

Families Volunteer

A Workbook for Involving Families

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Families Volunteer: A Workbook for Involving Families

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Foreword

In September 1979, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded a three-year grant to the Mountain States Health Corporation to explore and test the concept of family volunteering through local demonstration projects in eleven communities. Mountain States undertook the project in collaboration with VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement and the Voluntary Action Centers in the demonstration communities. The Family Volunteer Project was designed to seek answers to three primary questions:

- Are there volunteer jobs in the community that are appropriate for family members to do together, that can involve both parents and children effectively, that can take advantage of the unique character of family relationships?
- What is the most effective way to recruit family volunteers?
- What is the impact of family volunteer involvement on the recipient of services, on the community, on the family itself?

The project grew from a concern that the American family is in a time of transition and crisis, when family relationships are strained and the very nature of family life is being redefined by new social values and pressures. It was based on the premise that through volunteering, families could strengthen their own relationships and, at the same time, help others.

Although the 11 demonstration communities were primarily in the West and Northwest, the basic principles they identified about effectively involving families can apply to any agency or organization. **Families Volunteer** is more than a report on a specific project; it is designed to help volunteer leaders and administrators involve families as volunteers by:

- introducing you to the concept and sharing examples of how the project was implemented successfully;
- taking you step-by-step through the process of preparing for, recruiting, and managing family volunteers; and
- describing the experiences of two Voluntary Action Centers which successfully implemented community-wide family volunteer projects.

Families Volunteer was written with one primary audience in mind—you, the individual volunteer leader and administrator. You are, above all else, a manager. You seek to motivate and organize others to deliver services, to serve as advocates, to address difficult problems. Your success is dependent on your ability to assist others in being successful. You must be adept at planning, must be sensitive to people's needs, must understand and be able to carry out principles of effective management. And you must do all of this in an environment which is unfamiliar to most managers, with workers who are motivated not by tangible rewards, but by a desire to "do good," to help others, to grow personally while making a positive contribution.

Anyone can learn the skills necessary to be a good manager. But the most successful managers are those who care about other people, those who are willing to enjoy the reflected glow of others' successes, those who find their satisfaction not in their own production, but in the production of others. Volunteer managers—almost by definition—have those extra qualities.

Too often, however, we are impeded by our own attitudes, or by our views of ourselves as individuals and as professionals. Sometimes we forget the value of our work and of the special energies volunteers bring to problems. We have to struggle to remain confident of the importance of our work and of the skills we bring to doing that work.

Involving families as volunteers presents unique problems and challenges. It is not easy—and may not, in some settings, be justified by the effort that would be required. But the same can be said for involving any specific group of people. As volunteer managers, as **leaders**, we can be content to appeal to the community as a whole and to celebrate anyone who comes to volunteer. We can be so, but most of us won't be. Our responsibility as leaders goes beyond getting the obvious job done, to helping to build a community that is a good place for all of us; and that means reaching out to people who otherwise might not be involved.

Families offer unique opportunities to reach young people and to help them experience volunteering in a positive, reinforcing way. Families offer a chance to bring people together in a hectic, often uncaring world; they offer the opportunity to work together toward a common goal.

Families are a new kind of volunteer resource—one that we have only begun to explore and understand. If you decide to involve families, you will be accepting a new challenge as a manager and a leader. There will be no “right” answers against which you can compare your performance, only the experiences of others that we've tried to share with you in this workbook.

Good luck!

I. Introducing Family Volunteering

What is family volunteering?

Simply put, it is the idea that family members can volunteer together in community service activities. Family volunteering as a concept assumes that volunteers will come from different generations, in combinations such as parent-child, or grandparent-parent-child, rather than just two adults. It also assumes that families will identify themselves as such—that is, the nature of the relationships among the various people is irrelevant, as long as they consider themselves a “family.”

Is family volunteering a new idea?

Yes and no. Certainly all of us can think of examples from our own lives of families as volunteers: working together on a community service project through a scout troop or youth club, trick-or-treating for UNICEF at Halloween, helping with a religious service, helping a neighbor or friend who is ill or has a problem.

Also, we can remember how families have volunteered together throughout American history, from the first families who settled the new country and built our communities and institutions, to the patriot families who helped secure our independence, through their political activism; to the pioneer families who extended the frontier through cooperative group efforts and gave us a heritage of neighbor-helping-neighbor through barn-raising and quilting bees.

In that sense, then, family volunteering is not “new.” It has been with us as long as people have been involved, and whenever there has been an opportunity for young people and their parents to work together in a volunteer activity.

But families rarely have been viewed as potential volunteers by those in leadership roles in human service agencies, arts groups, community organizations, and other places that actively seek to involve volunteers. If young people are involved in those places as volunteers, typically it is through a separate mechanism, often a youth club or auxiliary. The involvement of families together is more accidental than intentional.

The concept of family volunteering suggests that families can be important new volunteer resources. Family volunteering has these potential benefits:

- It can increase the number of people who volunteer by adding young people, and by responding to one of the reasons put forward by many people who do not volunteer: “I don’t have time because of my family.”
- In some settings, particularly where the development of a relationship is a key part of the volunteer job, the unique nature of families may be a plus.
- By involving young people in positive service activities that are visibly endorsed by parents and other adults important to them, we are building a pool of future adult volunteers.

- The experience of volunteering together may help members of families to relate more effectively to one another, enabling them to focus on a positive, shared activity that transcends their immediate family tensions.

Family volunteering, in short, is a fun way to serve the community, to be active together, and to introduce young people to the importance of volunteering. It is a way for everyone—the family members, the organization or agency, and the community—to benefit.

Giving and Getting

This sense of mutual benefit is an important characteristic of volunteering. It wasn't so long ago that people thought of volunteering as a "do good" activity, one for which the primary motivation was altruistic and "other-directed."

Now, we are more comfortable recognizing that the motivations of people who volunteer are complex, a mixture of altruism and self-interest. The 1981 Gallup Organization survey of the nature and scope of volunteering asked people why they volunteered. The answers reflected the broad continuum of "giving and getting" that constitutes volunteers' motivations. Some were at the altruistic end of the spectrum: "like doing something useful; helping others." Other answers were clearly self-interest in nature; for example, "I am getting job experience" and "this work helps someone I know." Some were an intertwining of the two extremes and demonstrated that many people volunteer for what might be called "personal altruistic satisfaction." They indicated, for example, that they volunteered because they "enjoyed the work" or "for religious reasons."

Certainly, in the last few years, more attention has been given to the benefits people may get from volunteering: an opportunity to test new skills, experience that will enable them to get a paid job, support in transition from one phase of life to another, new relationships, etc. Volunteer leaders and administrators increasingly have recognized that the jobs they want volunteers to fill must offer opportunities for personal growth and benefit, as well as the chance to help others.

The "giving-getting" continuum is an important part of family volunteering as well. Consider what families can "give":

- their time, talent, and energy in the same way other volunteers do;
- their collective creativity in figuring out new ways to get the job done;
- outreach to others in the community, particularly to young people to recruit them as volunteers and to tell them about the agency or organization in which they are volunteering;
- a demonstration of how a healthy family behaves as a model for those in crisis situations;
- group support to families who may be facing immediate problems;
- a family environment for homeless young people, for elders seeking family interactions, for those who are far from home;

- multiple approaches to the same problem from each member's perspective and experience, allowing the family to give "total coverage" that an individual volunteer would lack;
- sustained enthusiasm growing from the reinforcement of working together as a family unit.

What can families "get" from volunteering? Here are a few of the benefits they may discover:

- an opportunity to rearrange hectic schedules so that they can spend more time together;
- an opportunity for young people to learn about the total community and to be exposed to experiences and people they might otherwise miss;
- "special time" for a working parent to share with his or her children outside the home;
- a chance to achieve something tangible together as a family;
- an opportunity to interact together around a positive activity in a neutral environment;
- a new way to fulfill the interests of family members;
- a situation in which each member of the family can contribute in his or her unique way and in which that contribution will be highly valued and reinforced;
- new friends;
- a new way to have fun together;
- a chance to pass on to young people the values that parents feel are important in a way that translates those values into positive action.

Kay Lynn Stevenson and her two children, Seth and Molly, work together as Meals on Wheels volunteers in South Lake Tahoe, California. Every Monday they deliver meals to eleven elders. Mrs. Stevenson believes the work is such a good experience that she has made special arrangements for 8-year-old Molly to be away from school for the time needed to pick up the food and make the deliveries. Here's how she described it:

*School is important, but there are other things outside of school that are important, too. I would like to have my children grow up to be good, decent people. Seeing people help other people makes you that way. Every person on this planet is important, but if we don't raise good families, what will happen to the future? The people we visit make us feel good for **doing** and they make the children feel like they're giving to society. It's really a give-and-take process.*

Mrs. Stevenson's views are not unique among families who actively seek to volunteer together. They reflect the most important single element in successful family volunteering: the opportunity for families to grow and benefit at the same time that they are providing a useful, needed service to the community.

Family volunteering differs in some significant ways from other forms of volunteering. Leaders and administrators will find that involving families takes time, careful attention, and nurturing—both in the community as a whole, and among the families who respond. But just as the families will both “give” and “get,” so will the agencies and organizations in which they work benefit from their involvement and contribute to the families' experience.

Families can be an important new source of people and creative energy for those who depend on volunteers to deliver services and address problems. The promotion of family volunteering is a way for agencies and organizations to give something back to those who volunteer, to the community as a whole, as well as contributing to the long-term development of our “volunteer community.”

How Families Volunteer

Successful volunteer experiences don't “just happen.” They are the result of careful planning, good job design, attentive management, and the development of a positive relationship between the volunteer and his or her supervisor. One of the most critical elements for successful family volunteering is the opportunity for families to benefit as well as contribute through their volunteering. Another important element is the nature of the jobs for which families are asked to volunteer.

Here are some of the characteristics of successful family volunteer jobs:

- The time commitment is flexible, often beginning with one-shot or short-term jobs that have the potential to grow into continuing activities.
- The jobs have understandable goals and logical, specific activities to be undertaken.
- They provide something relevant and of value for every member of the family to do.
- When appropriate, they take advantage of the unique nature of family relationships.
- They provide an opportunity to work with other volunteers, particularly other families.

The Time Commitment

We live in a hectic, fast-paced world. As we become more affluent and mobile, every member of the family tends to live on his or her own schedule. The image of a family gathering every night around the dinner table seems to be just that—an image, not a reality. Our perception that we don't have enough time, or that we are too busy, often becomes the excuse not to take on new responsibilities or activities; it is a particularly popular reason for not volunteering. Indeed, when the Gallup Organization asked people to explain why they did not volunteer, over half indicated that they were too busy and didn't have enough time. Significantly, just as many teenagers as adults gave that reason.

If fitting volunteering into an individual schedule is difficult, it's that much harder when there are two, three, or four schedules of family members to be considered. Thus, an important way to enable families to volunteer, especially initially, is to offer one-time or short-term activities. Here are some examples:

- Keep Tahoe Beautiful, sponsored by the Voluntary Action Center in South Lake Tahoe, California, involved families in cleaning up their neighborhoods and vacant lots throughout the community. A local refuse company provided free pick-up, and the Chamber of Commerce donated the litter bags, making it a total community effort.
- In Pleasanton, California, the Voluntary Action Center and YMCA cosponsored Park Work Day, a one-day effort to build nature hiking trails in local parks, to clean up existing trails, and to repair other park facilities. The families involved were able to enjoy a day outdoors and later identified the task as "fun" rather than as "civic duty."
- Across the Bay from Pleasanton, in San Jose, California, over 100 families participated in the Spring Tree Planting Day sponsored by the Sempervirens Fund, a local environmental group. Supervised by the organization's staff, all of whom are trained in forestry methods, the family volunteers prepared the soil and planted the trees.

Other family volunteer assignments demand a relatively small time commitment but have the potential to grow into continuing activities. For example:

- In Salt Lake City, a family created its own musical program to entertain residents of a nearby nursing home. They enjoyed the experience so much and found the audience so receptive, that they plan to do it in other nursing homes as their schedule permits.
- "Chore banks" in many communities offer volunteers the opportunity to help elders remain independent in their own homes. From such tasks as yard work, gardening, and housecleaning, can grow continuing relationships between the family and the elder that may involve the family in overall support to the elder.
- In South Lake Tahoe, families who volunteer for Tel-a-Care, a telephone reassurance project to support elders, have branched out to include home visits as well.

