FOCUS ON

# Volunteering

## Second Edition

READY-TO-PRINT RESOURCES FOR VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

BY SUSAN J. ELLIS

Energize Inc.

KOPY KIT® REPRODUCIBLE RESOURCES

# KOPY KIT® REPRODUCIBLE RESOURCES
# SINGLE-SITE LICENSE AGREEMENT

**REFUND**

1. If, after examining this package, you do not wish to follow the terms of the License Agreement, you may obtain a full refund by returning this package with your invoice within 10 days.

**DEFINITIONS**

2. **The term KOPY KIT® as used in the Agreement is a trademark of Parlay International, Emeryville, CA.** "KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resources" refers to the full set (or any portion thereof) of pages, tab dividers, binder and slipcase provided in this package, together with any update subsequently supplied by the Publisher, Energize, Inc.
3. "Licensee" as used herein refers to the original purchaser of this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resources product from Energize, Inc and does not include any subsidiaries, affiliates, joint ventures, or other related individuals or business entities of such purchaser.
4. "Licensed Site" as used herein refers only to that location to which this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resources product is delivered as requested by Licensee, unless some other site is agreed to in writing by Energize, Inc.
5. "Remote Site" as used herein refers to any site other than the Licensed Site.
6. "Hard Copy" as used herein refers to a copy or copies made onto paper or paper-like material which can be read directly without the aid of a machine.

**PERMITTED USES**

**MAKE COPIES AT LICENSED SITES, EDIT, DISTRIBUTE**

7. Energize, Inc. KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resources are protected by International Copyright. Licensee is permitted, at Licensed Site only, to copy all or any portion of this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resources product, and distribute such copies to whomever Licensee desires so long as: 1) such copies are not sold; and 2) the copyright notice or notices appearing on any such copies (e.g. "© Energize, Inc.") is applied to such copies. In the case of incorporation of more than one item from this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resources product, the copyright notice on the title page or cover page of this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource will suffice if applied to such copies.
8. The contents of this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resources product may be reproduced as is or edited (i.e., for insertion into publications such as newsletters, bulletins, reports, workbooks, or manuals), provided that the copyright notice is included.
9. A single copy of any portion of this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product may be distributed to a Remote Site via digital and/or electronic transmission and a single copy (only) of such transmission may be downloaded at such Remote Site.

**USES NOT PERMITTED**

**NO COPYING OR TRANSMITTING FROM REMOTE SITE, NO REPRODUCTION BY OTHER THAN LICENSEE, NO RESALE, NO SUBLICENSING**

10. Reproduction or redistribution of any portion of the contents of this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product by digital and/or electronic transmission or any other means by or at a Remote Site is STRICTLY PROHIBITED without a valid MultiSite License from Energize, Inc.
11. Reproduction or transmission in any form or by any means of any part of this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product by anyone other than Licensee or a commercial copying service acting for Licensee is STRICTLY PROHIBITED.
12. Reproduction of this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product or any part thereof for resale; transferring or selling any rights under this Agreement; distributing any hard copies for further reproduction by any party other than Licensee; or granting a sub-license under this Agreement are all STRICTLY PROHIBITED. Licensee may, however, receive payment for actual copying costs.

**DURATION AND TERMINATION**

13. The license granted herein is effective for 75 years from the date of purchase of this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product, unless sooner terminated or the original KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product is returned to Energize, Inc., whichever comes first.
14. In the event of a breach of any term of this Agreement, Energize, Inc. has the right to terminate the License upon written notification, as well as to enforce any other rights that it may have in law or equity as a result of such breach.
15. Upon termination of this Agreement for any reason, all KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resources materials shall be immediately returned to Energize Inc., removed from any electronic form it may be stored in, and any copying or distribution of this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product shall hereafter be STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

**GENERAL**

16. This Agreement represents our entire understanding and agreement regarding the KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resources product, and supersedes any prior purchase order, communications, advertising or representations.
17. This Agreement may be modified only in a written amendment signed by Energize, Inc. This Agreement will be governed by Pennsylvania law.
18. Energize, Inc. makes no claim that the information contained in the KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resources is a substitute for professional care or advice. The Licensee agrees not to claim otherwise.
19. This Agreement grants only the limited rights described above and no others; Licensee obtains no ownership rights in any KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product or in the copyrights thereto, and Energize, Inc. retains title to all KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource products and materials. Licensee shall use reasonable efforts to protect all KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product from unauthorized use, reproduction, distribution or publication. All rights which are not explicitly granted in this Agreement are reserved to Energize, Inc.

**WARRANTY**

20. Energize, Inc. warrants that this KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product is, and will be, free from physical defects provided such defects are discovered within thirty days of the date of the receipt of such product by Purchaser.

**LIMITATION OF WARRANTIES**

21. Energize, Inc. disclaims all other warranties, conditions, or representations (expressed or implied, oral or written) with respect to the information contained in any KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product or any part thereof, or its accuracy, including any and all implied warranties or conditions of title, non-infringement, merchantability, or fitness or suitability for any purpose (whether or not Energize Inc. knows, has reason to know, has been advised, or is otherwise in fact aware of any such purpose), whether alleged to arise by law, or by reason of custom or usage in the trade, or by course of dealing. In addition Energize, Inc. expressly disclaims any warranty or representation to any person other than the Purchaser with respect to any information contained in any KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product or any part thereof. In no event shall Energize Inc. be liable for any incidental or consequential damages arising out of or in connection with the use or reliance on any information contained in any KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product or part thereof.

SOME STATES DO NOT ALLOW THE LIMITATION OR EXCLUSION OF LIABILITY FOR INCIDENTAL OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES, SO THE ABOVE LIMITATION MAY NOT APPLY TO YOU.

Purchaser's sole remedy and Energize Inc.'s sole responsibility with regard to any breach of warranty shall be limited to the purchase prices actually paid by Purchaser for the KOPY KIT® Reproducible Resource product in question.

FOCUS ON

# Volunteering

SECOND EDITION

READY-TO-PRINT RESOURCES FOR VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

BY SUSAN J. ELLIS

published by
Energize, Inc.


KOPY KIT®
REPRODUCIBLE RESOURCES

ISBN 0-940576-33-3 electronic


First edition published by Parlay International in 1992.

Second edition published by Energize, Inc. Contact:
Energize, Inc.
5450 Wissahickon Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19144
215-438-8342
info@energizeinc.com
Web site: www.energizeinc.com

The following publishers have generously given permission to use extended quotations from copyrighted works: Jossey-Bass Publishers for *By the People: A History of Americans as Volunteers*, revised edition, by Susan J. Ellis and Katherine H. Noyes (1990); and Energize, Inc. for *From the Top Down: The Executive Role in Volunteer Program Success*, revised edition, by Susan J. Ellis (1996) and *The (Help!) I-Don't-Have-Enough-Time Guide to Volunteer Management*, by Katherine Noyes Campbell and Susan J. Ellis (1995).

## About the Author

Susan J. Ellis is president of Energize, Inc., an international training, consulting and publishing firm that specializes in volunteerism. She founded the company in 1977 and has worked with clients across three continents to start or expand citizen participation programs of every description. Ellis has written or co-authored nine books on volunteer management and numerous magazine articles. From 1981-1987 she served as editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*. She writes the national column, "On Volunteers," for *The NonProfit Times*

Ellis is involved in finding ways to apply new technology to the volunteer field. The Energize Web site (www.energizeinc.com) is devoted to serving leaders of volunteer programs. She is the documenting consultant to the Virtual Volunteering Project and the volunteerism faculty member of the Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations, a satellite-transmission distance learning program.

Printed in the United States of America

FOCUS ON

# Volunteering

## How to Use this Kopy Kit

This Kopy Kit is designed as a resource for anyone teaching about volunteering or training organizations to work effectively with volunteers. Buyers of the first edition found many uses for the material:

- handouts for training workshops of all sorts and for classroom lectures
- inserts in newsletters, especially in-house pieces
- postings on bulletin boards

Some of the pages can be helpful in volunteer recruitment campaigns, especially for raising the consciousness of the public about the value of volunteer participation.

In this second edition we have updated the material to reflect new developments (such as "Virtual Volunteering") and added a number of pages of special use for trainers. The last section has been fully revised to give you camera-ready forms and recognition materials.

Be creative in using this Kopy Kit. I hope you will find it successful in helping others to understand and value the scope of volunteerism.

—Susan J. Ellis
Energize, Inc., Philadelphia, PA

*Click on each title below to jump to that page.*

### About Volunteerism



*continued*

## What Volunteers Do



## Volunteering Possibilities



## Getting Involved

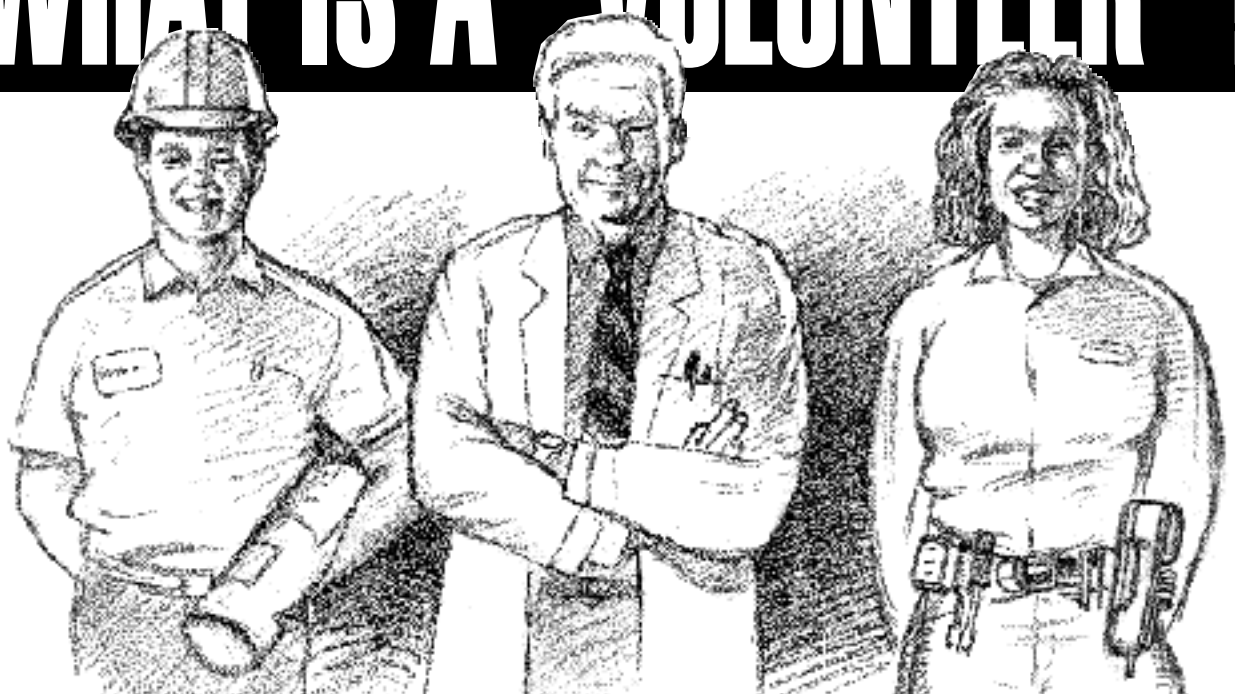


## Working With Volunteers



## Ready-To-Use Graphics

# WHAT IS A "VOLUNTEER"?



VOLUNTEERING happens all around us. It is so pervasive that it is sometimes invisible. We take it for granted, yet the work that we and our neighbors do as volunteers is what generates the spirit of community.

