with related professions... e.g. with the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and the National Human Resources Association. Let's take Volunteer Administration to the level it should be.

Submitted on 1 March 2006 by Don Rhodes, New Zealand

Greetings From Way Down Under, to offer our condolences to all affected by the unfortunate circumstances you are now working through.

I know similar things happen within large corporations, and within professional organisations, but I am always saddened rather than angry when I hear of people working in volunteer organisations who 'rip them off'. If it is any consolation, it happens in our fair land as well. I just wanted to pass on some information that may be helpful, based on the work we do here in New Zealand.

I am an Employers' Advocate. In other words, I represent only employers in various forums, and deal especially with employment matters. What I find time and again is that there tends to be a lack of rigorous auditing and supervision in volunteer type operations. It seems to be that the feeling is these people are either giving up their time for free; or they are choosing to work here when they could be making much more working somewhere else; or whatever. And as a result their activities are not monitored as closely nor are they expected in many instances to perform to what I identify as acceptable standards. What often makes it worse is that when someone is 'called to account' they turn real nasty. That shocks everyone, and makes me very determined they are dealt to with the full force of the law in every way possible. It's a bit like ripping off old ladies as opposed to ripping off the guy in the pub who is flogging off stolen property. Hope you understand all our Kiwi jargon?

So to finish, maybe people in your field should be reminded of this, and make sure they have rigorous checks and balances in place. Not only will that help them to run more efficiently, but may well ensure everyone sleeps nights. These checks and balances include not only a financial audit, but an administrative audit. Accountants are fine at checking all the figures match up, but oftentimes are not so experienced in checking jobs are done properly.....and there is a difference as I am sure you appreciate.

Submitted on 1 March 2006 by Rosanna Tarsiero, Bipolar Dream

Volunteer Manager, Pisa Italy

Sure it's ok to be angry, THANK YOU for saying it out loud! I tried to say the same thing on CyberVPM. Paradoxically (or ironically, depending on the perspectives), it is the reluctance to display even righteous anger that led to AVA's demise. Those financial info should have been demanded, and in few weeks (NOT months!). If the Board had acted with anger, AVA might still have been there maybe. For sure, it wouldn't have been in such a DEEP mess. One lesson we can gather from this for the whole profession is, I think, this: let's not smoothe conflicts over, and sweep them under the rag because if we do we will trip on them eventually. Politeness refers to how one expresses him/herself, NOT to lack of straightforwardness. That is called dishonesty.

Submitted on 1 March 2006 by Esther Cantu, The Volunteer Center at United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County Director, Outreach and Volunteer Services San Antonio, Texas USA

I am certainly saddened by the demise of AVA, and although a member, I have to say: "Not an active one!" Due to budgetary constraints we have had travel and training bans for about four years now. Attending a conference, training or meetings is not an option for us. So I implore those of you who will be meeting at the POL conference to discuss 'our next steps' to consider exploring a connection with or becoming a subsidiary of POL but with reasonable costs that everyone can afford.

If a totally new organization is formed, then also please consider cost for membership and other expenses associated with participation. We need an organization at a higher level than our local ones to strengthen the existence of volunteer administration and to unite all people in our profession and AVA was providing that. The Credentialing Program was an excellent way to place value on our work. In Texas we are hanging by a thin thread to NDVT (Network of Directors of Volunteers - Texas), a state level organization that served as umbrella to our local volunteer administrators organizations. So losing AVA is like a double whammy. San Antonio thanks those of you who have taken the lead to address our next steps. Call on me if you need my help.

Submitted on 1 March 2006 anonymously

I hope in the the midst of the "clean-up" the Board of Directors, each and every one of them, resigns their position. They have shirked their responsibility. The Board has the primary responsibility for financial oversight. It is not an excuse that "The board never really was given a true picture of AVA's financial situation until January 2006 when it learned that AVA was \$300,000 in debt." Weren't they reading the financials? If not, why?

Submitted on 1 March 2006 by Kenneth Manns, Free library of Philadelphia, Volunteer Services Assistant, Philadelphia PA

I recently had the opportunity to work with the society for human resources managers administrative staff at one of their annual conventions. I know HR and volunteer management are two different beasts, however are of the same species. Maybe there is a way to be absorbed into SHRM. They appear to be well managed with thousands of members, available resources, and respected accreditation.

Submitted on 1 March 2006 anonymously United Hospital Fund, New York City USA

I appreciate your email on "It's Okay to Be Angry," because that's what I am feeling right now. As someone knowledgeable in nonprofit governance and board management, I am appalled that AVA's board was unaware of the circumstances that lead to the organization's demise. Let's hope this never happens again!

The greatest value that AVA had for me was the annual professional development conference. It was at these meetings that I was able to network with some of the brightest people in the field of volunteer management, including individuals involved in the research and development of important volunteer trends. I would hope that former AVA members and other interested individuals can find a way to recreate this opportunity, even if it is on a much smaller scale. I can see these meetings taking place at a University where expenses could be kept to a minimum. Other professional organizations are able to produce extremely worthwhile professional development meetings organized by volunteers and I know that we have equally skilled professionals up to this task.

The United Hospital Fund has been a leader in New York City to promote health care voluntarism through a wide array of programs, and we continue to reach out to volunteer administrators in all disciplines with educational programs and grant funding. We would be pleased to be part of a group working to ensure that there is an annual meeting where volunteer administrators can meet, network, and exchange ideas.

Submitted on 1 March 2006 by Patricia Garcia, CAVS, Medical Center Hospital, Director of Volunteer Services, Odessa, TX USA

First of all, thank you for challenging our profession to be proactive by doing something, voicing our thoughts and moving forward.

I am a board member of a local AVA affiliate and will say that the news was devastating! My question to my colleagues regardless of what volunteer association you belong to - is..."What now?" Do we sit there and pick it all apart and fret about what should have or shouldn't have happened? Yes, understandably so, I understand we must ask some "hard" questions and ask for accountability - so this does not happen again. Therefore, the need to get involved, to write, to attend meetings to network is more important than ever! Apathy does not sit well in our profession.

I am convinced that we consider our profession more than a profession; we get involved in our profession and live it as if it were a vocation. We stand for something, for someone, for a better outcome than what we found it - we stand for all of these and more - even when we have fallen either out of step or have fallen completely. This is what makes us stand apart from any other line of work. We gather together supporting one another amidst crisis, controversy and continual changes we face.

Join me and many others who are saying, "yes" to extend our resources, our consultation, our advocacy, to those who consider themselves voiceless and "professionally homeless".

Adelante!

***Submitted on 1 March 2006 by Diane (Maxey) Klebanow, Step Up! a community volunteer network,
Program Director, Myrtle Beach, SC USA***

Thanks for your hot topic, Susan...I figured the demise of AVA would be your choice and you came through...Thanks! I have recently gotten back into the field of full-time volunteer administration after over 7 years on the fringes. I was a member of AVA in my last role in volunteer management and contributed a lot to the organization then, in part due to my close proximity to the office, then headquartered out of Boulder. Even though I have not been involved directly in AVA for several years, hearing the news about recent events almost made me feel like I'd lost a friend. I hope to be in Seattle in June and to be able to contribute to the dialogue about where we go from here.

PRIVACY STATEMENT

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