Clear Goals and Specific Activities

If there is anything more frustrating than not knowing what you are trying to accomplish, it's not having any idea what you are supposed to be doing to accomplish it. For volunteers, it is a frustration that may drive them away from the job. For family volunteers, it is a particularly critical problem:

- In most cases, it is a new experience for them to be volunteering together, and any difficulty may be magnified in their view into a reason not to continue.
- Parents must interpret for their children both the importance of the work they are undertaking and the specific responsibilities each family member will have. This is impossible if they themselves don't understand the goals and the activities.
- One of the best reinforcements and rewards for volunteers is a recognition of what they have accomplished. For many people, this must be in tangible, measurable terms. Resolving goals in advance of the work helps to set realistic expectations and provides a measure of what constitutes "a job well done."

Obviously, the short-term projects described above also have the characteristic of clear goals and specific activities: Families are asked to clean up or repair something; they are planting a tree; they are building trails; they are mowing a yard or cleaning a house. At the end of the day, they can see what they have accomplished. Here are some other examples of family volunteer activities that share this characteristic:

- The Human Race, held annually in northern California, gives volunteers an opportunity to raise funds for local organizations by getting sponsors to support them in a "walk-a-thon." Families in Contra Costa County found the Human Race to be a way in which they could all work together toward a commonly recognized goal that was easily measured by the distance walked and the amount of support pledged.
- In San Jose, California, Martha's Kitchen serves over 500 meals during the two days it is open every week. Family members can be involved in all aspects of the program's operation, from preparing and serving meals to cleaning up afterwards. By putting this activity that all families do together—preparing meals—into a new context, Martha's Kitchen builds on a common process and involves families with another part of the community.
- The Voluntary Action Center in Walnut Creek, California, recruited family volunteers to help with a fundraising jazz concert. The families assisted with pre-program publicity, worked in ticket sales booths and concession stands, ushered, and helped with cleanup. Taking advantage of the opportunity, the VAC also used the occasion to promote the idea of family volunteering to the whole community.

Something for Everyone

Family volunteering is built on the notion that everyone in a family can contribute something of value. To do that, then, the jobs family volunteers undertake must offer the opportunity for everyone to be involved, regardless of age or skill level.

Some activities, such as the short-term ones described above, offer that opportunity simply because of the nature of the work to be done. Often, these activities require few or no special skills and no training. Walking, planting seeds, picking up litter, helping in the kitchen, selling tickets—all are things everyone can do. In such work, it is relatively easy to see ways in which both adults and children can be involved.

The fact that children may be involved may seem at first a problem or a limitation on what families can do as volunteers. But remember the special attributes children bring:

- First and foremost, they are children and bring with them a special magic that may be missing in people's lives. Here's how Mrs. Stevenson describes her children Seth and Molly, as they volunteer for Meals on Wheels: ". . .they not only bring food . . . but radiate immeasurable portions of sharing and caring. Seth will brightly announce, 'Have a nice lunch!' while Molly will send out a shy smile . . . You can just see (the people they visit) brighten up," Mrs. Stevenson said. "Most don't get to see children that often."
- Children often can establish relationships that are difficult for adults. In Utah, Mormon families have been volunteering with convicts for over 25 years. One former convict who has been out of prison nine years, says that families with young children, from 3 to 10 years old, are often the most successful: "I saw some of the guys just melt because of those kids. Those kids, uninhibited as they are, they just treat an inmate like he is part of the family, like he is a big brother or something."
- Through their curiosity, children can turn almost any task into a learning experience for both themselves and the adults with them. For an adult, cleaning up a park may just be another time to pick up trash. But for a child, it is an adventure, a time to ask about nature, to inquire about the treasures they are finding. Through their eyes, adults can snatch back some of that wonder about the world around them.

Just as in any work situation, the role of the leader is to help each person in completing the work and in appreciating the importance of his or her specific contribution to the overall effort. With family volunteers, that means defining what each member of the family can do to help and communicating that clearly and effectively to both adults and children.

Family Relationships

Many of the volunteer jobs we've described could be undertaken by any small group of people, whether members of a family or not. Indeed, most of them typically are done by people who come together only for that specific task. But there are other volunteer jobs that grow directly out of the special nature of the family relationship. These take advantage of the interactions of a family and of the opportunity for group support to help those who are in crisis, alone, or far from home.

Heber Geurts, who founded the Prison Family Home Evening Program in Utah, believes that exposure to a family can change convicts' attitudes. He says, "When an inmate sees how a good family can get along, how they can live and love each other, the inmate begins to say, 'That's what I want.'"

The Prison Match Program in Pleasanton, California, is built on that same principle. There, however, the group served is made up of the families of inmates, and the program takes advantage of the presence of two prisons in the Pleasanton area to reach this audience. Families work at the Welcome House Visiting Center, the first stop for families visiting inmates. They welcome visitors, provide an open, non-judgmental ear, furnish emergency food and housing, and offer transportation to and from the prisons. Joan Stenger, Center staff person, believes that families working together as volunteers are a significant addition to the Center because they can relate more effectively to families than can individual volunteers. By providing support in a relaxed and understanding atmosphere, the volunteer families serve as positive models for the troubled and divided families to whom they relate.

Although volunteering at the Visiting Center requires a commitment of three to six months for families, it has been possible to recruit volunteers. Now program staff routinely seek out families as well as individual volunteers.

A somewhat different way of involving families is underway at Palomares, a residential group home program in San Jose, California. It is based on the notion that an important way to combat juvenile delinquency is for the total community to provide healthier social development opportunities for young people. Carol Houcke began the program in her role as volunteer coordinator to find families willing to serve in friendship roles to troubled teenage girls. It is a way for the girls to find new friends and to experience a healthy family environment.

A similar effort in Salt Lake City operates through the Youth Services Department. There, parents who are experiencing difficulties with their children can come for classes in effective parenting, can be helped by other families, and, ultimately, can have the opportunity to become volunteers helping still other troubled families. The classes are taught by husband-wife teams. Families who enroll are encouraged to take additional training courses and later to teach others, thereby providing their own first-hand experience and empathy. This recruitment process strengthens the program by encouraging families who have been helped to return and help others, and rewards those who do return by reinforcing their own growth and their new skills and insights.

The agency also recruits families to provide short-term housing for troubled young people, with the hope that exposure to different people and healthy families will bring positive change in their behavior and attitudes. Like the instructors in the parenting classes, the family volunteers emphasize the value of communication, and of accepting responsibility. Pat Berckman, volunteer director for the Youth Services Department, believes families are particularly appropriate and effective volunteers. The host families can serve a dual role: as support for those in crisis and as a force to educate the community about the problems of troubled families and young people.

Many times, "crisis" comes to people's lives simply because they are alone, far from home, attempting to cope with a new environment. Family volunteers have proven to be a particularly effective resource for international visitors and for refugees. Here are two especially good examples of how the special nature of a family environment can be used as a remedy in these situations.

In Bellingham, Washington, there is a high percentage of international students at Western Washington University. Recognizing the special needs of many of these students who are on campus as part of a one-year international exchange program, the university's student affairs department and the local Voluntary Action Center joined together to recruit host families to support these students during their first weeks on campus.

Although hosting exchange students requires neither specific training nor specialized skills, it does demand a serious commitment of time over several weeks, as well as close daily contact with a house guest. Despite this, the program attracted ten families as volunteers. In addition to providing housing, the families gave their guests an initial orientation to their new community, helped them get acquainted with American life, and assisted them in adjusting to changes in food, climate, and money. Most important, they opened their homes and extended the warmth and friendship of their family circles to young people who were far from home. Not only did the visiting students find immediate acceptance in a foreign environment, but the participating families broadened their horizons by learning first-hand about the customs of a foreign country.

In Columbia, Missouri, families have been involved in a variety of activities to promote international understanding. For example, the Voluntary Action Center and the Cambodian Foundation cosponsored a Cambodian Cultural Festival Night with an art exhibit, classical and folk dancing, and traditional Cambodian music. Families were involved both in planning the event and as active participants.

The growing problem of refugees has opened new opportunities for families to volunteer. An excellent example of a public-private joint response to the problem is the Refugee Resettlement Program in Utah. Volunteers are involved in all aspects of the program, including service on the governing board, and families have become a particularly valuable resource. They have conducted a series of collection drives to gather household goods and clothing for newly arrived refugees; they have provided educational support services; they have acted as counselors to help refugees adjust to their new cultural environment; and they have provided short-term housing.

Families have brought several special things to this work. First, they provide an immediate support network for refugee families. Second, they have been able to introduce refugee families to American customs and habits, thereby making the initial transitional period less lonely and traumatic. Third, they have established relationships that can continue into the future, offering continuing support and friendship. Finally, family volunteers have helped to educate the entire community to the needs of refugees. With that education has come greater community involvement and—with that added resource—a smoother resettlement process. Countless families have accepted the challenge to become what Elaine Smart, Director of the Voluntary Action Center, calls "an American ambassador, showing what you do, to a new generation of Americans." Families have moved from initial, short-term involvement, into all aspects of the program, becoming an integral part of the overall resettlement effort.

It isn't just new Americans who are lonely. In every community, there are literally hundreds of people who lack the opportunity or ability to be around others in a supportive environment. Family volunteers have responded to these people as well. Here are some examples:

- In Bellingham, Washington, families are working with the YMCA to provide temporary housing for battered women, and also are assisting in the development and construction of a Y-sponsored facility to house derelicts, transients, and newcomers to the community.
- The Valley Volunteer Center in Pleasanton, California, involves families to provide short-term housing to victims of natural disasters, runaways, abused women, and visitors to the local prisons; they have also provided respite care for foster parents. Families in Pleasanton constituted the only source of this service in the Pleasanton area. Families are also involved in the Senior Support Group, visiting frail and homebound elders, and providing family companions.
- In San Jose, the Family Companions program view both the family and the elders as volunteers, matching them for social activities and "intergenerational contact." Program staff seek to match carefully the two volunteer resources so that needs and interests of both can be reasonably well met.
- In Salt Lake City, the success of the "adopt-a-grandparent" program is reflected in the Sullivan family, who adopted Leatha White, a resident in a local nursing home. By visiting their new "grandmother" at her home and by bringing her to their home for meals and family activities, this family of four gained a new family member, and Ms. White gained a new family.

Finally, demonstrating that literally **every** member of the family can volunteer, many communities around the country have begun "pet sharing" programs. Experts call the contact between withdrawn elders and animals "pet-facilitated therapy," but families simply find it a new way to volunteer together. In Bellingham, Washington, for example, six families and their pets staged a "Pet Parade" at a local nursing home. Participants included Tom the pony, Winston the dog, and Midge the goat. Ann Weatherall, administrator of the Icelandic Old Folks Home, described the result: "Several of the residents who are withdrawn most of the time responded positively to the warmth and affection offered by both the pets and the families who brought them."

Too often, it seems, people are reluctant to recognize and talk about the importance of the family in American life. Media attention is given to the forces that lead to the disintegration of families, and much is made of the changes in family composition, the increase in divorce rates, the growing incidence of unwed parents, and the new forms of the family unit that are emerging. Obscured by those changes and ignored by the cynical are the values of a healthy family life.

We are learning more about the pressures on families and the changes resulting from these pressures—that one of the most significant impacts is the creation of people who are lonely, withdrawn, unable to participate effectively in the world around them. There are no easy answers to these growing problems. Clearly, however, families with basically healthy relationships are an important resource for those in

trouble. By mobilizing families as volunteers, we are opening the door to a new resource for individuals and other families who need support, reassurance, and friendship. There is not a more rewarding feeling for a family than the knowledge that they have, through their volunteer work, aided another family during a difficult time.

Working with Other Families

Many times, volunteers are unsure of themselves and hesitant to get involved. These feelings are reflected in the desire of many people to volunteer in small groups, often with people they know from the workplace, church, or other familiar group. The same is true of families who volunteer, particularly those who may be dubious about involving their young children. Many of the short-term activities described earlier offered excellent opportunities for families to volunteer with other families. The result was a built-in support system, an aspect of family volunteering that can be built into the program from the outset. Working with other families also offers an opportunity to make new friends and to extend personal networks in the community.