A volunteer is someone who chooses to act in recognition of a need, with an attitude of social responsibility and without concern for monetary profit. A volunteer goes beyond the basic obligations of being a good citizen and a loving family member to helping others as well.

You are still a volunteer even if you receive reimbursement for your out-of-pocket expenses. And if you, a member of your family, or a friend benefit from the program you serve, you are still a volunteer because your contribution of time and effort helps others as well.

Not everything done by volunteers is labelled as volunteering. Sometimes the vocabulary changes with the setting:

- In a school you might call it service-learning, community service, or an internship.
- In government you might call it citizen participation. George Bush called it "points of light."
- In a professional society you might call it *pro bono publico* work.
- On the street where you live you might call it neighborliness.
- In a church you might call it lay ministry.
- In a for-profit business you might call it corporate social responsibility.
- In a group of peers you might call it self-help.
- In a protest march you might call it activism.

Sometimes we use no label at all. For example, who marches in parades, sells raffle tickets for fund-raising events, or goes caroling in hospitals? It is clear that many things we expect to happen would disappear if volunteers were not there to do them.

Ironically, over the years many unfair stereotypes have developed around the word "volunteer." Some people hear the word and immediately think "women's work," "unskilled labor," "people with time on their hands," "rich," "white," "busybodies," "retired people," "charity givers," or "envelope stuffers." But few of these images reflect the true contributions of volunteers. Every age, race, religious group, social class, and both sexes have a long tradition of volunteer work—though they did not all use the word "volunteer" for everything they did. (For example, men who volunteered often called themselves "coaches," "trustees," or "firemen.")

Volunteers were the founders of just about every profession and institution we have today. And they remain the pioneers, working on cutting-edge causes and issues no one else is ready to address. Volunteers are experimenters, activists, and dreamers. They put their energies where their beliefs are—and show that participatory democracy can work.

# WHO VOLUNTEERS?

IF YOU STOPPED THE average person on the street and asked, "who do you think does volunteer work," you would probably hear a lot of stereotypes. Answers might include "mostly women," or "people who don't work for pay," or "retired people," or "the wealthy." The correct answers may surprise you. In the past decade or so the Gallup Poll and other surveying organizations have provided some revealing data about who is volunteering in the United States.

For example, just about the same percentage of men as women volunteer (approximately 49% of all men and 51% of all women). Sometimes we think volunteers are only women because they tend to apply that label to their community service. But when you consider all the sports coaches, firefighters, and board members who are men, you can easily see that voluntary service to the community is done by both genders.

The vast majority of people who volunteer also hold some type of paid job as well—62% have part-time work and 49% fulfill full-time job obligations in addition to community service. So we do see the busiest people doing the most.

The higher the educational level, the more likely someone is to volunteer in a formal volunteer program (neighborliness is not usually studied in national surveys). While it is true that more than half of the people with incomes over $20,000 a year volunteer in some way, 40% of people with incomes less than $10,000 a year also give their time.

More married people (52%) volunteer than single people (39%). Of households in which there are children under the age of 18, 54% of the parents volunteer. Almost half of the white population does volunteer work, while almost 40% of black and other minority citizens also contribute their time.

The ages of volunteers provide some surprises too. More than half (52%) of teenagers aged 14 to 17 are volunteers, but only 38% of seniors aged 65 and older are. The largest age category of volunteers is 35 to 49, of which 54% volunteer (in the busiest time of their lives).

The West and Midwest benefit from more volunteering (54% and 52%) than the East (43%) and the South (44%).

In many ways, the statistics show us that there is no clear "profile" of the American volunteer. He or she can live anywhere and be of any income level, any race, or any background. Approximately 52% of our population volunteers on a regular basis for a wide variety of causes. There does seem to be some correlation between volunteering and being active in a church or synagogue, but even those statistics are not definitive.

So who volunteers? Your neighbors and your friends. How about you?


Volunteers come from all backgrounds, age groups, and races.

# Options for Volunteering

There are lots of choices awaiting you when you decide to volunteer. Volunteers are needed by just about every organization, so it is up to you to select the best way for you to get involved. You can offer your services:

- **to help a particular cause,**
- **to help a particular client group,**
- **to help a specific organization,**
- **or to share a skill you have.**

You can volunteer as an individual, with a friend or family member, or as part of a group. There are volunteer assignments needing only a few hours one time only and others requiring a weekly, regularly scheduled commitment.

You can join a formal "volunteer program," or you can help neighbors and friends informally on your own. Your options may include:

## Volunteering in a Nonprofit Agency

Nonprofit, or not-for-profit, agencies are organizations founded to provide a needed community service with funds from private contributors, foundations, and government grants. They are governed by a volunteer board of directors and most often employ paid staff to handle much of the work. Nonboard volunteers get involved in everything from direct client services to clerical work and fund-raising.

By the way, nonprofit agencies do a whole lot more than human service work. Museums, performing arts groups, environmental advocacy organizations, humane societies, and literacy programs are just a few examples of nonprofit agencies at work in our communities.

## Volunteering on Behalf of Government

Many volunteers are active in government agencies, though they may not always think of themselves as civic-minded. The most common government-related volunteering occurs on the county and local levels in public schools, libraries, criminal courts, probation departments, prisons, and parks and recreation programs. Many townships involve citizen volunteers in the daily work of municipal government. Emergency squads, fire companies, and ambulance corps are also highly dependent on volunteers.

## Membership in an All-volunteer Organization

Every community has a wide array of civic, fraternal, religious, and even social groups seeking members. While many of the activities of these associations may be unrelated to volunteering, almost all such groups also sponsor community service projects. So joining a club or association is a way to become active in volunteer work, particularly if you want to do this with a group of people.

Professional societies, unions, and trade associations are also forms of all-volunteer groups. The same is true for churches and synagogues. Except for the clergy and office staff, religious congregations function because active members become involved. And, in turn, congregations often offer their help to the community at large.

## Volunteering on Your Own

Maybe you see a need that no one else has seen yet. Or maybe you have a skill or interest and can't find an established organization able to put you to work effectively. The wonderful thing about a democracy is that each and every citizen can act to address any issue. Will you be the founder of a brand new organization? Will you be the first to picket in protest over an injustice? Will you be a good neighbor to the person down the block who needs help after an emergency? You may risk being called a curmudgeon, maverick, or kook—but you can be the one to make a difference!

# VOLUNTEERING

# IN A NONPROFIT AGENCY

## What are "nonprofit agencies" and why are so many volunteers needed to support their work?

Nonprofit agencies—also called not-for-profit or voluntary agencies—are organizations that provide some of the most important services in our communities. They do many different things but share the following characteristics:

- They were founded by a few individuals (volunteers) who recognized a need that was not being met by any other organization and who were willing to work at building a new organization to meet that need.
- They are funded largely by private contributors and foundations and therefore exist because the community supports their efforts. Government may also provide funds in the form of special grants or fees for services.
- Because they receive funds from "third parties," nonprofits can provide their services to the public at reduced or even no charge. This is why they were historically called "charities."
- They are governed by a volunteer board of directors (sometimes called a board of trustees). By being unpaid, the board can provide oversight to the organization without personal vested interest. This assures contributors that their money is being used in the best possible way.
- Unlike for-profit businesses, there are no "owners" of a nonprofit agency. The volunteer board of directors manages the monetary assets, and no individual or group receives any monetary profit. Nonprofit agencies may have employees who earn a salary, and, in any given year, a nonprofit organization may indeed have an excess of revenues over expenses, but no one takes home a dividend check or bonus. Instead, the excess funds remain in the organization's treasury to be used in subsequent years.

You may also see the phrase "501(c)(3) organization" applied to nonprofits. This means that the Internal Revenue Service has designated the organization as "tax exempt." No federal income tax is paid by the organization on the funds it receives from donors or from fees it may charge. Also, contributors may take a deduction on their personal income tax returns for the gifts they make to 501(c)(3) organizations.

Volunteers give their time and skills to nonprofits as a form of contribution. Most often, there is a staff of paid workers who provide the majority of the services—largely because employees can give their full time to the work, while volunteers are available on limited schedules. The types of assignments volunteers fill are endless. Some of the most common categories are:

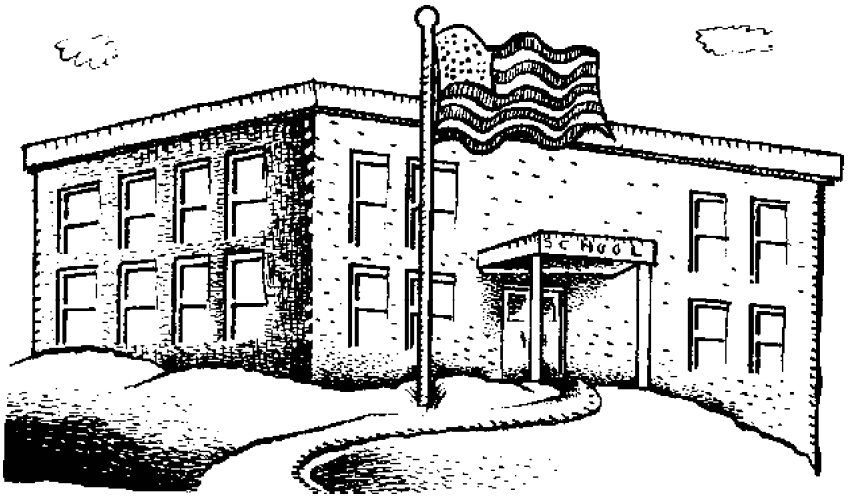
- fund-raising: seeking out donors and coordinating money-making events;
- direct service to clients: everything from one-to-one mentoring to helping with physical therapy;
- administrative help: clerical work, research, and writing;
- or advocacy: legislative monitoring, lobbying, and speakers' bureaus.

The causes addressed by nonprofit agencies are incredibly diverse. Consider:

- human services: counseling programs or services to children, seniors, and other client populations;
- health care: hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation services, and home health care;
- recreation: youth sports, Y's, Scout programs, zoos, and aquariums;
- cultural arts: museums, performing arts groups, community theater, and historic preservation groups;
- religion: churches, synagogues, and mosques;
- and special issues: everything from humane societies to environmental advocacy organizations.

If you examine this list, you will see that almost all of the services nonprofit organizations provide can also be offered by government agencies and even by for-profit business. In fact, your community may have all three types of programs available. That's freedom of choice.

As a volunteer in a nonprofit organization, you help the group to do its important work and keep its expenses low. You expand the organization's budget, enabling it do the most with the money it has.




