



The Texas Volunteer

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William P. Clements, Jr., Governor

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Corporate Voluntaryism Expanding in Texas

This issue of *The Texas Volunteer* explores the growing field of corporate/employee voluntarism in Texas. An informal survey of the business community in Texas will show that there are many companies across the state doing some kind of volunteer programming. And the corporations, both large and small, which sponsor and encourage volunteer activity by employees are as diverse as the Texas business world itself.

Employee volunteering is in its infancy. But already it has enlisted the enthusiastic support of enlightened corporate leaders who believe that it contributes in a significant way to the overall health of the company and to the betterment of the community that company seeks to serve.

As one Houston business executive explained, "Several years ago, we looked out at the skyline of our city and realized that the world outside the corporate suite isn't made up of adversaries, but of a company's employees, shareholders, customers and neighbors. The well-being of our corporation, we determined, is inseparably tied to the well-being of the community in which we operate."

In companies and communities across Texas, the essential elements which are contributing to the expansion of corporate voluntarism include the following:

- * Employees are becoming more interested in the idea of committing their time, energy and talents to serve the community, and in the process, to serve their companies and themselves.
- * Management is becoming more responsive to the potential role employee volunteering can have in enhancing all aspects of cor-

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Corporate Voluntarism, continued.

porate operations.

- * Voluntary and public agencies are creatively responding to this new corporate resource. Each is availing itself of the other to solve problems and meet the human needs of the community.

In Dallas, a very busy Martha Dealey works to connect the numerous Dallas companies involved or ready to get involved in corporate/employee volunteering with the ever changing opportunities for voluntarism at a myriad of agencies and nonprofit organizations. Dealey serves in this liaison capacity as Corporate Services Coordinator of the Volunteer Center of Dallas County. She staffs the Center's Business Volunteer Council, which was formed more than a year ago and is comprised of some sixty community relations practitioners from Dallas companies interested in initiating, expanding or improving upon existing employee volunteer programs.

"To further facilitate the growth of corporate voluntarism here in Dallas, we formed the Business Volunteer Council," says Dealey, "so that companies could talk to and learn from each other."

"And from the Volunteer Center's standpoint, formation of the Council seemed a much more practical, effective approach to take in meeting the increased demand for knowledge and first-hand experience in voluntarism that these companies can now provide each other," she stated.

"We are also seeing that when companies come together and information is shared in this way, it seems to have the effect of 'positive reinforcement' for the idea of employee volunteering—and much more so than if the companies were relying on the Volunteer Center alone for information, or if they were operating their own employee

volunteer programs without the benefit of knowing what else is going on in this area in the Dallas business community," Dealey added.

Corporate voluntarism is also providing another beneficial effect which Mike King, executive director of the Dallas Volunteer Center, describes as "a breaking down of stereotypes on both sides."

"It builds the bridge from the profit to the nonprofit world," says King, "and as a result, each gains a truer image of the other, with the ultimate potential of bringing the community closer together."

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"Oftentimes, the corporate world is perceived as cold, sleek, well-managed, and concerned with profits and bottom lines to the exclusion of human needs," King said. On the other hand, the nonprofit world has sometimes earned a reputation for being less well-managed and more 'bleeding heart' in its causes. Actually, when corporations start getting involved with nonprofits on a first-hand basis, through their employees, this experience allows all of us to open our eyes and see what's really there—rather than being intimidated by the images that each projects or has of the other," King stated.

There are "no negatives" involved, claims a Dallas businessman