In Lewiston, Idaho, a summer volunteer activity brought together 29 children and their families. They worked together to present a children's play, **A Dolly's House**, at the Lewiston Civic Theater.

Written and produced by local talent, **A Dolly's House** was scheduled to be part of the regular summer theatre series; as a result of CETA funding cuts, however, the Civic Theatre was unable to finance the play's production. Recognizing that cancellation of the play would be a loss to the area's children, as well as to the entire community, the Lewiston Volunteer Bureau's director, Margaret Irish, suggested an alternate strategy: recruiting families to assist with the production. Responses from interested families came quickly and enthusiastically, and with the help of various other local groups, Lewiston's family volunteers produced the play precisely on schedule. Because the text required a cast of twenty young children between the ages of six and thirteen, and because it called for additional accoutrements such as costumes and sets, the production was carefully coordinated, and family volunteers were organized according to their individual skills and interests.

Some of the tasks undertaken by the families included creating publicity posters to advertise the play, building and painting sets and backdrops, making costumes, assisting the young stars with dressing and make-up, and preparing and serving refreshments during the play's intermission. In addition, the families acted as prompters by assisting cast members with line memorization and warm-up exercises; they also handled all of the technical aspects of the performance, such as lighting, scene changes, and curtain calls. The production proved to be a great success, garnering such enthusiasm among the theatre patrons that even when mistakes were made (at one point, a novice lighting technician turned up the lights too quickly, and some of the cast had to creep on stage), the audience responded with warmth and support. The successful staging of the play provided the city of Lewiston with a special and enchanting source of entertainment and offered families a new way to volunteer together.

II. Involving Families Effectively

Involving families as volunteers is not significantly different from involving individual volunteers. The same components of good volunteer management must be present: an understanding of your needs and of the results you expect, a sensitivity to the needs and interests of the people you hope will volunteer, a job design process that seeks to involve the volunteer, an effective recruitment program, appropriate orientation and training, continuing oversight, supervision, and trouble-shooting, periodic reinforcement, and, of course, recognition.

This is not to say that families aren't "different" in some important ways. They have unique needs, often difficult logistical problems to overcome, and perhaps some resistance to volunteering that may not be present in the individual. But it is quite clear from the experiences of agencies which have successfully involved families that a good starting point is an effective ongoing volunteer program, preferably one that regularly involves both individuals and small groups. This provides the foundation from which a family volunteer program can be built, offers a proven support structure into which family volunteers can readily move, and may provide a good initial source of families willing to volunteer together.

This is not to say that one **must** have a structured volunteer program in order to involve families. Churches, neighborhood organizations, fraternal groups and others are appropriate places for families to volunteer. But leaders in these settings will want to be sensitive to the unique potentials and needs of families who volunteer.

This section is designed to focus on family volunteers in the context of some of the basic elements of effective volunteer management. You will find examples, guidelines, suggestions, and some exercises you may want to go through to prepare yourself, to plan for, to recruit, and to manage family volunteers.

As you work through this section, keep these guidelines in mind:

First, remember your own volunteer experiences and those of members of your family. Throughout, we will refer to the Golden Rule of Volunteer Management: "Do unto other volunteers what you would have a volunteer coordinator do to you when **you** volunteer."

Second, don't forget that volunteering involves both "getting" and "giving"—volunteers need to see the clear opportunity to do both.

Third, the effort to involve families need not be a "special project." Integrate it (and the families you recruit) into the ongoing volunteer activities of your agency or organization.

Fourth, decide for yourself what an appropriate measure of "success" will be. Is it the number of families you recruit? The kinds of jobs they undertake? The accomplishments they record? There is no "right" answer other than the one that is most appropriate to meet the needs of your organization and your volunteers.

Families can offer exciting new volunteer resources. But, just as with any volunteer, they must be involved in the right ways, at the right time, with the right support. As a program leader, you must assume the responsibility to bring all of those aspects of the volunteer experience together. It is not easy in the best of circumstances, and may seem particularly difficult when trying something as new as family volunteering. Only you can determine whether the results will justify the effort and whether family volunteers are the right resource in your setting.

Good luck!

Step One: Basic Preparation

By now, almost all managers have heard the saying, “If you don’t know where you want to go, how will you know when you get there?” This is as true of managing a volunteer effort as it is of any other program and particularly important when you are selecting a specific volunteer audience such as families.

So the first step is to make sure your own house is in order. Do you know why you want volunteers? What do you want them to do? How will they “fit” into your total program?

Understanding your needs for volunteers comes from being able to answer these questions with precision:

- What is the problem you are trying to solve, the need you are trying to meet?
- What do you want to accomplish? What are the desired results you want to achieve?
- How can these results best be achieved?
- What are the resources needed to achieve these results?
- Which of these resources can be provided by volunteers?

Appendix A reviews this basic planning process in greater detail. It may be helpful to work through it as a refresher before moving ahead.

Step Two: Thinking About Families Through Your Personal Experience

Once you understand what you want to accomplish and have a sense of the resources needed to get the job done, you should think about how families can relate to these needs as volunteers. Let’s begin by thinking about families generally—how they work, what kinds of energies they have, what kinds of problems there are in involving them. Perhaps the best place to start is with yourself and with your own family.

You’ve probably heard of the technique of “guided imagery.” It’s done in a small group with a facilitator who helps the participants envision past experiences or project expectations of the future, then “live” their thoughts through specific images. Milton Woolley, a psychologist in Pleasanton, California, developed such an exercise to help agency staff in that community prepare to involve families as volunteers. We are going to use a modification of his exercise as a way of stimulating your thinking about

families as volunteers. We are going to guide you through an analysis of your own family experience as a way of appreciating some of the strengths and potential problems of families as volunteers.

First, get an image set of your family when you were a child.

Image set? Comfortable? Let's begin.

Think back to when you were a child. Were your parents involved in the community as volunteers? What did they do? Did they tell you about their volunteer work? How did they feel about it? How did you feel about the fact that they did it?

When was the first time you volunteered? How did you get involved? Did your parents or grandparents or brothers or sisters play a role in helping you get started? Did you ever volunteer with any of them? How did your family feel about your involvement? Can you remember telling them about it?

What kinds of things did your family do together? Did it include things that helped other people? Can you remember a specific instance in which several members of your family were involved in helping someone else? What was it? What did each member of the family do? How did they feel about the experience? Was it fun? How did you feel about the person you were helping? Did that experience and others like it have an impact on your volunteer life?

Think again about that example. How did your family get involved in that helping activity? Was it hard to do? Did it take a lot of time? Who suggested that you do it together? Who in the family "managed" the work? What contribution did you make?

Take a moment to rest. What are you feeling about your family and its volunteer experience? Does this kind of thinking stir good memories or bad? Why? What do you think you've learned from remembering your family life as a child and its relationship to volunteering? Can you summarize that in three or four key phrases or ideas?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Now let's think about your family life as an adult, if you are part of a family with young children.

Are you involved as a volunteer now? Is your wife, husband, best friend, roommate? What do you do as a volunteer? How do you feel about your volunteer work? Is it an important part of your life? Do you tell the rest of your family about it? What do they each think of the fact that you are a volunteer?

Think of the last time you told one of your children something about volunteer work. What did you say? Did you let your feelings about your work show?

Do your children do any sort of volunteer work? What is it? How did they get started? Did you play a role in that? How do you help them in their volunteer activities? How do you feel about the fact that they are volunteers? Do you let them know how you feel?

What does your family do together? Does it include things that help other people? Can you remember a specific instance in which several members of your family worked together to help someone else? What was it? What did each member of the family do? How did each member feel about the experience? Was it fun? How did each person feel about the person you were helping? Did you talk about your work or about the person you were helping together as a family?

Think a bit more about that example. How did your family get involved in that helping activity? Was it hard to get everyone involved? Did it take a lot of time? Who suggested that you work together? Who in the family “managed” the work? What contribution did each member of the family make? What do you think each member gained from the experience? Was it worthwhile? Would you want to do it again? Why?

Once again, reflect on what you’ve been thinking about. Now, summarize what you’ve learned from this analysis in three or four key phrases or ideas:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Two final questions grow out of this exercise. To answer them, think about both of the images you’ve been through.

First, what are the three most important things your families—both past and present—got out of their experiences together as volunteers?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Second, what are the three most difficult problems your families encountered in their volunteering?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step Three: Identifying Obstacles

We're going to shift gears now and ask you to return to your role as volunteer leader or manager. You may want to take a break to regear your thinking before moving into the next part of this step.

Looking at families now from your perspective as a volunteer manager, think about this question:

What are your reactions to the statement: "families can be a valuable volunteer resource in **your** organization"?

List quickly the first few thoughts that come into your mind:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

It is important to be sensitive to your own feelings about the potential of families as volunteers because there are really two sets of barriers that must be overcome before families can be involved effectively: those created by the families, and those that **you** have from your perspective as a volunteer manager.

A group was brought together in Lewiston, Idaho, to help plan a "family volunteer project" for that community. The group included a school volunteer coordinator, a secretary and mother, two high school seniors, a college counselor and father, and the executive director of a local human services agency. They were asked to identify the obstacles to family volunteering that they could see. Here were the things they included on their list:

- A family may not have the confidence that they have the skills needed by others;
- Families are busy;

- Families have diverse interests;
- Rotating shifts at work can disrupt family schedules;
- Agencies may resist the prospect of seeing families as a resource;
- People aren't used to thinking of families as resources;
- There isn't enough understanding of the values and rewards of volunteering.

Discouraged? Don't be. You should know that the group developed an equally long list of ideas and resources to overcome these barriers. As they analyzed their list, they began to recognize that the problems naturally divided into three groups: those that might apply to any individual or group volunteer; those specific to families; and those based in the perceptions of the people whose primary job was recruitment and management of volunteers. Throughout, they saw a central theme: fear of the unknown. At this point, they recognized the importance of challenging people to think about the issues surrounding family volunteers. We have already introduced some of those issues in the discussion of "guided imageries" about your families, and in the questions about your reactions to families as volunteers.

All of us suffer at times from a tendency to want an "ideal world" to exist. As a result of this desire, we can always find reasons why something **doesn't** work: it's too early in the year; it's too late in the year, etc. Success grows out of our ability to respond flexibly and creatively to a constantly changing set of circumstances, rather than out of this tendency to rationalize potential failure. Try to accept your challenges with fresh ideas and energy instead of with pessimism; your positive attitude will be particularly helpful as you begin implementing family volunteer programs.

Step Four: Gathering the Facts

There's one more task to be done before we can bring this all together and decide whether families are a good potential volunteer resource. You need to learn something about the families in your community.

This is one case in which it is important to be "confused with the facts" at the beginning rather than the end of the planning process. Here are some of the things you'll want to know:

- How many families are there in your community (or service area)?
- How are they composed: two parents, single parent, etc.?
- What is the average age of children in your community?
- Do families tend to be large or small?
- Is it common for both parents to be working at paid jobs in your community?
- Where do families live in your community? Are there any areas in which there is a concentration of families?

There are two great information resources you can use to find some answers: the most recent census and a knowledgeable resident of the community. Census figures typically will be available from the municipal government or the library. It's also worth calling the United Way, the department of human resources (or its equivalent), or a private agency that serves families—all are likely to have collected and analyzed much of the information you need. Keep in mind that you are trying to determine if there are demographic factors to be considered in recruiting families as a volunteer resource.

The knowledgeable resident is most helpful in answering the other important question:

- What is currently the nature of family involvement in the community?

Are there active youth organizations? Do they have community service projects? And, if so, do young people participate? Is there a student volunteer program in the schools? Are parents active in youth groups, churches, the schools? When there is a community-wide activity that might attract both adults and children (a walk-a-thon, a clean-up campaign, etc.), does it attract them?

In short, you are looking for any information that can help you make an informed judgment about whether or not families will prove to be a real volunteer resource for you.

Step Five: Are Family Volunteers for You?