# Volunteering on Behalf of Government

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S immortal phrase that our government is "of the people, by the people, and for the people" is proven every day by volunteers. The next time you hear someone complain about high taxes or government waste, remind them that not every government worker is on the payroll:

★ Every candidate for political office is a "volunteer," in that he or she does not get a government paycheck until (and unless) elected. Some campaign expenses may be covered by campaign contribution matching funds, but none of this money goes to the candidate. The political process in our country requires the involvement of thousands of volunteers for election campaigns. Everything from leafleting to poll watching is done by active citizens.

★ In our smallest communities, township officials often serve without pay or with only a modest stipend for expenses. All levels of government create "commissions," advisory councils, and task forces to oversee or advise on a wide array of public services. The members of such groups are most often private citizens receiving little or no reimbursement.

★ More than 80% of the nation's firefighting force is all-volunteer. Emergency and ambulance corps, police auxiliaries, and neighborhood watches also involve countless volunteers. Neighborhood clean-up campaigns, anti-litter and "adopt a highway" programs, and community gardens are all run by volunteers to improve the quality of life in a community.

Governments at the local, county, state, and national levels provide services directly to citizens. Volunteers work alongside paid staff in such services as:

★ public schools;
★ public libraries;
★ parks and recreation programs;
★ community hospitals;
★ services to the aging;
★ various counseling services;
★ courts, jails and prisons, probation and parole departments;
★ and homeless shelters.

Some cities and counties have an Office of Volunteers that places interested citizens into assignments, including helping with the daily work of government offices.

Civic events such as parades, Independence Day festivities, or community concerts may be coordinated by government employees but rely on the helping hands of many volunteers.

If you volunteer in a government program, you activate your citizenship. Your services stretch available tax dollars to cover even more than would have been possible otherwise. This is a way to keep taxes manageable and still provide seriously needed programs.

# Being a Volunteer through Membership in an All-Volunteer Organization

Every community has a wide array of all-volunteer groups seeking members. The decision to join such a group is voluntary. When you become active enough to hold office, chair a committee, or work on a project, you become a volunteer through your membership. Some association activities may be purely social or recreational in nature, but almost all such groups sponsor community service projects of various sorts.

A lot of people like to do volunteering through membership in an all-volunteer group because they are assured of social companionship. It is fun to work as a team with people you already know and share interests with. When you volunteer with a group you gain the clout of numbers and influence. There may also be the variety of a different service project each year.

All-volunteer organizations bring together people with common interests or a common heritage. They may employ one or two paid staff members to handle administrative or clerical tasks, but the majority of the work is accomplished by the members themselves. Funding comes from member dues and from periodic fund-raising activities.

You can find an all-volunteer group to match almost any focus:

- civic groups,
- business clubs,
- professional societies,
- hobby clubs,
- fraternities and sororities,
- religious organizations,
- sports and recreation clubs,
- advocacy organizations,
- protest groups,
- self-help groups,
- auxiliaries and "friends of" organizations,
- labor unions,
- and amateur performing arts companies.

Remember, too, that churches, synagogues, and mosques are also voluntary associations. Religious congregations depend on the willingness of their members to do all the work except for special tasks delegated to the clergy and a few office workers. In turn, churches, synagogues, mosques, meetings, and other religious organizations express their religious commitment by offering their collective help to the community at large.

# Volunteering in a For-Profit Setting

Some people may be surprised to discover that volunteers give their time to for-profit organizations as well as to nonprofits and government. The key to this puzzle is the work assignment a volunteer is asked to do or, in the case of internships, the training received in exchange for the service.

## Internships

Many students and people in personal transition want to explore a career or gain credentials to put on a resume for later job hunting. It is difficult to get any paying job in a new field without experience and even harder to get a job above the novice level. So volunteering as an intern is a way in the door. While some interns receive a salary or a stipend, the majority of internships are without financial remuneration.

Mega-sized companies accept interns and so do sole proprietorships. In fact, just about any work experience desired can be obtained by volunteering. Yes, the company benefits from extra, and usually eager, workers at no cost. But the volunteers are paid back many times over by the opportunity to observe the workplace, to be adopted by mentors in their hoped-for career field, and to test themselves in action.

## Technical Assistance

Another type of volunteering with a benefit to for-profit businesses is technical assistance consulting. Government and some nonprofit organizations, generally limited to serving start-up small businesses, women or minority business owners or special entrepreneurs such as artists, provide support to spur economic development. For more than three decades, SCORE—the Senior Corps of Retired Executives—has been run by the Small Business Administration to give advice to new business owners. The counselors are all retired business people who voluntarily share their experiences. One more example is Accountants for the Public Interest (API), a national nonprofit organization with affiliates around the country that recruits volunteer accountants to work not only with small nonprofit groups but also with individual artists and business people in economically disadvantaged communities.

## For-Profit Services

The newest and already the largest arena of volunteering in the for-profit business sector is a direct result of changes in service delivery in many communities. Services formerly provided solely by public and nonprofit organizations are increasingly being "privatized." Consider the growth in for-profit hospitals and nursing homes. Even some school systems and prisons are experimenting with for-profit management. This trend is likely to continue.

The issue here is that the clients or service recipients stay the same although the management has changed. So, if patients, elderly residents, students or inmates needed (and deserved) volunteer attention before a for-profit takeover, those needs still exist. The setting around them may change, but not the people being served. That's why volunteers may still legitimately be recruited.

There are some ethical considerations, however. When people volunteer for a nonprofit organization, they frequently wish to show support for the mission and goals of the organization itself, as well as serve the clients as individuals. In most cases, however, volunteers who work in a business are focused solely on the clients (sometimes even in the role of advocates to assure the accountability of the company ownership). It is most important that volunteers be allowed to direct their energies to the recipients of service. Volunteers should never be seen as "free help" to give the company a better bottom line, nor as a substitute for adequate staffing. Therefore, in most situations, volunteer assignments provide individualized client attention, reduction of isolation and loneliness, and other vital support that can best be given by someone acting as friend, rather than as a paid worker.

Of course, the for-profit service provider may also encourage internships in any unit of the business, just as the other companies described earlier. But the majority of volunteers will work in direct client services for exactly the same reasons such clients warrant help in a nonprofit setting.

# Volunteering On Your Own

DO YOU SEE A NEED in your neighborhood that is not being met? Do you "burn" on an issue and wish someone would do something about it? Would you or your family benefit from a program that is not available where you live? You can make a difference.

Not all volunteering is done by signing up with an agency and serving on a regular schedule. In fact, the history of volunteering is filled with people who set off on their own to create programs no one else had the vision—or the willingness—to tackle.

Some volunteer efforts are intensive and short-term. If your street corner needs a stop sign and you mobilize every family on the block to contact City Hall, you can disband your committee once the sign is erected. Maybe a neighbor's house burns down and you organize a carnival to raise money for the family. Or you take the lead in forming a summer play group so that your kids and their friends have safe, supervised afternoons for two months.

Other projects may require a long-term commitment. They may start with your efforts and then expand to involve many other people. In fact, you may end up founding a nonprofit organization, raise money, hire staff, and go national! But it all begins with the desire of just a few people (or one individual) to act.

Be prepared to be called a maverick, or a rabble-rouser or even a kook. But keep your eyes on your goal. Think about the many things we now take for granted but that began in recent memory as protest movements or unpopular causes:

- anti-smoking laws
- campaigns against drunk driving and all the designated driver projects
- hospice and services to the dying and their families
- environmental protection agencies
- services for the homeless
- AIDS support groups

Volunteers are always on the cutting edge of issues because private citizens are affected first by social change. Only after something has grown in impact do government and businesses respond.

It takes courage and time to be an independent volunteer. You need skills such as recruiting other volunteers, working with committees, organizing, and planning strategies. You need vision and the ability to articulate your vision to others in a motivating way. But every organization has a founder, and it might be you.

There is one more way to be an independent volunteer that requires little more than time and caring. You can be a good neighbor. You can be aware of who is sick or in need and offer your help. You can be a role model to neighborhood children or a listening ear to those in pain. You can pick up litter even if it is not in front of your own door. Even if you do not want to call this type of cooperation "volunteering," it certainly improves life for everyone you touch.

# Models of Volunteer Service

People do volunteer work in lots of different ways. Can you still be of help if you only have a few hours to give? Are there ways to test out how well you like something before making a long-term commitment to do it?

There are a number of ways to volunteer your time. Not every organization will be able to accommodate every schedule, but here are some of the options you can consider.

## One-time Events

Get involved with a project requiring lots of helpers on a particular day. Some examples are: holiday parties, fund-raising carnivals or bazaars, group trips, clean-up brigades, or rehab or construction projects. You can be of real help while getting a sense of how the organization works, who else volunteers, and if you fit in.

Although most one-time assignments involve groups of volunteers, you can approach an agency with the offer of spending one day or shift with them to accomplish something very specific that you are able to do as an individual. For instance, perform for an audience of clients or residents, build a wheelchair ramp, or talk about your profession or job to young students.

## Short-term Assignments

Organizations often need someone to tackle a specific project that, with concentrated attention, could be completed in a designated timeframe. "Short-term" can therefore vary from a few full days to several hours a month for a few months. Again, the possibilities are enormous: translating agency materials into another language, installing a computer program, teaching a skill to others, updating a list of community resources, or helping someone find an apartment.

## Skills Banks

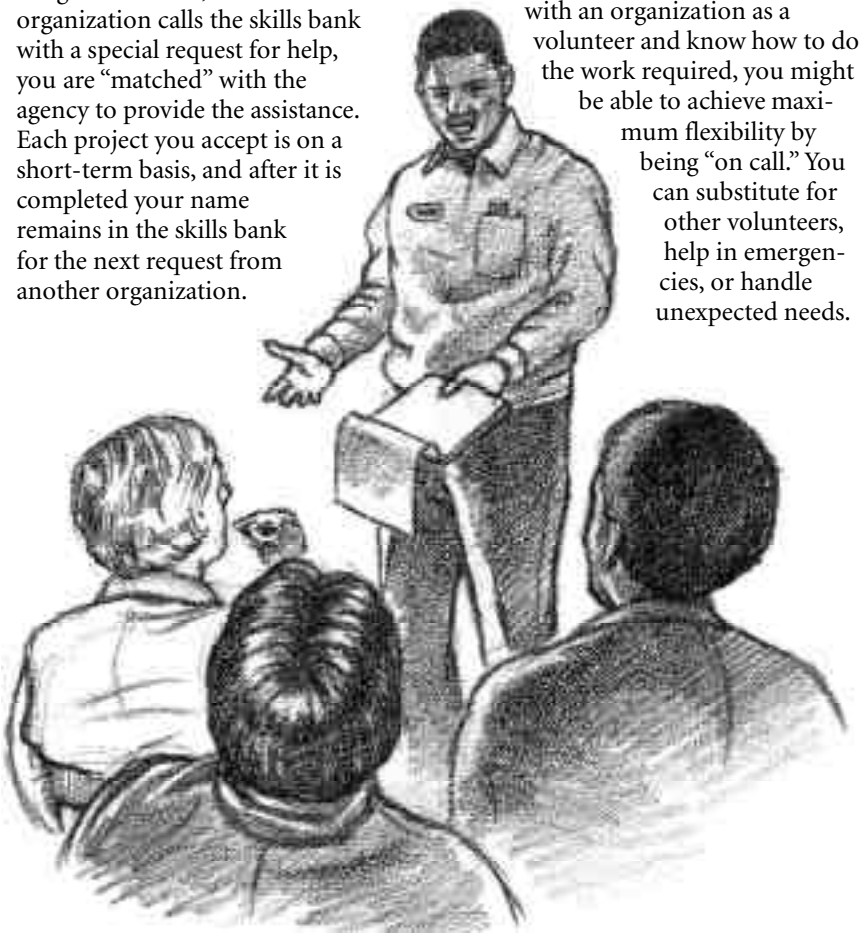
A variation on the short-term assignment idea might be available in your community. "Skills banks," often coordinated by a Volunteer Center, allow you to register yourself and the skills you are willing to offer to agencies. Then, when an organization calls the skills bank with a special request for help, you are "matched" with the agency to provide the assistance. Each project you accept is on a short-term basis, and after it is completed your name remains in the skills bank for the next request from another organization.