Now it's time to bring this all together. Here are the components of information you have accumulated:

- an understanding of your needs for volunteers and of what you want them to accomplish;
- an understanding of the kinds of resources and skills needed;
- knowledge about how your organization or agency, now works, and how it currently involves volunteers;
- some images of how families get involved, what various members of the family can do, what the problems encountered may be, what the benefits to the family members are;
- an understanding of what you think of the potential of families as volunteers;
- a preliminary understanding of some of the barriers and resistances to family volunteering that you may encounter in your agency and from families;
- specific information about the demographics of families in your community;
- some perspective on the extent of current family involvement in your community.

Are families a potential volunteer resource for you?

Here are four summary questions to help you make that decision.

What are the "pros," the benefits to your organization and agency, in seeking involved families as volunteers? List them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are the "cons," the greatest obstacles or problems, you see? List them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are the most important benefits a family could gain by volunteering in your organization or agency?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Can you easily think of some volunteer jobs families might undertake with you? List them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Now all you have do is come to a conclusion!

It is important to bear in mind that there is no “right” answer. There are undoubtedly settings in which small groups, whether families or not, are less appropriate volunteers than individuals. There are undoubtedly situations in which the fact that people are acting as part of a family group may be a liability rather than an asset. Certainly there may be settings in which there simply is nothing for children to do—and even some where there is nothing for adults to do!

Family volunteers aren't for every organization **or** for every job. But they **are** for some. If you decide that they are for you, we believe you will find them an exciting, valuable new resource.

Before moving on, consider this final procedural note. The exercises we've been through were designed with the individual volunteer coordinator in mind. They can just as easily be done in a small group. Just as it is important to involve volunteers in designing their own jobs, it is important to involve staff in deciding how volunteers can be involved most effectively. A good way to do this is to invite key staff to work through these exercises with you. Two heads are always better than one, and three or more are even better—particularly when their involvement may excite them about new possibilities and begin to break down any resistance they may have to family volunteers.

Step Six: Designing the Job

Once upon a time, the first step in recruiting volunteers was to write a job description, similar to many of the ones that are routinely done for paid jobs. Increased awareness of volunteers' motivations and needs, however, has led to a lessening of the compulsion to write highly formalized job descriptions. Three fundamental rules for developing volunteer jobs have emerged:

1. Involve people in defining their own jobs. Allow them to express their own interests, needs, and motivations. Attempt to design jobs with a sensitivity to the volunteer's needs and to the tasks that must be accomplished.
2. Understand the positive **and** negative aspects inherent in any volunteer job. A good way to do this is to analyze your own volunteer experience. Seek to maximize the positive, and minimize the negative.
3. When designing jobs, talk about **results**, not activities. People are more involved when they can assume responsibility for figuring out how best to achieve the desired result. Simply listing tasks for them to do robs them of that opportunity and turns them into uncreative subordinates.

This is not to say that nothing should be put in writing, or that you shouldn't offer prospective volunteers as much information as possible. But think about yourself and about your family. Would you want to go into a situation where someone you had never met before told you, step by step, what it was you were going to do? Or would you prefer to know what the expectations were for your performance and to figure out for yourself and with others how you were going to do it?

Think about the “job description” as a way of communicating two things: the results you want, and the basic information a family will need in deciding whether yours is a setting in which they wish to work. We’ve talked previously about results. Here is some of the information you may want to give in a “job description”:

- Your organization: In one sentence, what is its primary purpose? Where is it? How can someone contact you? To whom should they speak?
- The problem: Why do you need volunteers and what do you want them to do for you?
- The job: Is there a specific “job” or area of work (counseling runaway teenagers, cooking meals for the indigent, building a nature trail)?
- The work: Can you give examples of the kinds of activities volunteers might engage in? (Note that they **might** do it. This is **not** a list of duties.)
- The volunteers: Are there any special skills required (a knowledge of a specific foreign language, for example, or a willingness to work with someone who is very ill)? Is there a specific time commitment, either in terms of specific hours that must be filled, such as in staffing an office, or a preferred length of commitment, such as the desire to have a volunteer tutor work for the entire school semester?
- The benefits: Are there any special opportunities available to volunteers, such as special training sessions, field trips, certification of skills, participation in evaluation sessions, etc.?

Job announcements (that’s what they are, really—the first announcement of the availability of a volunteer opportunity) should be brief, clearly written, and inviting. If you have doubts about the ones you’ve developed, try reading them from your perspective as a volunteer. Would it attract you or turn you away? Take it home to your family, or share it with a neighbor’s family. What do they think of it? Would they be willing to volunteer for it? Why?

In South Lake Tahoe, California, the Voluntary Action Center served as the local sponsor of a community-wide family volunteer project. They discovered that it was possible to involve the agency, the family, and the VAC in the job design process **by making it a priority to do so**. In fact, “finishing the job description together,” as they described it, was a key element in the recruitment, interviewing, and placement process.

Perhaps designing volunteer jobs can best be captured in this rule of thumb:

Volunteers are motivated by jobs that challenge them; by jobs that they help to create; by jobs that meet some of their own needs; by jobs that offer them an opportunity to meet a real need in an effective way that uses their skills and energy creatively—**by jobs that are worth doing and doing well**.

Remember that with family volunteers, you have to consider the interests and needs of several people, usually **both** adults and children. Approaches to children and teenagers can be as effective as approaches to adults in generating interest. Thus the job announcement you create must appeal to both adults **and** children; or perhaps you will want to write two separate announcements, each with a specific group in mind.

Volunteer managers who have actually involved families as volunteers have identified these “success principles” for effective job design:

- Emphasize the positive benefits to the family, as well as to the particular project and the general community.
- Write the job descriptions with the family’s perception in mind.
- List the different objectives your agency would like to accomplish in the near future, or on an ongoing basis. Or, list the various goals for your particular family volunteer programs.
- Remember that there are many diverse kinds of families: traditional, single-parent, extended, childless, couples only. If you think a particular type of family will work best, state your preference.
- Be flexible. Many times, one type of family can add talents to a project that are different from, but as important as, those contributed by another type.
- Make the job description concise, using activities that will be involved in accomplishing the result desired. When appropriate, list the responsibilities for parents separately from those for children or grandparents.

Step Seven: Preparing to Recruit

Development of a “job announcement” is a useful step in the volunteer management process because it helps us to bring together all of the information we have about a volunteer job, to organize it, and to begin to phrase it in a way that it becomes an effective communications tool. It is one of the most basic resources needed for the next step: recruitment.

We’re going to approach recruitment by referring to what we earlier called the Golden Rule of Volunteer Management: “Do unto other volunteers what you would have a volunteer coordinator do to you when you volunteer.” Working on the theory that we can learn from our own experiences and then extend our learning to conclusions about others, let’s start with a brief assessment and analysis of your own experience as a volunteer, both individually and in your family.

The following worksheet is organized into two columns: one for you as an individual volunteer, the other for you if you have had an experience as a “family volunteer.” The answers to these questions may be obvious—or they may **seem** obvious. Take a few minutes to work through them. Think back on your time as a volunteer. Try to visualize the job you were performing, the way you felt, the goals you accomplished.

Be careful to differentiate the “how” from the “why.” The distinction may be subtle, but it is important. “How” you got involved might be, “My child volunteered me to be a scout leader.” But **why** did you accept?

As you review these questions, jot down your most important thoughts in the space provided. We’ll come back to this information a little later.

Worksheet

Your Volunteer Autobiography

You as an individual volunteer

1. What was your very first experience as a volunteer?

2. How did you get involved that first time?

3. Why did you get involved? _____

4. List the positive aspects of that first experience.

5. List the negative aspects of that first experience.

6. Think about your most recent volunteer experience.

What was it? _____

7. How did you get involved? _____

8. Why did you get involved? _____

9. What were the most positive aspects of this most recent experience? _____

10. What were the most negative aspects?

You as a family volunteer

1. What was the first experience your family had together as volunteers? _____

2. How did your family get involved the first time?

3. Why did your family get involved? _____

4. List the positive aspects of that first experience.

5. List the negative aspects of that first experience.

6. Think about your family's most recent volunteer experience. What was it? _____

7. How did they get involved? _____

8. Why did they get involved? _____

9. What were the most positive aspects of this most recent experience? _____

10. What were the most negative aspects?

Another important preparatory step you can take is to learn how families who currently volunteer got involved. How can you find them? Begin with individual volunteers currently working with you and ask whether their families have had any volunteer experiences together; check with colleagues in other agencies, with your neighbors, with people in your church. Then, do an analytical interview with them, basing your questions on those in the Volunteer Autobiography Worksheet.

Take another look at your volunteer autobiographies and at the results of your interviews. Focus on the questions about **how** the involvement happened. Remembering that those questions really focus on the **mechanism** through which someone volunteered, create a list here of the different answers you have collected:

The ways people get involved typically fall into one of these three categories:

1. On your own initiative—that is, you may simply decide that volunteering is a desirable way to meet some of your own needs, to serve the community, or to help solve a particular problem. Your action is to seek out potential volunteer jobs, perhaps through a local Voluntary Action Center or Volunteer Bureau, through a public interest organization, or through your church or neighborhood association.
2. Through direct personal contact with someone who wants to get you involved—that is, you are asked to volunteer by a friend, a co-worker, a neighbor, a member of your family.
3. Through indirect recruitment—that is, you respond to an overture to volunteer that is posed in an indirect, impersonal fashion. Examples of this might include TV or radio public service announcements, a flyer or brochure that comes through the mail, a poster that you see in a public place. Again, you take the action of responding or seeking out the volunteer opportunity.

Analyzing each of these categories suggests the kinds of skills and priorities needed to recruit from them:

1. To reach people who volunteer on their own initiative, you need to be visible, either by being well-known throughout the community, or by being known to those organizations or agencies to which people turn when they are seeking to get involved, such as civic clubs or a Voluntary Action Center.
2. To recruit effectively through personal contact, you need good communications skills. You also need to be part of networks in the community through which people communicate with one another.
3. For effective indirect recruitment, you must be able to communicate specifically the three program elements we developed earlier: the problem you are seeking to solve, the desired result of your work, the approach you hope to take.

Step Eight: Recruiting Families to Volunteer

We are going to focus most of our attention here on recruitment through personal contact. Why? Because the way MOST people get involved is through direct personal contact with another person who is already involved, or through participation in a group that gets involved in some way.

One of the most revealing questions in the 1981 Gallup survey on volunteering was, "How did you first learn about the volunteer activity?" Among adults who had volunteered in the year prior to the survey, here are the most popular reasons:

Asked by someone	44%
Through participation in an organization or group	31%
Had a family member or friend in the activity or benefiting from the activity	29%

Only 6% of adult volunteers said they "saw an ad—radio, TV, or printed source."

Responses from teenagers who had volunteered were similar:

Asked by someone	53%
Through participation in an organization or group	33%
Had a family member or friend in the activity or benefiting from the involvement	42%

Note the increased percentage of teens who first volunteered because a member of the family already was involved or was benefiting from the work. **Only 3%** of teens first learned about their volunteer activity through radio, TV, or a printed source!

The survey confirmed what most of us already know but oftentimes forget—the best volunteer recruiter is another volunteer.

We can appreciate this if we stop to think about the amazing amount of printed and media stimuli we receive every day. Americans are almost constantly bombarded by jingles, slogans, billboards, and appeals, as well as an incessant diet of news, weather, sports, and every form of music ever devised by man.

But to whom do we listen? Usually it is to each other, to our friends, our family, our neighbors, our co-workers. This is where real communication takes place. Here is where real understanding is developed.

The value of this direct recruiting is well illustrated by a project begun in Wichita, Kansas, by the National Center for Voluntary Action in 1978. It was designed to recruit workers in fourteen corporations in Wichita. The technique used was to identify

a person in each company who, during a few hours each week of “released time” from the job, would serve as “volunteer coordinator” for the company. Individuals who participated included a bank vice-president, secretaries, personnel staff, and the loading dock foreman at a meat processing plant.

At the end of six months, these recruiters had turned out several hundred volunteers, most of whom never had been involved before!

How did they do it? By the simple act of asking for help.