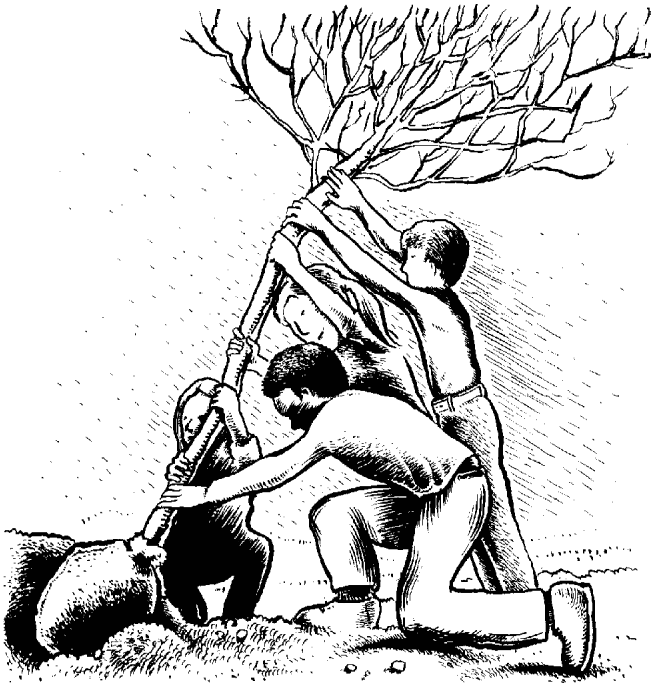
## Ongoing Commitments

Once you know that you want to volunteer in a substantial way, you can offer your time on a regular schedule, weekly or monthly, for a specific length of time. Some organizations may ask you to commit for at least a year. This allows you to volunteer for lengthier assignments: developing relationships with people in need, serving on a board of directors, or meeting a fund-raising goal.

## On Call

Once you have become involved with an organization as a volunteer and know how to do the work required, you might be able to achieve maximum flexibility by being "on call." You can substitute for other volunteers, help in emergencies, or handle unexpected needs.





# Why People Volunteer

People volunteer for a wide variety of reasons. Some motives are altruistic in that they involve a desire to help others. But others are wrongly considered "selfish" just because they also give something back to the volunteer. It is just fine to benefit from volunteering. In fact, the most successful forms of volunteering are an exchange—when the giver and the recipient both come away with something positive. This makes volunteering less an act of "charity," based on the paternalistic attitude of "we who have so much must give to those who have so little."

In some situations, the lines between volunteer and recipient blur so much it is hard to tell who is who. If a group of seven-year-olds visits a senior center after school, bringing a welcome diversion but also getting help with homework, does it matter whether the youngsters or the elders are the "volunteers"?

So when you think about why you want to volunteer and set about finding the best volunteer assignment for you, consider the many possible motivations you can legitimately have. Here are some:

- to feel needed;
- to share a skill;
- to get to know a community;
- to demonstrate commitment to a cause or belief;
- to gain leadership skills;
- to act out a fantasy;
- to do your civic duty;
- because of pressure from a friend or relative;
- to keep busy for recognition;
- to repay a debt;
- to donate your professional skills;
- because there is no one else to do it;
- to have an impact;
- to learn something new;
- to fill up some free time;
- to help a friend or relative;
- for escape;
- to become an "insider;"
- because of guilt;
- to be challenged;
- to be a watchdog;
- to feel proud;
- to make new friends;
- to explore a career;
- to help someone;
- as therapy;
- to do something different from your job;
- for fun;
- for religious reasons;
- to earn academic credit;
- to keep skills alive;
- because an agency is nearby;
- to have an excuse to do what you love;
- to be able to criticize;
- to assure progress;
- to feel good;
- to be part of a team;
- to gain status;
- because you were asked to test yourself;
- to build your resume;
- to be an agent of change;
- because of personal experience with the problem, illness, or cause;
- or to stand up and be counted.

You will probably have some special reasons of your own. Remember that the motivations you have in selecting a place to offer your services may not be the reasons you stay. Once you're volunteering in a specific position, you will continue to serve as long as you feel that your efforts are accomplishing something, that your talents are appreciated, and that you make a difference. And if you also like the people with whom you work, so much the better!

# THE TRADITION OF VOLUNTEERING IN THE United States

WE USUALLY STUDY history as a succession of events enacted by key individuals. The focus is on the leaders: monarchs, dictators, generals, and orators. It is important to recognize that no one can be a successful leader without active, involved followers. Millions of more-or-less anonymous private citizens fall between the lines of history books, but they stood on the front lines while history was being made. Throughout the history of the United States, volunteers affirmed their rights and responsibilities by participating in shaping the future of American society.

The early European colonists came to the New World to escape from oppressive governments and powerful state religions. The streak of independence ran strong. When the Revolutionaries formulated the new constitution and laws of the infant United States, the role of government was severely limited. Federal power was confined mainly to military defense and the regulation of trade and commerce. There was no intent to involve government in social, health, educational, or cultural matters. These were left to each local community to handle in much more informal ways.

Historically, therefore, if a community wanted anything for the social good, it had to be created by the citizens themselves. Volunteers had to build churches, schoolhouses, and quarantine huts. Volunteers had to develop systems for clearing snow from the roads, hiring school teachers, and caring for orphans. When the towns were small, neighbors naturally helped one another with everything from bringing babies into the world to hunting wolf packs. The proverbial barn raisings and quilting bees were occasions for recreation and socializing, as well as to get work done.

As towns grew into cities, informal self-help was no longer sufficient to meet the needs of the community. Over many decades, more and more services were assumed by local governments, paid for by tax dollars, and performed by employed public servants. Police and firefighters came first, followed by school systems, hospitals and, by the twentieth century, every conceivable type of social service program. As the frontier was pushed west, the new states evolved in the same way as the original states: beginning with voluntary cooperation and ending with extensive government services to meet the needs of a growing population.

But this is not the entire story. Because Americans looked to government as a last resort, we developed a system of independent, voluntary agencies—organizations founded by volunteers to provide special programs wanted by the community. These voluntary agencies raised money from private contributions and even from government grants. But they continued to be controlled by a volunteer board of directors and to enlist the help of other volunteers in providing their services.

Voluntary agencies are a form of freedom of choice, offering a range of programs supplementing those available through public agencies. These include private schools, organizations focused on specific diseases and health issues, museums, recreational associations—most of the activities that we depend on to maintain our communities.

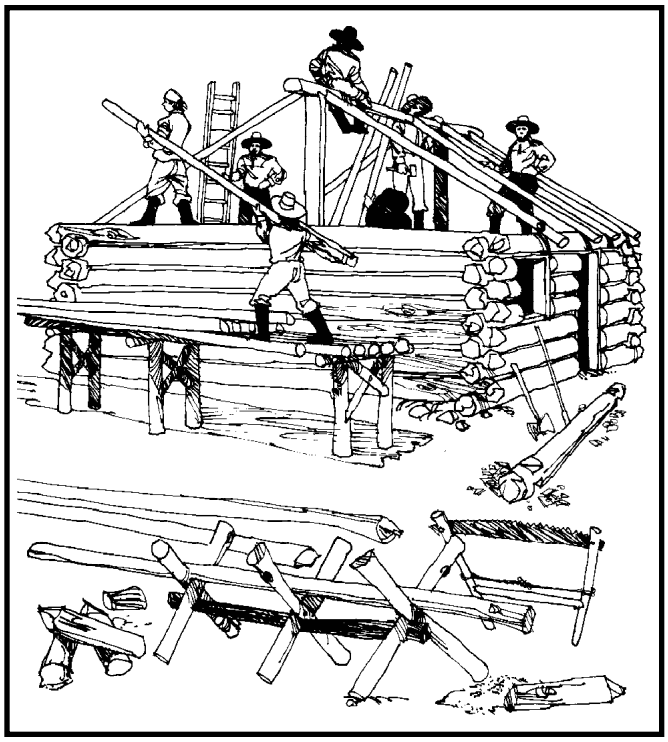
The history of volunteering is a history of pioneers. Volunteers see problems before they attract the attention of government or business and find innovative ways to address those problems. Even in recent history, the pattern is clear. Who first organized to help the homeless, to support people with AIDS, to ban smoking in public places, or to enact mandatory recycling laws? Volunteers come in all colors and backgrounds, of both sexes, and from all economic sectors.

Often volunteers start as mavericks, agitating for unpopular causes. But with time and determination, they enlist the support of more and more people until their impact is felt. History remembers successful volunteer efforts by dubbing them with the term "movement." Think about it. What are the temperance movement, the civil rights movement, and the peace movement all about? They are the cumulative effects of the actions of hundreds and thousands of private citizens doing volunteer work because of their beliefs.

Volunteering has been a crucial element of American history from the beginning. It has sometimes been invisible in the history books because so many volunteers worked quietly at the local level to achieve their goals. But we owe the existence of most of our institutions and social programs to the dedication of private citizens who were willing to give their time, money, and skills for the common good.

Adapted from *By the People*, 1990, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California

# The Colonial Period to the Revolution (1607-1781)



When the first European settlers reached North America, there was already an extensive native culture on these shores. The Native Americans had developed mutual help systems as part of their tribal customs. In fact, the legends surrounding the first Thanksgiving describe the sharing of food and communal support. For the colonists, cooperation and collaboration meant survival in harsh physical conditions. The skills and efforts of every community member were needed to make a new home.

The commitment to voluntary cooperation was expressed as early as 1620 when the Pilgrims signed their Social Compact and made a covenant to "all care of each other's good and of the whole by everyone and so mutually." The strict codes of Puritanism defined individual behavior and taught that performing good deeds was the most important way to strive for salvation.

All of the images we have of taming the wilderness through land clearing, barn raisings, group harvesting, and mutual defense are examples of voluntary help. The New England town meeting became the vehicle for community decision-making and the apportionment of work.