The volunteer recruiters discovered that while posters, flyers, brochures, other “impersonal” presentations were useful supplements, their greatest success came through one-to-one, face-to-face discussions with potential volunteers. It was in that setting that they could achieve these results:

- personalize the need;
- illustrate how the person could help;
- relieve anxieties;
- provide logistical information;
- persuade.

These are the key elements for direct, personal recruiting. To look at each of them in some detail, we will be using as a working example a citizen action group interested in issues of traffic safety, a setting that can involve both adults and young people.

Personalizing the Need—People respond most readily to those needs to which they immediately can relate. Vague appeals for help for “poor people,” for example, never are as effective as specific requests for help for a local resident who is impoverished.

Compare the effectiveness of these two statements:

“Each year, over 50,000 people are killed in traffic accidents.”

“So far this year, six people have been killed at the intersection of Oak and First Streets. The latest was a five-year-old girl who was crossing the street on the way home from school. There is no stoplight or crossing signal at the intersection.”

Or these two:

“Many people who are involved in auto accidents are disabled and require continuing help.”

“My neighbor’s teenage son was paralyzed from the neck down when he was struck by a drunk driver. His parents aren’t able to provide all of the care he needs and we are looking for people to help set up a self-help group of accident victims that he can be a part of.”

In each case, the more powerful statement is the one that personalizes the need, the one that brings it to the local community, to the immediacy of everyday life for the potential volunteer.

Illustrating How the Person Can Help—People dislike being recruited for something they don't think they can do. It is important to be clear about why you are asking them to be involved. Here are some examples:

"Because you are so handy with tools, we think you'll be able to help us decide how to build exhibits used in our public education programs."

"You really understand how the media works. Can you help us figure out how we can get our point across through public service announcements?"

"I know that you are respected in your neighborhood. Will you help us get support there for our work?"

Note that in each of these examples, there are two elements to the statement. The first is an **affirming** statement—that is, the talent, knowledge, or stature of the potential volunteer is openly recognized and appreciated. The second element is a specific request for help in achieving a desired **result**. As we noted earlier, this is a subtle but crucial distinction. Compare these two questions:

"Will you build this special display board that is illustrated in these drawings?"

"We think you'll be able to help us decide . . ."

The latter is an **empowering** statement, one that recognizes the ability of the volunteer to make a contribution to planning and decision-making, as well as to implementation.

Relieving Anxieties—Many people hesitate to volunteer because they are afraid of the situation in which they'll find themselves. Can they deal with a young person who is paralyzed? with grief-stricken parents? with government officials? Will they be expected to speak before a group of strangers? to spend endless hours in rambling discussion? to undertake the tasks for which they have no known skill?

Perhaps the most critical tasks the recruiter completes are: (1) identifying anxieties, and (2) helping to relieve them. Ask questions you feel will give an insight into the person's reactions and concerns. Here are some suggestions for possible questions:

"What do you think about this problem?"

"Do you think you'd be comfortable helping us?"

"What kinds of things do you think you could do to help?"

Always provide honest answers. It is better to lose a volunteer than to gain one who will quit in disillusionment or frustration.

Providing Logistical Information—Most of us are reluctant to jump into something unless we know how it works. Who is going to be at the meeting? Will I be the only stranger? Will I be working alone or with other people? When do I have to be there? How often must I participate?

Persuading—Salesmen call it “closing the deal,” and, in the final analysis, that’s what you are doing—selling. But you’re not selling soap or insurance or subscriptions. You’re selling a community problem, a way to solve that problem, an opportunity to be involved and to make a contribution.

Even people who need a little extra urging can still be recruited. Often, they simply need extra persuasion. Remember again the way you first got involved. How many times did you have to be asked? How were you finally persuaded?

Worksheet

Preparing For Contact With a Potential Volunteer

1. Who is that person? _____

2. What does he or she do now, either for pay or as a volunteer?

3. Why do you want to have him/her involved? _____

4. What contribution can he/she make to your effort? _____

5. How will you personalize the problem you are addressing?
How exactly will you say it? _____

6. How will you state affirmatively the reason you want this person involved?

7. What will you ask him/her to do? _____

8. What barriers do you anticipate he/she may put **forward** for not getting involved?

9. How can you overcome these barriers? What will you need to say? _____

10. What logistical information do you need to provide him/her to facilitate involvement?

11. What can you say that will be persuasive to **this** person to become involved with
you? _____

Now, let's extend this exercise to recruiting a family. Keep in mind these differences:

- You need to think of the family as a group. What resources do they bring because they are a family, because of some special characteristics of their specific family?
- You also need to think of them as individuals. How does your volunteer opportunity benefit each of them?
- It may not be possible or desirable to talk with the entire family at the same time. How are you going to make contact? What will you say to the person you talk with to persuade him or her to involve the rest of the family?

Now turn back to the worksheet you have just completed and think about ways of getting that person's family involved. Your approach to involve this person and his or her family will differ substantially from your attempt to involve an individual. Note the differences below:

Obviously, it is not possible for an individual volunteer coordinator to work through this kind of in-depth process for each person or family to be recruited. It will be most helpful in two ways:

- to give you experience in this kind of recruitment approach so that you can effectively help others do it, too;
- as a tool to use in recruiting the most important volunteers you need, the ones around whom an entire program can be built.

Step Nine: Using "Networks" to Multiply Yourself

A great deal of attention has been given recently to the concepts of "networks" and "networking." For our purposes, we are going to remain with a relatively simple definition of networks: the mechanisms through which people in a community communicate with one another and share resources to achieve common goals. The networks that we are interested in, then, are the ones that encourage and assist direct, personal interaction, not just places that bring people together in groups.

A church that has a very rigid order of service with no social hour or other form of informal exchange among members is not a "network" in our sense; but one that encourages members to come early for a cup of coffee, or stay for breakfast after the early service, is.

A local newspaper isn't usually a network, but a neighborhood newsletter in which volunteer correspondents actively seek news from their neighbors, is. Going to a movie

or to a basketball game or a dramatic performance isn't "networking"—unless there happens to be an intermission when you can meet people; but having lunch with members of the Rotary or Junior League is.

This is an important difference when we are recruiting volunteers. We want to be able to tap the networks that encourage and assist direct communication, the places where people can talk to one another about themselves and the community, where people can influence others to a desired course of action.

Networks for recruiting family volunteers can be broken into three broad categories:

- those that directly touch families who are together in groups;
- those that directly touch young people;
- those that directly touch adults who are most likely to be members of families.

To begin to identify ways to break into each of these groups of networks, think about it in these terms:

Where can I find families together in groups?

Where can I find groups of young people together?

Where can I find adults who are most likely to be members of families?

The answers, which will be specific to your own community, can be uncovered through a brainstorming exercise. Ask one or two of your colleagues, a member of your family, a young person you know, a popular local minister, or someone who knows the community well to join you for the exercise.

Brainstorming is essentially the creative development of a list of alternatives. After giving your brainstorming group the background on why this exercise is important, give them a direction like: "Let's think of all possible places where we can find families together in groups."

Remember that brainstorming is a creative process. Repetition of ideas is good, since every repetition may add a new perspective. Ideas should not be evaluated as they are put up on chart—**nor should there be a discussion or debated ideas**. Keep the process going until everyone seems drained of possibilities.

At the end of the brainstorming session comes the time to consolidate ideas. Here, you group the ideas together as appropriate; evaluate each idea in terms of its potential effectiveness in reaching families; and consider a realistic manner of implementation. From this process should grow another set of lists:

High Priorities for Contact

Possibilities

Long-Shots

Strategies for contacting each group you listed can then be developed based on your knowledge of the group, the contacts you may already have, and their past history of interest in volunteering.

Once again you may be confronted with a task that seems impossible for an individual to do alone. Once again you are called on to be a manager rather than a doer. Perhaps it is possible that some of your current volunteers will be willing to take on the additional responsibility of helping with recruitment through these networks. (Indeed, your current volunteers may already have better contacts than you do with some of these groups.) Or you may want to recruit new volunteers whose specific responsibility is recruitment. Working from the perspective that "the best recruiter is another volunteer," try to achieve a "pyramid approach" in which each volunteer, whether individual or family, assumes responsibility for carrying the message of your volunteer opportunities to at least one other person or family.

This approach to recruitment is heavily dependent on one single factor: your ability and willingness to ask others to help you make personal contacts and encourage volunteering. Too often imaginary barriers can be erected that stifle that approach. You may think, for example, that none of your volunteers would be willing to take the time to contact someone else. Isn't that an awfully negative view of your own organization and your current volunteers? If your organization is important enough to have attracted good volunteers to start with, don't you think those volunteers would want their friends, neighbors, co-workers, **families** to be involved in this important work as well?

Another barrier is the belief that you have to get your message to a great number of people in order to find enough volunteers. Wrong! It is the **quality**, not the quantity of the approach that counts. If you can make a personal approach to 10 people and get 5 to volunteer, why spend the resources to approach 100 and get 5 to volunteer?

It is true that direct, personal recruitment and the use of networks take time. But the results achieved—interested, motivated volunteers—more than offset the expenditure of time required. As importantly, participation in this kind of recruitment can be a renewing experience for you and your volunteers, reminding you of the importance of the work you are undertaking.

Finally, don't undersell the potential of the number of people you can reach in this way. It is tempting to believe that a TV commercial, a radio public service announcement, or a newspaper column reaches "everyone in town."

But common sense tells us that just isn't so; such media forms reach only the people who happen to be exposed to them, and most of those people simply don't pay much attention. Consider how many people you can reach through direct recruitment:

Let's assume you currently have 50 volunteers, that 30 of them are willing to help recruit someone else, and that 15 actually succeed in bringing in a new volunteer. Now you have 65 volunteers, an increase of 30%. Do it again in six months—this time, assuming the same proportions, you'll add 20 new volunteers. Six months later, you'll add 25 new ones. In a year, you will have more than **doubled** the number of volunteers involved—and because they know one another, there will be a constant reinforcement that will help you keep more of them for a longer period of time.

For another approach, try thinking about the use of networks:

How many speeches can you give in a year to local groups? 25? 50? 100? Let's assume one a week (with a little vacation) or 50 a year and an average audience of 30 people each. That's 1,500 people you'll be talking to. What percentage of them will volunteer? What if you could talk to 10 times as many people? You can't, but a corps of trained volunteers can.

Once again, you are being called on to act as a manager, achieving your goals by effectively mobilizing and organizing others to help.

Here are two final thoughts about recruiting families:

- Don't overlook your current individual volunteers as potential converts to family volunteers. They already understand the work being done in your organization. They already are committed to the idea of volunteering—therefore it may not be difficult for them to understand the potential benefits of involving their families. This may be particularly true of any single parents who volunteer for you. Single parents often appreciate the opportunity to bring their children with them, to have some time together in constructive activities.

- Don't forget that the decision-making process is more complex for a group than for an individual and may take more time. Consistently, agencies who have attempted to recruit family volunteers have reported that there is a much longer response time between the recruitment contact and the response than there is with individuals. This may suggest the need to follow-up in an organized way. The Pleasanton, California Voluntary Action Center solved this problem by using "response cards," which they distributed to their audience. They encouraged anyone who had an initial interest in family volunteering to fill out the card. This gave the recruiters a list of "possibles" for contact later.

Step Ten: Getting the Most from Family Volunteers

Despite the increased awareness that volunteers gain substantial benefits from their experience, your primary concern undoubtedly remains insuring that your program or agency gets the maximum benefit from the volunteers you recruit: the deepest commitment, the most hours, the most effective work, the most creativity, the greatest accomplishments, etc. The way you achieve that is through effective management of your volunteers: good interviews that allow you to make the most appropriate placements, appropriate orientation and training, good, continuous supervision and evaluation, opportunities for growth and reinforcement, recognition, and feedback. Not surprisingly, those same management techniques, when applied well, also insure that the volunteers enjoy the best possible results from their work.

Your expectations of family volunteers should be no different than those for any other volunteers. Your rationale for seeking to involve family volunteers is to gain a new resource for your program, not to "do good for families." You have every right—and **the responsibility**—to expect that families will make a positive contribution to achieving your goals. At the same time, they have every right to insist that the experience of volunteering be positive and beneficial for them.

In this section, we'll look at four key elements of family volunteering:

- Using your own experience as a guideline;
- The involvement of children and teenagers;
- How groups differ in their needs from individuals;
- Using the family group as a positive resource.

The Golden Rule of Volunteer Management

Do unto other volunteers as you would have a volunteer coordinator do to you when you volunteer.

Too often we get so involved in the various roles we play that we isolate ourselves from our own experiences. Thus we tend to manage without remembering what it is like to **be** managed; we supervise without remembering what it is like to **be** supervised. Most importantly, we forget that what separates us from the person on the other side of the desk is only the matter of circumstance.

As a result, we often overlook one of our most valuable resources, our experience. Throughout this workbook, we have tried to refer constantly to that resource as a way of understanding and evaluating the potential of family volunteers. We have seen how it can be used to understand the interests and needs of families and in the planning of recruitment efforts. It is equally valuable in the rest of the volunteer management process.

Try to get in the habit of asking these two questions of yourself whenever you are preparing to deal with family volunteers:

- When my family volunteered together, what were the management techniques that were most effective in motivating, mobilizing, and supporting us?
- In the situation I am about to deal with, how would my family like to have the volunteer coordinator behave?

We think you will find that the answers offer some pretty sound guidelines for your own behavior as a manager.

Children and Teens

Families come in many shapes, sizes, and configurations. But, as we said at the outset, we have been concerned with families that include at least two generations, one of which is younger and dependent on the other, that is families with children and teenagers.

Most of us have a natural resistance to viewing young people as a volunteer resource. We can invest many more negatives than positives about their involvement, and can go to great lengths to argue why they cannot be involved. This probably results from the way many of us were treated as children, not necessarily by our parents, but by other adults in positions of authority. A first step toward breaking down some of that resistance is to use the "Golden Rule" to evaluate our own feelings. Try these questions:

- When I was a child, could I have helped someone else who had a problem? Could I have worked constructively with my parents in a helping situation?
- What can my own children do as volunteers? Would I want someone to decide arbitrarily that they have nothing they can offer in a volunteer setting?
- If my children wished to volunteer, what responsibilities would I be willing to assume to support them in that work?

Having children and teenagers involved does present some special circumstances, of course, which you as a manager will have to confront. Consider these general guidelines.

- You are a leader, a manager of your volunteers, not their parent. It is not unreasonable to expect that the adult members of volunteer families will continue to fulfill their parental responsibilities while volunteering. You are offering them an opportunity to volunteer **with** their families, not a free babysitting service. Job activities should be structured in such a way as to allow parents to work with, supervise, and support their children.
- Children of any age can contribute something to virtually any volunteer situation. It may simply be their presence that is important, as with the delivery of meals to shut-ins or on visits to nursing homes. It may be that they are playmates for other children, as with the families who visit relatives in prison. Or it may be acting as peer supports, as with the children of refugee families or with young people in distress. Or it may simply be as an extra pair of hands or legs to run errands or add to the overall workforce on a project. The challenge is to determine what that contribution is, not to build barriers that they have to climb over in trying to make it.
- Young people bring a different perspective to problems. They may be more creative, may see the easier way to get something done, may be more direct. The easiest way to find out what they may be able to contribute is to ask them **and to listen to their answers.**
- Children may have unrealistic expectations of their volunteer experience. Perhaps the most common are those who believe that they will get a "cookie-baking grandma" from their work with elders. They may. Or they may get someone who is completely self-sufficient, desires some companionship but isn't looking for surrogate grandchildren. You can begin to understand and respond to expectations in the interview. Remember, it is better to lose a volunteer during the interview by admitting that you can't fill his or her needs and interests, than to have a disgruntled volunteer who damages your overall effort.

- Children also may confront disappointments in the volunteering, such as with the death of a person with whom they have been working. Such occasions are a time for understanding, consoling, and supporting. They are also experiences to help children grow. Your relationship with the parents will help you to be supportive of young people in the most appropriate and needed way.

- One of the arguments against involving young people is that of the legal liability assumed by the agency or organization. You may want to check with your insurance agent or legal counsel to make sure you have the appropriate coverage and protection. You may also want to consult with agencies who already have young volunteers, and with youth organizations, to determine how they handle these problems.

- Disabled young people can also volunteer. A special demonstration project sponsored by VOLUNTEER and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in five communities has proven the value of volunteering by disabled young people to both the community and the volunteers. For more information about this and related projects, you may want to review the publications listed in the "Resources" section of this workbook.

Involving Groups

The most obvious characteristic of families is that they are composed of more than one person. If you have worked with small groups of volunteers, you will be sensitive to the ways in which they differ from individual volunteers working alone. Here are some thoughts about families as groups:

- Decision-making usually takes longer for groups than it does for individuals. Thus, there may be a time lapse between your interview with the families and their decision to volunteer. You may want to do more follow-up than you normally would; or, you may want to try to identify any questions or problems they are having, and respond appropriately. Remember how your own family would reach a decision to volunteer, and be patient accordingly.

- Similarly, families may have difficult scheduling problems. A group of adults or teens with similar common interests might be able to find meeting times acceptable to all or most of them; but in most families, the parents and children operate on separate and quite diverse schedules. However, such problems as coordinating schedules can be overcome if the family wants to volunteer. It's not a question of "finding time" (although many people want to think that it is), but rather one of determining what is most important to the family, and then building schedules around these priorities. Don't be shy about reminding your family volunteers of that.

- Families may bring to the volunteer job completely unrelated internal tensions, which may spill out occasionally. Indeed, some families may hope to use their volunteering to resolve or at least escape from some of the problems. There is no "right" way for you to respond to such situations. It may be very appropriate and possible for you or your organization to respond to those problems and to offer needed support or intervention; but it also may not be appropriate, and you may be faced with the difficult decision to "fire" a volunteer. Before you move to that step, however, you will have invoked the "Golden Rule" and developed an intermediary strategy of intervention and honest discussion with the family.

As a manager, you may be called upon to fill the role of mediator—either among members of a family, or between the family and other volunteers or members of the staff. This is an important role because it offers another opportunity to be supportive and responsive to their needs. It is also one way you can respond to the internal tensions a family may be experiencing. To use the current vernacular, your goal is a “win-win” situation—that is, it is far better to have everyone agree to a compromise, which even partially meets the needs of all the parties, than to have some people disappointed and alienated because they “lost” everything. You bring two important resources to the mediator’s role: you can be a neutral, objective outside force, and you can help focus their attention on the larger goals they are trying to achieve in their volunteer work.

The Family as a Management Resource

It is easy to think of all of the ways in which working with families is more difficult than working with individuals. But there is another side to the ledger, the resources families bring to the volunteer management process. Consider these possibilities:

- Family members can help to teach one another. Are you concerned that children won’t have the skills needed to do a particular job? Perhaps the parents already have that skill and can assume responsibility for on-the-job training of the young person. There may even be opportunities for young people to turn the tables and teach their parents a new skill—witness the explosion in computer technology, a field generally much more familiar to young people than to adults.
- Family members can reinforce one another. Volunteer managers have always known that in difficult or emotionally wrenching volunteer assignments, it may be far preferable to have people work in small groups so that they can support and encourage one another. Families bring this as an automatic resource.
- Families can grow together through volunteering, and family members can help one another’s growth. As a manager, you may be able to stimulate this process by providing learning materials that families can study together to learn more about the area in which they are volunteering. In addition, you can provide parents with information they need to help their children most appreciate the experience and to relate it to other aspects of their lives.
- Because they are part of many different networks, family members can be particularly valuable in educating the community about your organization or agency, in mobilizing public support, and in recruiting other volunteers. Don’t be reticent about asking them to do more. Asking for additional assistance is an important way to let them know that they are important, valued members of your organizational team, doing important valued work.

Reinforcement is one of your continuing responsibilities as a manager. One way to fulfill that is by offering volunteers an opportunity to come together with one another to discuss their experiences, successes, frustrations, and problems. The same strategy can be used with families who volunteer by offering them the opportunity to meet other families. The result can be a continuing support structure for all of the family members, and a greater sharing with one another about what the volunteer experience means to each of them.

Another form of reinforcement is recognition. Typically we think of this as a way of saying "thank you," of giving awards, certificates, and plaques. All of these, of course, are appropriate ways to support your volunteers. But the most significant form of recognition is a willingness on the part of your organization to share authority and power with the volunteers. Volunteers are the most valuable resource you have to strengthen your program; one measure of your planning, decision-making, and resource allocation is the richness of their experiences and accomplishments. With family volunteers, that resource is multiplied many times over because of the diversity of views they bring. Say "thank you" when it is appropriate, but also seek ways to draw your volunteers into more responsible decision-making roles.

III. Family Volunteering as a Community-Wide Project

Two Case Studies

Establishing a single program for family volunteers is one thing; diffusing the concept of family volunteering throughout a community is quite another. This section of this manual is intended to assist with the implementation of family volunteering as a community-wide project. In this chapter, we'll review two examples of programs that successfully engaged their communities in family volunteering efforts.

Valley Volunteer Center, Pleasanton, California

Pleasanton, California is known as a high-technology area. It is a progressive community, where many of its people are highly educated and specialized in such fields as engineering and physics. Its volunteer bureau, the Valley Volunteer Center, actually serves not only the city of Pleasanton, but also the entire Livermore-Ardmore Valley area. Both a placement/referral bureau for volunteers, and a volunteer program sponsor, the Volunteer Center serves a group of 110 social service agencies, and a general population of approximately 110,000. Through its placement/referral service, the bureau directs about 500 volunteers a year to various service programs; and while the community has a reputation for being a comfortably suburban area, Betty Stallings, who serves as the director of the Volunteer Center, disagrees with that assessment. She said:

We have community-level problems, too—and like any other type of community, we need social service agencies and volunteers to help solve those problems.

In the fall of 1980, bureau staff elected to try a new approach to finding solutions when they undertook the challenge of implementing a community-wide family volunteer program. Two facts about the Pleasanton Center's approach make their program both successful and unusual:

- 1) The staff created and used an extensive task force.
- 2) The task force organized and used a speakers' bureau.

In the following sections, you will see how these two factors propelled the concept of family volunteering throughout the Pleasanton-Livermore-Ardmore area.

The Task Force: Organizing

Before attempting to publicize their idea of family volunteering, the staff at the Volunteer Center began an extensive process of assessing community needs; this process was begun with the creation of a task force. They tried an innovative approach, constructing two task force groups composed of different types of people who would have different types of responsibilities. Representatives from various area agencies, such as the Red Cross, Parental Stress Group, Senior Support Group, and the Shelter for Abused Women, comprised the first group, whose primary responsibility was the development of appropriate and interesting job placements for family volunteers. The second task force, made up of families interested in volunteer work, families already involved in volunteering, and influential community members, had the responsibility of analyzing their own motives for desiring to volunteer as families. By setting up its task force into two separate groups, the bureau gained two different types of information: the types of volunteer jobs open for families, and the types of volunteer

jobs that appeal to families. By combining these types of information, the bureau began assessing the needs of the community, thus beginning to choose a focus for its family volunteer project.

Training

To conduct training sessions for the two task force groups, the director contacted Milton Woolley, a local family counselor, private consultant, and long-time bureau associate. Woolley designed his training sessions with a specific goal in mind: giving the participants a deeper understanding of the goals, potential, and complexity of a family volunteering campaign. Through a series of meditation exercises, he had the group members recall their family lives as children, asking them to consider how their lives might have been improved if they had included volunteer activities. He also requested that the group list the activities done by families, as well as those done for families; and he asked for lists of people who might perform such activities, as well as those who might receive their services. Finally, he told the group to imagine themselves as if they were directors of family volunteer projects.

By having the task force members consider family volunteering from the perspective of a child in a family, of an adult in a family, and of a coordinator in a family volunteer program, he encouraged them to analyze the problems and challenges inherent in implementing such a project. They probed for answers to questions like the following:

- 1) How will children view volunteer work?
- 2) What do families like to do together?
- 3) What needs do families have?
- 4) How does a manager supervise families in a volunteer situation?