In the mid-Atlantic and southern colonies, the larger distances between settlements necessitated different approaches. The dominant church in a particular area directed the social welfare activities to be undertaken by congregation members. As plantations grew to be self-contained units, the needs of the very young, the very old, and the sick were tended to within the plantation itself.

Every aspect of community life required citizen involvement, largely because no one expected government or an outside force to do what was needed. The town watch, street lighting, clearing snow from the roads, and fighting fires all required voluntary participation. Epidemic control and nursing the sick were organized by private citizens.

At first, schooling was considered an upper class privilege but education soon became a more popular concern. Through projects of local churches (Sunday "schools" really began as schools) and charitable organizations, education became available even to poorer children. Once nonreligious public schools were established, it was still the responsibility of volunteers to build school houses and to serve on local school boards. One of the most important signs of liberation from Europe was the founding of American colleges to train clergy and other leaders on American soil. Libraries began as cooperative societies, raising money to purchase books for community use. Similarly, historical societies, scientific societies, and museums all owed their formation to volunteers and donors.

Colonial America prospered. Inevitably, ties to Europe lessened, and impatience with control from abroad grew. All of the activities that led to the American Revolution were performed by citizens acting above and beyond the ordinary. The members of the Committees of Correspondence and Safety were volunteers, as were the Sons of Liberty, who dumped the tea into Boston Harbor.

Almost by definition, no one is paid to rebel! The citizen militias which fought the war began as completely volunteer units. It was not until later in the revolution that funds were raised to pay the army and certain government officials.

Although the label "volunteer" was rarely applied to the citizens of the New World, their self-help, cooperation for survival, and fight for independence are undeniable examples of the power of voluntary citizen action.

Adapted from *By the People*, 1990, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California

# THE NEW REPUBLIC
## (1782-1850)

The end of the Revolutionary War ushered in the realities and responsibilities of self-government. The years between 1782 and 1850 were filled with controversy and compromise. The original colonies grew in population, and towns evolved into cities. More states joined the Union, and the frontier was pushed further and further west. Regional differences of north and south, east and west became more distinct. Those who settled the western lands continued the colonial spirit of mutual cooperation for survival. Those who remained in the east focused on government itself, developing the working structures and legal procedures that would become the law of the land. Because so much was involved in building a new nation, the inexperienced government could not do everything. Social welfare, education, the arts, and other local concerns continued to be handled by the citizens themselves.

A larger population also meant increased crime. Jails and prisons, often built with the proceeds of public lotteries, became the focus of concerned citizen groups, such as the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, formed in 1787 (and still in existence today under the name of the Pennsylvania Prison Society). Through the efforts of many such groups the incarceration of debtors was eventually ended, and a more humane treatment of prisoners was established.

One volunteer is credited with the development of the concept of probation. A Boston shoemaker, John Augustus, offered to supervise an alcoholic neighbor in 1841. By 1859 Augustus had worked with over 2,000 probationers and had provided a model for other communities to follow.

Volunteering supported other causes as well. In 1780, in an effort to furnish supplies to the destitute

Revolutionary Army, a group of businessmen started the Bank of North America. Though intended as a profit-making venture, the bank was actually a patriotic gesture with more risk than usual. After the war, efforts were devoted to gaining acceptance of the new American paper currency.

Before the nineteenth century there was no such thing as organized labor. As industrial trades expanded, however, relations between employers and workers changed. The first labor organizations were formed as "benevolent societies" to provide benefits to members who were sick or to their widows and orphans. Because there were no government assistance programs, workers had to provide for their own needs. Between 1800 and 1810, twenty-four benevolent societies started in New York City alone. By the 1830s such groups had broadened their activities to include strikes and boycotts for better wages and working conditions, such as the ten-hour work day.

Care for the sick was still largely a private concern, with neighbor helping neighbor. The few hospitals were dreaded as a last resort for the deathly ill. In the 1790s, several epidemics swept the east coast. Yellow fever decimated Philadelphia but elicited the outpouring of mass volunteer assistance for the sick. Meanwhile, cities such as New York established health committees with the major purpose of keeping Philadelphians away! In the early 1800s, free vaccination clinics were opened in the largest cities. Eventually, these and other public health efforts evolved from all-volunteer activities to programs regulated by local government.

Concern for the needs of poor children, waves of immigrants, increased public education, and care of the mentally ill all elicited volunteer efforts during this period. But the most visible outpouring of citizen involvement was on behalf of a startling array of "isms," political causes of every sort. Some, such as spiritualism, Noyesian free love, or transcendentalism, were short-lived fads. Others had a more lasting impact.

The temperance movement brought together advocates from every social class and geographic area. Because drink was portrayed as a form of slavery, temperance activists laid the groundwork for the most important issue of the day: abolition. Antislavery sentiment dated back to the early 1700s among some groups such as the Quakers, but throughout the early 1800s, abolition societies formed in earnest. While the most outspoken abolitionists were from New England, a majority of the abolition groups were actually in the southern states. By the 1830s, the groups had expanded their protest and lobbying activities to include aiding runaway slaves. The Underground Railroad—the work of hundreds of anonymous volunteers—helped countless black fugitives find safe harbor in northern American cities and Canada. Antislavery work was furthered by the involvement of free black citizens and by the support of the slaves themselves.

By the time of the Civil War, social progress and political division reached the boiling point.

Adapted from *By the People*, 1990, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California

# THE CIVIL WAR ERA
## (1851-1865)

It is fascinating to look at the American Civil War from a volunteer perspective. What is obviously a period of great division in our country becomes more an example of the similarities of the two sides rather than of their differences.

Naturally the North and South were in fundamental political and economic dispute. Antislavery efforts increased in magnitude and involved many volunteers, regardless of race, above and below the Mason-Dixon Line. But there were also pro-slavery organizations, as well as peace societies who wanted to avoid military conflict at all costs. When the Confederacy declared its independence, southern citizens rallied to the cause in the same ways that the colonists had supported the new, struggling government during the Revolution.

The Civil War divided the country but unified each side. It was considered a matter of honor for able-bodied men to take up arms and for women, children, and males unable to fight to support the war effort on the home front.

Northern women organized themselves into Ladies Aid Societies and made everything from uniforms to tents, bandages, and banners. "Refreshment saloons" were opened along the roads and railways that the union troops had to use. Volunteers served meals, gave medical care, transmitted messages home, and did whatever they could to comfort the soldiers. As the war progressed, such travel stations opened hospitals and expanded their services to include helping men find their families.

The medical needs of the Union army evoked a massive civilian response. In 1861, after much citizen lobbying and pressure, the War Department officially recognized the U.S. Sanitary Commission formed by the Women's Central Relief Association for the Sick and Wounded of the Army. The Commission was the largest private relief organization of the war and enlisted the help of volunteers across the northern states. Private donations of food, clothing, and medical supplies were collected and distributed. "Sanitary fairs" raised money and special campaigns assured a steady supply of fresh fruit and vegetables to fight scurvy. Farm women cultivated potato and onion patches "for the Commission," while children pledged their 4th of July firecracker money to buy more supplies.

Prior to the Civil War, hospital nursing was done either by men who were paid or by religious orders. In 1861, Dorothea Dix offered her services—without pay—to the Secretary of War to recruit and train volunteer nurses. This freed male nurses to fight in the army and also provided military doctors with a new source of assistance. The Sanitary Commission also mobilized field ambulance services.

One other massive volunteer effort kept northern loyalists busy: the Christian Commission. Also formed in 1861, the Christian Commission concerned itself with the spiritual needs of the fighting men. It recruited pastors to provide ministerial services and collected and distributed Bibles, sewing kits, and other small personal items.

The volunteers also organized a network of special diet kitchens behind the lines to prepare food as close to home cooking as possible.

Because the Civil War was fought predominantly on southern soil, the combat affected Confederate civilians in daily, direct ways. Local communities buried the dead of both sides and housed the injured. Hospitals were created out of every unused building. Previously spoiled southern women cared for wounded soldiers, smuggled supplies, kept their farms going, and even organized local guards.

Cotton production was voluntarily limited as the growing of food crops became a priority. Southern families donated as much of their own belongings as they could to feed and clothe their army. Ladies Gunboat Societies raised money for military hardware. Soldiers Aid and other relief societies flourished, as did their northern counterparts.

In some cities, humanitarian concerns overrode politics. Northern wounded were also given care and shelter. For example, in Memphis, Tennessee, Yankees were nursed in private homes.

The American volunteer spirit was evident in the North and the South throughout the war. The magnitude of human loss was staggering—six times the proportionate losses in World War II. The reliance on citizen involvement would be even more important in the challenge of rebuilding a national identity after the war.

Adapted from *By the People*, 1990, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California

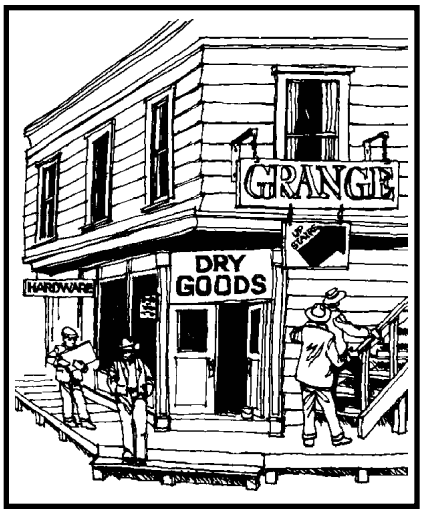
# RECONSTRUCTION
## (1866-1899)

The period following the Civil War was almost as turbulent socially as the armed conflict had been. The process of rebuilding involved volunteers as well as government and business people. The Freedmen's Bureau, established in 1865, supervised massive relief efforts on behalf of the former southern slaves. The New England and western states fielded hundreds of school teachers, missionaries, and a wide variety of zealots to provide education and other services. Although many were motivated by idealism, there was also a decidedly exploitative side to the enterprise. Some saw new customers in the freed slaves, others wanted their political support through their newly-given vote.

Reconstruction also brought crime and vigilantism to the south. Beginning as a volunteer effort to protect local women from harassment, the Ku Klux Klan quickly evolved into an extra-legal group fostering white supremacy beliefs. Similar associations such as the Knights of the White Camelia and the Council of Safety flourished in the 1870s, when counter groups put an end to most of the racist terrorist activities.

With the end of the war, business was again able to focus on consumer demands. Manufacturing increased and the railroads expanded. The boom in industry also brought the first efforts at true unionization. Unsafe working conditions, low salaries, and few protective benefits motivated workers to band together. Leading the way were railroad and mine workers who organized local "Brotherhoods" as mutual benefit associations. Members paid weekly dues into a central fund which was then available in cases of illness, accident, or death. As the forerunner of today's workers' compensation laws, these volunteer efforts served to unify the working class.