This process of meditation, reflection, and discussion affected the committee members in several positive ways. It involved them personally by inviting them to imagine themselves filling different roles in a family volunteer program from multiple perspectives in an attempt to anticipate, avoid, prevent, and solve any potential problems. It also led them to some reasonable expectations for starting a family volunteer program. Betty Stallings remembers the tangible results Woolley achieved through his sessions:

The people on the task force became enthusiastic; they were willing to work energetically for results—and at the same time they tried to be patient for those results. The training sessions emphasized the importance of being spirited but realistic.

You can see that one result of Woolley's leadership was the setting of the tone for the project; but Woolley also helped the task force establish a focus and set its goals. Task force members created a master list of possible activities for family volunteers. By analyzing this list, and by considering the immediate needs of their community at large, the task force people identified a single outstanding need: emergency short-term housing. The opportunities for families to provide short-term shelter were numerous

and varied, including aid to disaster victims, respite care for parental stress groups, shelter for battered women and/or abused children, and help for children visiting incarcerated parents. In fact, the needs were so great that the bureau decided to begin its family volunteer effort with a campaign focused on short-term housing. Building a family volunteer program around a single community need helped the bureau to publicize the idea of family volunteering, and it also enabled program coordinators to place family volunteers into existing volunteer projects. For example, the staff worked with the local Red Cross to recruit families to help house victims of various disasters. Also, the staff placed family volunteers with the Welcome House Visiting Center, where children go to visit their incarcerated parents. Finally, they also encouraged families to provide "time-out" respite care for families experiencing serious conflict between parents and children. In all of these cases, the bureau helped to recruit family volunteers for agencies identifying a need for volunteers willing to provide temporary housing. What's more, the Volunteer Center achieved an encouraging level of success with recruitment and placement.

Predictably, recruitment staff experienced a time lapse between interviewing the families and receiving their commitment to volunteer, but this time lapse was no great barrier. Training sessions had prepared the staff and task force members for this delay, and as they continued to advertise their project, they gradually saw a stream of potential family volunteers appear.

Speaker's Bureau

You may be wondering just how the success was achieved. Betty Stallings attributes credit to the consistent recruitment techniques applied by the task force. In her words:

We publicized the concept and its mutual benefits everywhere we could—through the media, in the schools, at the churches, with all the people we knew—and it eventually caught on. People heard about family volunteering in so many ways, and from so many sources, that they were ready to try it.

Their main vehicle for publicizing the project was their "speaker's bureau." Organized and staffed by the task force members, the speaker's bureau consisted of people willing to address local groups on the topic of family volunteering. Groups like the Chamber of Commerce, the Ecumenical Council, and various women's clubs engaged speakers from the Volunteer Center's "bureau"— and each time a speech was made, another portion of the community learned about family volunteering, became interested in trying it. Slowly the word about family volunteering was being heard.

The speaker's bureau was particularly successful in holding meetings over luncheon or dessert. In one example, task force and Volunteer Center people met with a group of ministers, priests, and other religious leaders in the community to share their ideas about effectively involving families. The results were rewarding as the church leaders and volunteer advocates reciprocated in a session of sharing ideas and insights about involving family volunteers. By tapping networks such as this one, the participants in the speaker's bureau were able to reach an increasingly wider audience. You can see that as the word got out, the families came in. Kris Miller, project coordinator, reported:

Our approach was successful for us. After effectively involving families in meeting short-term housing needs, we began to recruit families for other types of efforts.

Program organizers in Pleasanton have found that building a network of community family volunteers is difficult but possible, and certainly worth the effort. They attribute their own success in diffusing the concept to their extensive preprogram planning, their process of assessing community needs, and their persistent and energetic approach to their program. Kris Miller is enthusiastic about the longevity of family volunteering at the Pleasanton Bureau. "It's now an integral part of our core program, and we intend to continue offering volunteer opportunities for families as well as for individuals." Because of the hard work of the staff and the community at large, family volunteering now works in Pleasanton—and it's there to stay.

Voluntary Action Center, Salt Lake City, Utah

Salt Lake City, Utah, is a major urban center with a heritage of community involvement. Its Voluntary Action Center serves Salt Lake City and County, or a total population of 590,450. The VAC provides 113 other social service agencies and nonprofit organizations in the area with a total of 1,080 volunteer workers annually.

In recent years, Salt Lake residents have witnessed a steady flow of refugees immigrating to their city. Community structures and traditional values have been affected by this increased and varied population, and just as many other modern cities have done in recent years, Salt Lake City has grown and changed. In an effort to meet these and other community concerns, the staff at the VAC decided to implement family volunteerism on a community-wide scale.

In preparing for its initial family volunteer programs, the VAC in Salt Lake City built a strong and active task force, but their methods differed somewhat from those used in Pleasanton. Elaine Smart, director for the VAC, reports that "organization and precision in planning are the keys to a successful beginning." VAC staff formed a small steering committee composed of the VAC director, a trainer, and a recruiter; this group did the initial program planning, and developed a survey questionnaire regarding family volunteering. After several planning sessions, the steering committee held a meeting with community agencies interested in placing volunteers within their agency framework. At this meeting, all agency representatives responded to a questionnaire from two viewpoints: as agency leaders, and on behalf of their own families. In addition, they agreed to administer the questionnaire to four other people. Finally, they were asked to recruit one person to be part of the implementation task force.

Consisting of a variety of agency representatives, this task force had a sophisticated inner structure with an executive committee and three major subcommittees: the awareness, the recruitment, and the documentation/evaluation subcommittees. Each of these subcommittees had its own primary concerns, and each worked to promote and reevaluate its part of the project on a continuous basis. By designating these responsibilities of advertising, recruiting, and evaluating, the VAC ensured that its task force filled the role of an active, outreach community awareness committee.

In addition, task force members participated in a series of preliminary exercises, different on the surface, but similar in purpose, to those undertaken in Pleasanton. In one project, the task force assessed the current status of family volunteering by

distributing, individually and **not** by mail, the survey questionnaire developed by the first small VAC group. After retrieving the completed questionnaire and combining the data, they analyzed their findings and considered ways of expanding the current levels of family volunteering. In Elaine Smart's words, "this project produced some reasonable expectations about goals for our family program; and it helped us to advertise the idea in our area."

In another exercise, task force members themselves had to consider what would motivate them and their families to volunteer together. Then, they contacted three other families, including personal friends, and asked them if they would consider volunteering as families and why. For Mrs. Smart and her staff, this exercise was another way of promoting family volunteering and diffusing it in the community:

Insight into the families was important. We learned about motivation techniques for involving families, and at the same time, we were all inspired to become more personally involved as task force members.

Like the group in Pleasanton, the VAC task force in Salt Lake City took the responsibility for increasing public awareness about family volunteering. They developed a special brochure for families with an interest in and specific questions about family volunteering. They helped the VAC staff to develop a special newsletter, **The Family Volunteer Voice**, which they distributed to agencies and interested families (including those who had previously volunteered together). They planned a slide presentation for use in public speaking engagements, and began to recruit people with the professional skills (photographers, writers) needed to create an effective slide show. Finally, they continued to meet regularly, reviewing their progress, and considering ways to improve their programs.

You remember that one effect of the task force training sessions in Pleasanton was the increased personal involvement of each task force member. These detailed and precise preliminary exercises in Salt Lake City had a similar effect on the task force there. Members were encouraged to involve the people they knew well, and as they did so, they created a support network for themselves as family volunteers, as well as for family volunteering in general. Just as in Pleasanton, the Salt Lake task force members became individually responsible for advertising, explaining, improving the VAC's family volunteer program. The more they worked, the more they learned; and as they involved more families in more activities, they were better able to understand the motivation and rewards for families who take the time to volunteer together. In Elaine Smart's words, "Our task force was and still is our vital force."

The Slide Show

One example of the effectiveness of the Salt Lake City task force is seen in the slide show project. When the VAC first undertook the challenge of implementing a project for family volunteers, VAC staff and task force people decided to try to develop a slide show. In the presentation, they hoped to introduce and define family volunteering, and at the same time, to encourage people to try it. Creating the program was one goal, and once it was created, it was to serve as a tool toward yet another goal, i.e., recruiting more families.

At first, the process of designing the show was difficult. The people were uncertain about skills, time commitment, and money required to do a professional job; furthermore, they wondered whether such an undertaking would be effective in reaching potential volunteer families. These questions and doubts surrounded the project of the slide show while, slowly but surely, the task force kept up its recruitment efforts, and families began to volunteer.

Gradually, the strength of the task force commitment began to reveal itself. Many Salt Lake City area families were volunteering in a variety of settings; and people with special skills had become interested in helping to create the slide show. Professional photographers, artists, a writer, an editor, and other individuals with the necessary technical skills had learned about family volunteer opportunities through the various community networks. They agreed to donate their time, expertise, and energy toward the production of a polished slide presentation to use in public speaking engagements. You can see how infectious personal involvement is: the enthusiasm and hard work of the task force personnel encouraged those same qualities in other community members.

Conclusions

Promoting family volunteering as a community-wide project is quite different from doing it within the context of a single agency or problem area. Based on the experiences of the demonstration communities in the Family Volunteer Project, it is clear that as a community project, it is likely to be successful only if it is possible and desirable to follow these “success principles” identified over the life of the project:

- Make extensive use of volunteers through a “task force” mechanism and give them significant responsibility for planning and implementing the project.
- Build the project around a single problem area that is high priority in the community—such as emergency housing or working with newly arrived refugee families—at least initially.
- Seek out those existing structures, agencies, and organizations most likely to offer direct access to families already inclined to be involved.
- Be willing to make the promotion of family volunteering the highest possible priority for your organization or agency for a period of months until the idea really takes hold.
- Build the project around a single problem area that is a high priority in the community—such as emergency housing or working with newly arrived refugee families—at least initially.

Following these success principles can make a difference in the planning and implementation of your family volunteer program. Additional resources for program planning and evaluation are listed in Appendix B, at the conclusion of this manual.

Appendix A: Understanding Your Needs for Volunteers

A few years ago, one of the most popular posters on the market included this quotation from Mao Tse-Tung: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

So is it also with the involvement of volunteers, and that single and first step is to gain a clear understanding of what your needs for volunteers are. From there, you must discern what you want your volunteers to do for you. Let's look at how we can begin our planning. We will use as an example an organization that wants to get volunteers involved on issues related to traffic safety.

Our exercise starts with this question:

What is the problem I am trying to solve, the need I am trying to meet?

Here is a helpful hint to keep in mind. Too often, we mix a statement of the problem with our intended solution. Thus we might say, "The problem is that drunk drivers receive lenient sentences." It would be far better to begin with the **actual** problem. For example: "More people are killed or seriously injured on the highways by drunk drivers than by any other cause."

The fact that drunk drivers receive lenient sentences suggests one possible solution, e.g., stricter sentences. There are obviously others: more alcohol education, legislation raising the drinking age or mandating stricter sentences, improved law enforcement of driving-while-intoxicated laws.

Think about your own efforts. **WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU ARE TRYING TO SOLVE, THE NEED YOU ARE TRYING TO MEET?**

Write it here: _____

The example we've used is of an organization with an interest in a very broad problem, traffic safety. But our starting question can just as easily be applied to the setting of a human service agency, an arts program, a recreation department—wherever there are volunteer managers. If you are in one of these settings, try to focus on a specific need within your agency. Think, for example, of a request that may have come from another member of the staff who wants volunteers: to help plant a garden for the residents of a nursing home, to help promote a new exhibit or an upcoming performance, to organize play activities for disabled youngsters. Now go back and look at the question again. Is your answer any different?

The next step is to ask the question, "What do I want to accomplish in solving this problem?" Or, you may want to think of it in these terms: "What result will satisfy me?"

Think about the example used above. The desired result is "to reduce traffic accidents caused by drunk drivers." Or if you really want to evaluate it, you might pose a quantitative result like "to reduce traffic accidents caused by drunk drivers by 55%."

In terms of **your** efforts, **HOW CAN THE RESULTS YOU DESIRE BE ACHIEVED?**

Write it here: _____

What we have done in this quick exercise is to state the problem we are addressing, to articulate our goal, and to begin to define how we are going to go about reaching that goal. Each of these statements will be helpful as you recruit others to help.