By the early 1870s unions began to use the weapon of a strike to achieve




their goals. Strikes often involved violence, and employers fought back by blacklisting activists. This drove many of the unions underground. What had begun as scattered, local initiatives now began to organize into regional and then national efforts. With the formation of the American Federation of Labor in 1881, the union movement had come of age. Cooperative action spread to all industries and across the country, from factories to logging camps, always depending upon the willingness of individual workers to volunteer for local leadership roles.

Agriculture also turned towards cooperative effort with the formation of the Patrons of Husbandry in 1867, more popularly known as the Grange. Later, various farmers' Alliances were also formed. These groups provided their members with economic clout but also with youth activities, recreational programs, and access to the growing amount of scientific information about farming. Black farmers also organized similar, but separate, alliances.

Women had ventured outside the home to support the war effort and had learned to enjoy working with one another. The period from 1868 through the 1890s saw the establishment of hundreds of Women's Clubs and Ladies Aid Societies—some with membership restricted to a particular religious denomination or race and others reaching out to all women. These groups began by concerning themselves with domestic issues of child raising and housekeeping. But political activism soon motivated many of the groups, especially the push for women's suffrage. The fight for equal rights was especially compelling to working-class women who organized their own trade unions to battle on their behalf in the workplace and in the legislatures.

Concern for public health conditions led many volunteers into action. Groups established public bath facilities in the larger cities. The American Red Cross moved from its early war-time activities into local and regional disaster relief. Diseases, from tuberculosis to epilepsy, found advocates for care of the sick and to research on cures. The first settlement houses were founded to help the poor and the newest Americans to develop job and personal skills. Organizations of every description, including the Salvation Army, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Volunteers of America, and the National Association of the Deaf, were formed by volunteers to support social causes. Cooperative fund-raising, the forerunner of today's United Way, also began in this period.

It is difficult to capture the spirit of the late nineteenth century, when economic expansion and social improvement seemed limitless. Every type of American was involved in civic activities. People of all races, nationalities, religions, income level, and backgrounds found common ground on behalf of the many causes that needed to be addressed. Progress was the motivator. The frenzy of the Spanish-American War closed out the century, again mobilizing citizen effort for and against America's military action.

Adapted from *By the People*, 1990, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California

# PROGRESSIVISM TO WORLD WAR I (1900-1919)

As the United States entered the new century, the prevailing political attitude was what came to be called "Progressivism." Progressivism enlisted social reformers from all parts of the economic spectrum to revitalize democracy through collective action.

Social work developed as an organized system of service delivery, beginning with volunteer "friendly visitors" who worked with clients in their own homes. Women's clubs became more active in the fight for child labor laws and legislation supporting family issues. Concerned volunteers spread the work of juvenile courts and other services to youthful offenders.

The women's suffrage movement gained momentum and visibility, culminating in the formation of the National Women's Party in 1913. President Woodrow Wilson was targeted for protests urging the vote for women. Month and after month silent volunteer picketers stood in a vigil at the White House gates, while more vocal demonstrations sought public support. After almost a century of effort, American women obtained the right to vote in 1920, but the demand for full equal rights continued.

The effort of women to win their civil rights affected black citizens as well. The 1905 Niagara Movement led to the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909 and later the National Urban League. These and other groups mobilized African-American volunteers to fight against racial prejudice and for full participation in all aspects of American society.

New causes evoked new volunteer associations. Tuberculosis organizations sponsored the Modern Health Crusade, enlisting thousands of school children in an elaborate campaign for better personal hygiene. Out of the youth activities of the various farmer alliances grew the government-sponsored 4-H movement, depending heavily on volunteer group leaders. Civic clubs, such as Rotary Clubs, the Kiwanis, and the Lions, grew in popularity and sponsored a wide array of social improvement projects. The Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Camp Fire Girls flourished, as did organizations that introduced adults to the pleasures of camping outdoors.

War clouds over Europe again threatened to involve American soldiers. Civil defense preparedness became the concern of several volunteer groups, and pacifist efforts increased, such as those of the American Peace Society. By 1913, as many as eighty different antiwar groups were active across the country.

When America entered World War I, civilian support efforts were again mobilized. A National Woman's Committee was formed within days of the declaration, organizing an effective network of state and local committees to meet service goals. Thousands of women registered formally to become Committee volunteers and were asked to indicate their abilities in any of 154 possible service areas. Their skills were put to use in Liberty Loan and Bond campaigns, helping the Red Cross, handling unfilled civil service jobs, and providing recreational programs for enlisted personnel. The War Camp Community Service involved over 60,000 volunteers under the supervision of 2,700 employees to run canteens and a wide variety of entertainment active near military bases.

The war brought unprecedented cooperation among major service organizations. The YMCA, YWCA, National Catholic War Council (Knights of Columbus), Jewish Welfare Board, Salvation Army, and American Library Service all coordinated their efforts to assist the soldiers and the public. Everyone was recruited to participate in food conservation efforts, such as wheatless and meatless days. Female farm workers called themselves the Woman's Land Army of America.

Volunteers did not only help Americans. Money and goods were collected for distribution in war-torn Europe and the Middle East. These private relief efforts were not part of official foreign policy but had an important impact on the attitude of foreigners towards the United States.

Adapted from *By the People*, 1990, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California

# THE GREAT DEPRESSION
## (1920-1945)

The "roaring Twenties" pushed the horror of World War I into the background. New diversions and pleasures, especially the automobile, polarized young and old, urban and rural. With the challenge to traditional morals came fundamental religious groups and Prohibition. Former support for foreign aid turned into isolationism and intolerance.

The 1920s saw volunteer efforts of many kinds. One campaign was for home and public safety—a concern closely tied to the introduction of so many new mechanical devices. The National Safety Council mobilized hundreds of local groups to educate citizens about the hazards of modern appliances and particularly about the need for traffic safety. School students became involved in this campaign and participated in school safety patrols.

The same year that brought ratification of women's suffrage (1920) also ushered in Prohibition, in the form of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Also called the Volstead Act, this "noble experiment" at legislating the drinking habits of Americans owed its existence to the decades of tireless work by temperance volunteers, known as the "drys." But no sooner had the Eighteenth Amendment been ratified than other volunteers began to protest it. So vocal and effective were the anti-Prohibitionists that the Volstead Act was repealed in 1933. Concern about alcoholism continued, however, and in 1934 Alcoholics Anonymous began the volunteer self-help program of battling the bottle.

Various social reform efforts were started by volunteers in the early twenties. Child labor laws were strengthened and a national school lunch program was proposed. Birth control was openly advocated—and protested. Organizations helping the

disabled, migrant workers, and the victims of a range of serious diseases all enlisted the efforts of private citizens. President Herbert Hoover spoke eloquently of the American spirit of volunteerism and cooperation.

And then came the Great Depression. When the stock market crashed, the optimism and self-sufficiency of the twenties were replaced by fear and helplessness. All existing social service organizations and religious institutions mobilized to give relief. Volunteers opened soup kitchens and shelters, organized work exchanges, and offered as much moral support as possible. But as the Depression wore on, it became evident that charity alone was inadequate to meet the enormous demands. The Federal government had to step in to handle the crisis and for the first time public agencies became involved in large-scale welfare programs.

During the Depression, survival depended upon creativity. When money was short and charity insufficient, many turned to the old-fashioned approach of barter. Neighborhoods and small towns developed systems of work exchange, whereby one person's skills could be traded for surplus garden vegetables and other necessary commodities. Cooperative housing rehabilitation and community gardening efforts produced benefits for all involved.

As the Roosevelt administration's New Deal took hold, the country began its slow climb out of despair. By the late 1930s people could begin to think about more pleasant things. Recreation occupied many volunteers, who formed the Little League, the Cub Scouts, the National Ski Patrol and other groups promoting outdoor activities. Conservation of national resources became important to these enthusiasts— many of whom had served in the Civilian Conservation Corps and had learned to appreciate America's scenic beauty. The Save-the-Redwoods League, American Forestry Association, and National Wildlife Federation were just a few of the groups who campaigned for protection of dwindling wilderness areas and the extension of the National Park system.

America's involvement in the Second World War started reluctantly but soon galvanized traditional home-front support efforts. Volunteers planted "Victory Gardens" and "An Acre for a Soldier;" collected rubber, tin, and newspapers; built model airplanes for civil defense education; staffed canteens and military recreation projects; and worked in military hospitals. The American Red Cross coordinated thousands of projects to aid enlisted personnel abroad and at home. Even the family pet was called to action. Over 10,000 dogs were volunteered by their families to be trained by Dogs for Defense as behind-the-lines couriers and aides.

By the end of World War II, the Depression was in the past, and Americans were more tied to their government than at any other time in history.

Adapted from *By the People*, 1990, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California

# SOCIAL CHANGE
## (1946-1969)

After World War II, the United States remained linked to the international community. From its role in the establishment of the United Nations, to military conflicts in Korea and Indochina, the U.S. was involved. Such activities spurred citizen responses both in favor of and against government initiatives. Volunteers became involved in an overwhelming number of organizations to advocate numerous points of view on just about any subject. Regardless of the cause, most activists used similar techniques: lobbying, petitions, public education, and protest marches.

The McCarthy era of the 1950s brought out extremist factions in the campaign to ferret out Communists. But groups opposing the undemocratic tactics of Senator McCarthy and his supporters also gained momentum and eventually won the day.

What had begun in the 1940s as the War Advertising Council elected to fill a peacetime role as the Advertising Council, recruiting advertising firms to donate their expertise on behalf of social causes and nonprofit organizations. The "Smokey the Bear" firefighting campaign was one of their early successes.

Progress in disease prevention was the concern of a growing number of volunteer groups, many of whom focused on a specific illness such as cancer or muscular dystrophy. Polio was a major public health issue, and the discovery of the Salk vaccine brought hope for the first time. From 1953 to 1955, more than 200,000 lay volunteers organized and ran the public vaccination program: completing the complex forms, herding youngsters into the inoculation areas, checking supplies, and handling the press.

In the 1950s volunteers accepted new roles in support of education. The

Martin Luther King, Jr.

postwar baby boom filled the classrooms and made it virtually impossible for teachers to provide individual help to their students. Volunteers began a wide variety of tutoring and classroom enrichment programs, started school libraries, and organized field trips.

Perhaps the most important social issue of the period was the Black civil rights movement, the collective effort of countless volunteers that permanently changed relations among the various races in America. The fight against segregation galvanized people, non-Black as well as black, into protest marches, "Freedom Rides," sit-ins, and boycotts. Student groups, religious organizations, welfare rights groups, and others faced the threat and reality of violence to bring full civil rights to African-Americans in southern and northern states.

By the 1960s, Black Americans were not the only ones seeking equality. Civil rights efforts by Chicanos and Hispanics, gays, Native Americans, and people with disabilities became active and visible. And the work for equality for women continued with more and more supporters. Consumer rights found new proponents, as Ralph Nader coordinated hundreds of "public interest research groups" to document health and consumer safety concerns.

American involvement in Vietnam evoked strong emotions in most citizens. War resistance faced pro-war activism. Volunteers counseled draft resisters, picketed corporations producing chemical weapons, and constantly protested the U.S. involvement in southeast Asia. Meanwhile, all the branches of the military were organizing volunteer support programs for servicemen and women and their families. The Army Community Service, the National Military Family Association, and other programs have continued through the present to assist with the nonmilitary concerns of military personnel.