It is important to note that our focus here is on **results**, not on the specific mechanisms you will use to achieve those results. Too often, we limit our creative thinking by beginning our planning with the mechanisms—the “how” rather than the “what.” The volunteer coordinator asked to “find volunteers to plant the garden” is needlessly limited if his or her first thought is, “Where can I get a volunteer to do it?”

A results-oriented person analyzes the situation and decides what constitutes success in each case. Is it getting the garden planted? Or is it:

- finding a way to involve nursing home residents in the garden project;
- using the garden project as a way to bring new people into the nursing home;
- providing the nursing home with a new source of fresh vegetables for the residents to eat?

As you think about each of these possible alternative results, you will begin to see that there are literally hundreds of different approaches you might take to achieve the results, only one of which may be encapsulated in the instinctive question, “Where can I get a volunteer to do it?”

There is one final step. Based on your goal statement and your approach statement, think about the resources you need to accomplish your desired result. For the example we have been using, this list might include such things as:

1. Good data on the cost of accidents as well as on the potential savings if the proposed solution were implemented.
2. Media support of your cause.
3. Support of the city council and the mayor’s office.
4. Examples of successful solutions from other traffic safety programs.

The following worksheet is a good way to organize your list.

WORKSHEET: Resource Shopping List

Expertise in (list subject areas): _____

Contacts with (list agencies, organizations, etc.): _____

Equipment & Supplies (such as audiovisual equipment, automobiles, other materials):

Other assistance (such as media exposure, funding, etc.):

Go back through the list and underline each resource that in some way can be provided by other people working as volunteers.

You can now safely guess that almost everything you need—whether it is information, public support, signatures on a petition—can be supplied through the active involvement of other people.

“Ah ha,” you say. “It still comes down to the question, ‘Where can I get a volunteer to do it?’”

True. But you've taken several important interim steps:

- You've gained an understanding of what you really want to accomplish and can tell others the desired results that will come from their volunteer work.
- You've begun to identify the skills that will be needed to achieve those results and thus can begin to identify characteristics of people who may make effective volunteers for this purpose.
- You've built a rationale for getting others involved and can tell potential volunteers why they will be a valuable added resource.

One last word on this shift in approach is appropriate. **You** have subtly shifted roles, too. You've become an organizer and a manager, as well as the moving force and chief worker in the effort. By reaching out to others, you are assuming a responsibility to get them involved effectively, to share your authority with them, to focus their efforts where they will do the most good.

It sounds like a lot of work. It is. But experienced community organizers and volunteer leaders know that the long-run pay-offs far exceed the investment that is required.

By making this shift in approach, you are acknowledging that finding a solution to the problem is your top priority. Your staff will recognize that you want to get results, and that recognition is what makes you a **LEADER**.

Appendix B: The Family Volunteer Project

The Family Volunteer Project was a three-year demonstration project implemented in ten pilot communities through a collaborative effort of two national nonprofit organizations, The Mountain States Health Corporation and VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement. Funding was provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The object of this project was to recruit families to volunteer together in human services programs on a community-wide scale, as well as to study its mutual benefits to the volunteer families, the placement agencies, and the implementation communities.

Although the project period has formally ended, the two organizations which sponsored the program continue to serve as information-sharing sources of technical assistance. Background and contact information about The Mountain States Health Corporation and VOLUNTEER are provided below.

Mountain States Health Corporation

Since its beginning in the early 1970's, the Mountain States Health Corporation (MSHC) has been dedicated to the development of human resources. A public, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, the corporation sees its goal as improving the quality, access, and availability of human services.

The lack of sufficient human services, including health care, in less populated parts of the West is a well-documented flaw in the "American Way of Life." The MSHC was created to help remove this flaw by marshaling local resources, promoting regionalization of service delivery models, and drafting information packets that aid their replication in other communities.

As a part of its effectiveness, the MSHC has been sensitive to the need for community involvement and local decision-making. The corporation has brought together the skills and experience of experts who live in the region and who understand its people and their special situations. Staff competencies include a fortunate combination of health care professionals, educators, administrators, and social scientists.

In the first eight years of MSHC, the staff developed and managed nearly five million dollars in projects that were conducted by the corporation. Project descriptions are available upon request. They include ongoing state programs such as the Idaho Volunteer Office, and the Idaho Technical Assistance and Training Office for Head Start Programs. The larger number of MSHC programs are regional and national in scope and usually two to three years in length.

In addition to the programs of multi-year duration, MSHC also carries out various short-term projects each year. In recent years, for example, MSHC staff prepared a descriptive report on a rural health service operation for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, provided technical assistance to an Idaho Indian tribe in developing a tribal specific health plan, and conducted a training program in management and program accountability for the Indian Health Service on eight reservations in Montana and Wyoming. MSHC currently is providing assistance to more than 100 nursing homes in developing geriatric nurse practitioner positions and is consulting with several medical schools implementing gerontological departments.

The common thread running through all of the corporation's programs and activities is community activation—working always toward the goal of local decision-making by an active, responsible community involved in planning, developing, and continuing its own programs. For additional information contact:

Mountain States Health Corporation

P.O. Box 6756
Boise, ID 83707
(208) 342-4666

VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement

VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement is the only national organization which exists for the sole purpose of encouraging more effective citizen involvement in problem-solving. It offers a broad range of information-sharing, technical assistance, and training services, in support of local volunteer leaders and administrators, as well as serving as a national advocate for volunteering,

VOLUNTEER will continue to serve as a resource about family volunteering—disseminating this publication, seeking to increase awareness of the potential for family involvement, consulting with individual organizations and agencies, and linking together those who have a continuing interest in family involvement.

VOLUNTEER's specific services to the volunteer community include:

- **Associate Service Plans for individuals and organizations.** Associates of **VOLUNTEER** receive subscriptions to the quarterly magazine and the two quarterly newsletters, access to technical assistance through **VOLUNTEER's** library and staff, as well as discounts to the National Conference on Citizen Involvement.
- **The National Conference on Citizen Involvement.** An annual event, this conference features keynote speakers from all facets of the public, private, and voluntary sectors, as well as a diverse list of workshops and seminars relating to effective citizen participation.
- **Voluntary Action Leadership.** VAL is the only quarterly magazine designed to provide current information on the volunteer world and the issues which affect volunteers.
- **Volunteering.** This quarterly newsletter covers the issues and events which affect major volunteer programs.
- **Exchange Networks.** This quarterly newsletter reviews ideas and events relevant to neighborhood and community groups, nonprofit organizations, and small businesses.
- **Workplace Relations Department.** **VOLUNTEER** maintains a special department which recognizes and encourages the increasing support of volunteer activity within a corporation.

- **Publications and Distribution Center.** VOLUNTEER operates a direct-mail service, VOLUNTEER READERSHIP, through which constituents may purchase helpful publications relating to volunteer and nonprofit management, and special gifts for volunteer recognition.

For additional information, contact:

**VOLUNTEER: The National Center
for Citizen Involvement**
P.O. Box 4179
Boulder, CO 80306
(303) 447-0492

The Demonstration Communities

Family volunteering is a new resource with great potential for the volunteer community. Some excellent resources for learning about it undoubtedly are those who actually implemented family volunteers activities at the community leadership during the demonstration phase of the family volunteer project. Their insights about the potential of family volunteering as a community-wide project, and about how best to approach it within an individual agency may prove helpful. In addition, they may be able to link you with an agency or program similar to yours which participated in the demonstration project.

Pleasanton, California

Betty Stallings, Executive Director
Kris Miller, Project Director
Valley Volunteer Center
519 Kottinger Drive
Pleasanton, CA 94566

South Lake Tahoe, California

Rosemary Manning, Director
Carol Thurlkill, Project Director
Voluntary Action Center
P.O. Box 14524
South Lake Tahoe, CA 95702

San Francisco, California

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33 Gough Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

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2116 N. Main St., Suite E
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San Jose, California

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Alice Woodworth, Project Director
Volunteer Center of
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San Jose, CA 95126

Lewiston, Idaho

Margaret Irish, Director
Lewis-Clark Volunteer Bureau
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Lewiston, ID 83501

Columbia, Missouri

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Voluntary Action Center
200 Strollway Center
111 South 9th Street
Columbia, MO 65201

Salt Lake City, Utah

Elaine Smart, Executive Director
Voluntary Action Center
2900 S. Main Street, Suite 200
Salt Lake City, UT 84115

Bellingham, Washington

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Voluntary Action Center
1229 Cornwall Avenue, #213
Bellingham, WA 98225

Kennewick, Washington

Geneva Davidson, Director
Benton-Franklin County
Voluntary Action Center
205 N. Dennis
Kennewick, WA 99336

Appendix C: Additional Resources

Suggested Publications

The following publications are meant to supplement this workbook, and to cover a wide range of topics relating to program development and volunteer management. All publications listed below are available through VOLUNTEER READERSHIP, the publication distribution service of The National Center for Citizen Involvement. Order information is listed below.

Step By Step. (Marie MacBride, 1979).

A practical concise guide for agencies working with volunteers, this manual will be particularly useful to new volunteer leaders and to those who are creating programs for the first time within agencies. **Step By Step** covers the basics on recruiting, interviewing, selecting, placing, training, and retaining volunteers—as well as important points about budgeting, funding, and public relations. Available for \$8.20 postpaid.

Helping People Volunteer. (Judy Rauner, 1980).

This workbook is a practical guide that can be used for total volunteer planning on a daily basis. A time and energy saver for managers, it assists leaders who are implementing a new program, and is also useful for operating and evaluating an already existing program. Its sections cover factors influencing your program, skill development for managers, an opinion survey, program planning, job development, recruitment, placement, supervision, evaluation, and recognition. Available for \$13.75 postpaid.

Effective Management of Volunteer Programs. (Marlene Wilson, 1976). This book discusses commonly held management theories and provides a helpful understanding of how a good manager would approach such things as job designing, volunteer supervision, recruitment of professional volunteers, delegation of responsibility to volunteers, volunteer staff training, and inter-office communication. Available for \$9.60 postpaid.

Survival Skills for Managers. (Marlene Wilson, 1981).

The logical extension of **Effective Management of Volunteer Programs**, Marlene Wilson's newest work extends further to examine the many problems and frustrations the volunteer manager encounters in today's workplace. The author's personal and professional experiences combine to provide you with creative options to issues like stress management, program planning, and personnel motivation. This is an invaluable tool for all volunteer managers—those beginning new programs, as well as those continuing with an established project. Available for \$13.75 postpaid.

Children Are For Loving: Volunteer Involvement in the Treatment and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. (Isolde Chapin 1978).

Here is a useful summary of the ways volunteers combat the problems of child abuse and neglect. The booklet examines some of the facts regarding the maltreatment of children, and specific programs are described under such headings as parent aides, multiple services, self-help, crisis line, legal help, temporary homes, and day care. Prospective volunteers, and volunteers already in the field, will find this a practical orientation tool. Available for \$5.90 postpaid.

Elders and Volunteerism. (The Western Gerontological Society, 1981).

This special edition of the fine WGS journal, **Generations**, is a hallmark in the field of volunteering. Over twenty outstanding authors contribute articles on topics like senior advocacy, the positive physical and psychological effects for older volunteers, recruitment and retention considerations, and advisory council involvement. The mutual benefit for the volunteer and the community is a constant refrain in this exciting and insightful collection—but the outlook given is not entirely optimistic, as several contributors discuss deterrent factors for older people. Available for \$7.25 postpaid.

To obtain a copy of the VOLUNTEER READERSHIP catalog, or to order the publications described above, contact:

VOLUNTEER READERSHIP
P.O. Box 1807
Boulder, CO 80306

**Volunteer Readership
Order Form**

Order Code	Quantity	Title	Unit Price	Total
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
			Total \$	_____

Payment must accompany order.

Name _____

Organization _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime telephone number () _____

Canadian Orders: Please pay in American dollars. Allow 3 to 6 weeks for delivery.

Clip and return to:

Volunteer Readership
P.O. Box 1807
Boulder, Colorado 80306

Check here for a free VOLUNTEER READERSHIP catalog listing all books and resources currently available.

Acknowledgements

As with any demonstration project, a great number of people were involved in every step of the program development—from initial conceptualization of the idea, to local implementation, to final evaluation. We are pleased to have this opportunity to recognize their participation and the important contribution they made to this effort.

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