The Peace Corps, formed in 1961, and VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America), formed five years later, expanded the concept of volunteering for many Americans. These programs asked citizens to give one to two years of their lives to become full-time volunteers in exchange for a modest living allowance. Both programs generated controversy but also immediate support. Some viewed the efforts as paternalism and propaganda, others as an opportunity to showcase the best of the American spirit.

We rightly remember the 1960s as a period of vocal and passionate political action. Volunteers supported and opposed many causes and used tactics ranging from research to violence. At the same time, other volunteers worked quietly to continue the programs of traditional organizations and to contribute to their own communities in positive ways.

Adapted from *By the People*, 1990, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California

# HIPPIES TO YUPPIES

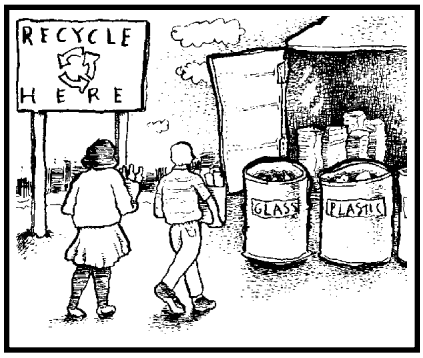
## (1970-1989)

The turbulent protests of the 1960s continued through the official end of the Vietnam War in 1975, fueled by incidents that seemed to symbolize the era: Kent State, Attica, Watergate. People seemed ready for a respite and turned from public causes to personal growth. Tom Wolfe labeled the seventies the "me decade," and many believed that a preoccupation with "what's in it for me?" dominated American culture. Yet volunteering was still integral to most community activities.

In reaction to the cry for "relevance" in the curriculum, many colleges and universities created opportunities for students to spend time out of the classroom, applying theoretical knowledge to real life. Such "service-learning" programs introduced students to the daily demands of addressing social problems. Similarly, the protests against profit-hungry businesses led to programs of "corporate social responsibility."

Companies enlarged their philanthropic giving and strove to show they could be good neighbors in their communities. Some corporations instituted employee volunteer programs, encouraging their workers to show concern for a spectrum of causes. Although much of this volunteering was to be done in the employee's free time, options for "release time" were also developed so that the company shared in the contribution by allowing the employee to volunteer on company time.

Also targeted for increased volunteer involvement in the 1970s were senior citizens. The size of the population past retirement age was growing, with the more important factor of seniors remaining healthy and active well past their sixties and seventies. Self-help activist groups such as the Gray Panthers sought to change the public's perception of older people. The concept of volunteering as a "second career" intrigued seniors seeking ways to continue their




own growth after leaving the paid work force.

Civil rights activities continued to expand in focus. From 1972 to 1982 feminists fought a losing battle to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. But volunteers advocating laws to protect the rights of the disabled had much greater success. Efforts by volunteer groups to integrate Spanish-speaking and Asian citizens influenced legislation, schooling, and community programs. Activists for gay rights and other liberal causes found themselves battling new fundamentalist Christian groups calling themselves the "moral majority."

American volunteers became involved in major domestic and global issues, such as world hunger, the depletion of natural resources, and environmental protection. The events of Earth Day in 1970 symbolized the ways large numbers of people were seeking to express their concerns about the future of the planet. Three-Mile Island and Chernobyl became rallying points for the dangers of nuclear accidents and waste disposal. By the late 1980s, proponents of recycling had succeeded in educating many and in getting local waste disposal ordinances passed. All of the activities of the environmental movement required the concerned involvement of volunteers, because their battles were against both government and big business.

Drug abuse, illiteracy, hunger, and homelessness were other major concerns of the 1980s, requiring enormous amounts of volunteer time and effort. Despite the "yuppie" '80s and the Reagan administration emphasis on "trickle-down" profit, the contradictions of increasing poverty and conspicuous consumption were evident. Responses to the needs of the poor ranged from shelters to food banks, from counseling efforts to Hands Across America. These issues are still in the forefront today. Volunteers, who have already done so much, are also the most vocal in advocating more public and private money for these needs.

Volunteers achieved critical successes in these twenty years. Their work created hospices, programs against domestic violence, bans on smoking in public places and a total turnabout in the nation's formerly permissive attitude about drunken driving. Not all of this effort was directed at serious social needs. The period also witnessed numerous community efforts to celebrate the United States Bicentennial and to support such things as the 1984 Summer Olympics.

The divergent symbolism of "hippie" and "yuppie" crystallizes the 180-degree turnabout in beliefs and style in this twenty-year period. But, as always, one cannot judge the period by the media imagery. Just as many people were focused on building their careers when the period started, many others were concerned about community improvement as the '90s began. George Bush coined the phrase "a thousand points of light" during his presidential election campaign to recognize the contributions of American volunteers, but continued the trend of further cutbacks in the funding of social programs. So those citizens willing to help one another faced even greater burdens. Volunteer accomplishments were evident, but the work continued.

Adapted from *By the People*, 1990, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California

# THE MILLENNIUM ENDS
## (The 1990s)

The 1990s began with international and domestic challenges. The crisis in Iraq brought "Operation Desert Storm," but would prove to be an ongoing military risk. Volunteers by the thousands rallied to support the troops overseas and their families at home. Some observers believed the outpouring to be a delayed penance for how the returning Vietnam War veterans were ignored.

The collapse of the Soviet Union caught many by surprise in its swiftness. Map makers were kept busy with continuing boundary and name changes, too often the result of armed conflict and ethnic hatreds. This unrest was evident in Africa as well. For a time it seemed that volunteers would be kept busy forever with relief efforts in the face of genocide, famine, drought and natural disasters. Whenever one crisis ebbed, another burst out in a different location.

In addition to international crisis relief, a new type of volunteering evolved to assist eastern Europe and Africa: training in capitalism and in nonprofit organization management. A wide range of government-sponsored technical assistance programs provided a mix of paid consultants and volunteer experts to conduct group seminars and offer on-site support to inexperienced business owners and nonprofit leaders.

As a worldwide health problem, AIDS became the rallying point for much volunteer activity. From campaigns to prevent sexually communicated diseases to "buddy" programs supporting people living with AIDS, volunteers have tackled just about every aspect of the fight to control this deadly disease. Other 90s cause-related advocacy, from marches on Congress to petition drives, focused on reproductive rights, tobacco industry liability and welfare reform.

The invention of the World Wide Web opened the Internet to millions of individuals, and volunteers have been right in the middle of it all. Many web sites advocate a cause, try to educate people on special issues, raise funds for nonprofit services and recruit volunteers. The vast majority of these sites are developed and maintained by devoted volunteers. Similarly, from the early "sysops"—system operators of electronic bulletin boards—to present hosts or moderators of newsgroups and listservs, such cyber leaders serve without pay. Finally, all the groups raising concerns about privacy on the Internet, protecting children from electronic pornography and the importance of universal accessibility owe their impact to the efforts of their volunteer members.

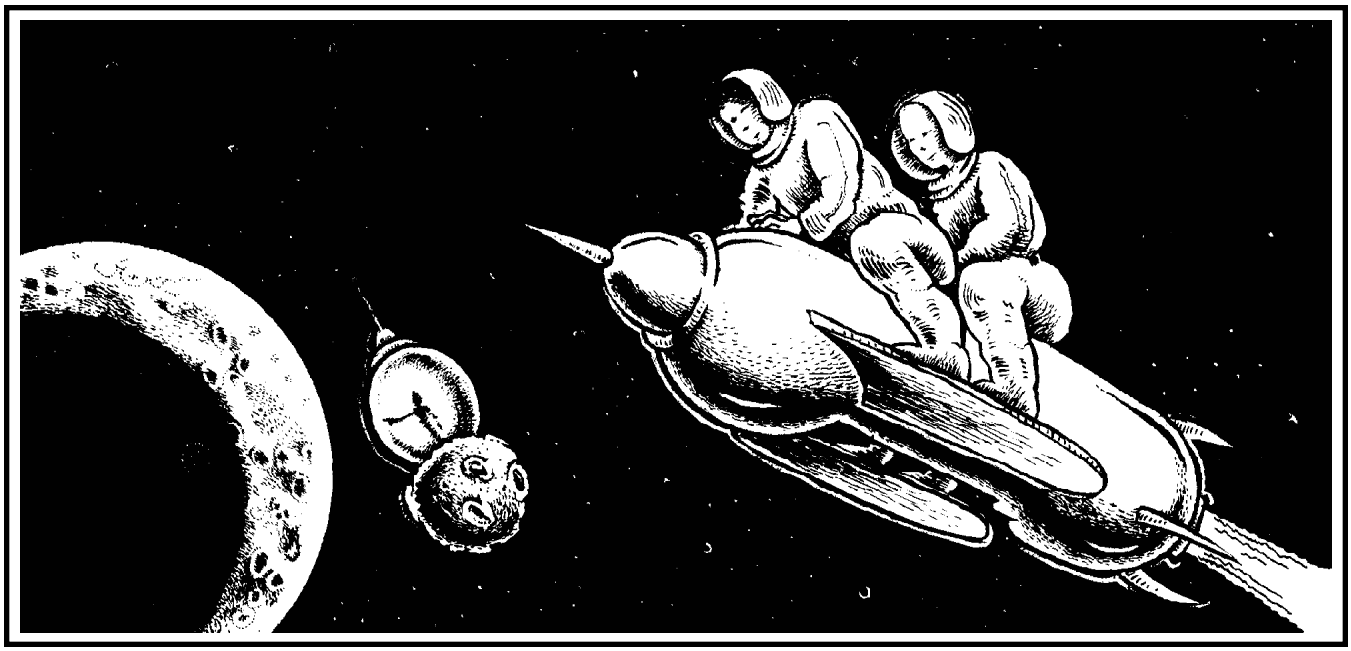
Perhaps the most fascinating result of accessible Internet technology is the evolution of "virtual volunteering," in which the people are real, but the volunteer activity is done online. Ranging from technical assistance and web research assignments to support groups and e-mailed homework tutoring, virtual volunteering is surfacing as one of the first entirely new forms of community service to be introduced in a long time.

The decade saw the expansion of the concept of "mandated volunteering," a seeming contradiction in terms that actually opened the door to new talent pools of individuals previously not seen as a resource. Court-ordered alternative sentencing, already well-established, was joined by welfare reform projects in which volunteering is accepted as one way to continue to receive public assistance benefits and by public schools requiring students to participate in community service to be eligible for graduation. The debate over the ethical dilemmas posed by such government-ordered service has not been resolved, but there is clear evidence that a significant percentage of people who enter service by mandate end up remaining with their host site beyond the time required as volunteers by choice. Whether by requirement or option, the decade saw the proliferation of many types of student community service programs, especially at the high school level (and even for younger students).

The Clinton Administration came into office with a strong commitment to full-time, stipended youth service programs. The former federal agency called ACTION was transformed into the Corporation for National and Community Service. VISTA and the Peace Corps continued to recruit participants, but a new program called AmeriCorps was initiated. AmeriCorps members work in the community full time and receive both a living allowance and an end-of-service educational benefit. In 1997, the unprecedented President's Summit on Volunteerism called for volunteers to work with youth—"America's promise."

The decade brought concerns that threatened volunteering, too. Fear of legal liability drove some organizations to limit volunteer roles in an effort to avoid, rather than manage, risk. Agencies serving children and vulnerable populations faced costly and time-consuming background check requirements. The decline in membership in traditional service clubs raised questions about the American spirit of community. Yet the evidence that volunteering is alive and well as we enter the new millennium is overwhelming. As if to prove the point, the United Nations declared 2001 as International Year of Volunteers.

# THE FUTURE OF VOLUNTEERISM



From the history of volunteerism we can see that volunteers are experimenters and pioneers. They are on the cutting edge of new issues—fighting the good fight before institutions recognize any needs. The first people to become active on behalf of a cause have often been considered radicals or even eccentrics, but they have also been good neighbors. And time has often proven them right, as more and more people joined in, funds have been raised, and the problem has been addressed in a system-wide way.

Judging from the past, there is every reason to expect volunteers to continue their tradition into the future. Right now, volunteers are on the leading edge of technology, forming computer user groups, advocating cyberspace privacy laws, and running electronic newsgroups that help people communicate just as the old town square did. As nuclear families undergo the changes of divorce and creative custody arrangements, people are forming networks of support groups and services to fill the emotional gaps.

What might be the causes of the future? Anyone's crystal ball can envision the variety of ways today's trends might evolve. By extrapolating just a few modern issues, it is possible to conceive of volunteers in the 21st century active in:

- traveler's aid on the moon,
- trips for active seniors over age 100,
- work weekends to rebuild deteriorating bridges, tunnels and roads,
- test-tube baby alumni associations,
- historic restoration of drive-in movie theaters,
- or support groups for video game addicts.

The options are only limited by the imagination—but none are unrealistic.

Some worry that Americans have less and less free time, while others point to the growing number of upwardly mobile couples opting for "voluntary simplicity" lifestyles. Some are concerned that employed women are not volunteering for traditional community service, while others point to the teenage boys who are being introduced to social service volunteer work through school-based projects. Culturally we grapple with defining multiculturalism and the aging of the population regardless of race or ethnicity.

While the jury is still out on such trends, there is every reason to believe that volunteer work will continue to attract Americans of both sexes, every age, and all income levels. Why? Because volunteerism continues to be one of the best ways to express our beliefs, to put our bodies where our mouths are. Participatory democracy is still our ideal, and volunteering is the way that people who seem different on the surface join together to work for mutual goals.

Adapted from *By the People*, 1990, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California

# VOLUNTEERING

# AROUND THE WORLD

Volunteers are so much a part of our society that we sometimes assume that the United States is special in the ways its citizens become involved. Historians often quote Alexis de Tocqueville, who observed us to be "a nation of joiners." While it is true that many of the things volunteers do here are unique to American culture, the fact is that volunteers can be observed all over the world.

Charitable activities fill a human need, and every culture finds ways to help the poor, the sick, the widowed, or the orphaned. While the United States has a diverse voluntary sector of nonprofit agencies, other countries are just starting to form what they often call NGOs—non-governmental organizations. Whether through NGOs, government action, or religious bodies, private individuals are almost always involved in relief work, especially at the local level.

Political activism is also universal—and very few people ever receive a salary for protesting governmental decisions! In the more democratic nations, citizens give their time to political parties and to causes ranging from environmentalism to women's rights. Under dictatorships, volunteering becomes all the activities we commonly refer to as the "underground"—publishing newsletters and disseminating information, helping people to obtain immigration documents, and providing support and sometimes safe harbor for dissenters.

Volunteers in different countries follow similar patterns of recognizing and addressing community needs before anyone else. The demands of each culture affect the roles volunteers fill, and some international volunteering may strike Americans as unusual. For example:

- In Israel, volunteers work closely with the military to provide grief counseling for families of soldiers killed in combat.
- In Ecuador, volunteers run some of the major cemeteries and provide basic supplies for hospitals, such as blankets.
- In England, volunteers are working to save the habitats of badgers.
- In Denmark, Red Cross volunteers are trained to give "psychological first aid" to disaster victims along with physical help.
- Several North American native people's projects are pairing adults with youngsters to pass along and thereby maintain native languages, customs and skills.
- In the crowded cities of Japan, housing units are divided into "blocks" that are self-governing and led by the residents themselves.
- In Sri Lanka, volunteers build wells.
- In Canada, non-English speakers organize local networks and petition the government for bilingual public education in their native language.

Volunteers of all nations are involved in cross-cultural exchanges, sometimes with the support of their governments and sometimes without. Student internships and volunteer host families represent one type of these exchanges. Amateur and professional scientific conferences and expeditions are jointly sponsored among various nationalities. Volunteers link with others who believe in a global approach to solving the problems of pollution, AIDS, hunger, and economic development. And volunteers work for regional and world peace—usually at the risk of their own safety if they reach out to one another despite a tradition of cross-cultural enmity.

Volunteers are motivated by the desires of all human beings for a better life for themselves and their children. They understand that working together is more effective than working apart.

Adapted from *By the People*, 1990, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California

# HEALTH / MEDICINE

Folklore has enshrined the image of the good neighbor bearing chicken soup to someone housebound with the flu. This type of informal community volunteering continues to be important in health care, while the practice of medicine has grown sophisticated, complex, and largely connected to institutions. Volunteers are still integral to the provision of medical services in a wide variety of ways:

Doctors and nurses often volunteer their professional services for community clinics.

### Hospitals and Clinics

Volunteers serve as trustees, and doctors and nurses may volunteer their professional services for community clinics. Other volunteers supplement patient services by raising funds (often through auxiliaries), staffing gift shops, assisting the nursing staff, providing special services to patients (such as friendly visiting or letter writing), organizing holiday and entertainment events, providing life skill examples to retarded children, or assisting with occupational and physical therapy programs. They also staff ombudsmen and patient relations programs. Some newer assignments include sharing pets for patient therapy.

### National Organizations Devoted to the Elimination of Specific Diseases and to the Support of People with Those Diseases

Volunteer members support research and public education on a disease or condition. They serve on boards and advisory committees and handle fund-raising, such as organizing and staffing telethons. Volunteers even sometimes serve as experimental subjects.

Examples of organizations often needing volunteers include the Multiple Sclerosis Society, the Easter Seal Society, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the American Diabetes Association, and the National Association for Mental Health.

Volunteers in such organizations can also be involved in direct service to patients and their families. For example, volunteers with local chapters of the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Foundation wage antismoking campaigns, counsel mastectomy and laryngectomy patients, and run early detection workshops.

### Hospices

Volunteers support terminally ill patients and their families through such activities as visits, assisting in the completion of forms or the writing of letters, or translating materials into the language of the patient.

### Family Planning and Related Services

Volunteers provide birth control information and sex education in schools and clinics and staff venereal disease information hot lines. The abortion issue has mobilized volunteers both to support and protest abortion legislation.

### Services to Those with Special Needs

Volunteers assist blind individuals as readers, Braille transcribers, guides, or drivers; assist individuals with speech or hearing problems as sign language translators, adjustment counselors, speech therapy aides, or supporters of the National Theater of the Deaf; assist physically disabled persons with transportation, physical therapy, or recreational activities; provide massage therapy; provide respite care; assist retarded or emotionally disturbed individuals as tutors, therapy or recreation aides, companions, or vocational training instructors; construct adaptive tools; or make houses physically accessible.

Volunteers in these fields may also promote legislation favorable to citizens with special needs or advocate appropriate architectural designs to accommodate physical disabilities. Other volunteers may run Special Olympics or similar competitive games for the disabled.

### Services to People with AIDS

Volunteers provide assistance and support to AIDS patients, especially through buddy programs and chore services; provide similar support for friends and relatives and for HIV-positive and ARC-diagnosed people; or work in public education campaigns to promote safe sex and reduce AIDS discrimination.

### Patient Rights and Self-help

People with mutual needs may organize to obtain improved services and treatment, educate the public, or lobby for legislation. Especially active are patient rights associations in hospitals and psychiatric institutions and organizations of paraplegics, amputees, and others in wheelchairs.

### Thanatological Issues

There are volunteer campaigns for and against legalizing euthanasia and suicide. Volunteers advocate living wills and the right to die with dignity. Individuals may donate their body organs or bone marrow either while still alive or, if medically feasible, upon their death.

### Childbirth Services

Volunteers instruct and counsel expectant parents in the teaching of childbirth techniques, pre- and postnatal care, or breastfeeding.

### Public Health

Volunteers assist in coordinating and conducting immunization campaigns; serve on poison prevention teams and hot lines; ensure the provision of free medical services to the needy; or serve in organizations ranging from local storefront clinics to the national City of Hope.

### Anti-addiction Projects

There are many group and individual efforts to prevent drug and alcohol abuse. Volunteers work in addiction treatment and rehabilitation programs and support addicts with housing and job counseling.

### Professional Associations

Medical and mental health personnel are active in voluntary professional groups. Members serve as officers, deliver research papers, convene conferences, and generally maintain the standards of the healthcare profession. Examples include the American Nurses' Association, the American Medical Association, and the American Psychiatric Association.

# VOLUNTEERING IN EDUCATION

Although teaching is an established profession, volunteers are involved in just about every aspect of education, from preschool through college and adult learning programs.

### Classroom and Library Support
Adult and student volunteers serve as teachers' aides, hall monitors, or playground and lunchroom supervisors. They assist with school and community libraries and bookmobiles, conducting everything from story hours to computer laboratories.

### Parent-Teacher Organizations
Volunteers work to improve the quality of education in a specific school and to maintain good relations between the school and the community, including raising funds for special projects. Teachers of a particular school may form volunteer committees to deal with issues such as school discipline. They may also spend time in both organized and informal tutoring on all levels.

### Literacy Groups
Volunteers in growing numbers are teaching illiterate children and adults to read, often one-on-one. Volunteers also develop reading motivation programs and design special materials for adult learners.

### Programs for Students with Special Needs
Volunteers work to motivate and teach truants and dropouts, gifted and creative children, retarded and emotionally disturbed people, the physically disabled, and students of English as a second language.

### Alternative and Community Schools
Parents and students may contribute their time and ideas to program development and maintenance and the administration of experimental learning projects, for which teachers often volunteer or work at reduced pay. Citizen pressure groups advocate "back to basics" in education. Examples include noncredit, college-level programs for senior citizens, in which the teachers are volunteers, often seniors themselves, and adult continuing education workshops, in which volunteers plan curricula and coordinate the program.

### Career Education
Community members in a variety of jobs may volunteer to describe their work and skills to students, allow students to observe them on site, or even arrange for students to experience a job firsthand. Volunteers often run programs in which students substitute for local government officials for a day.


Library patrons and students of all ages depend on the assistance of volunteers in the educational process.

### Student Exchange Programs
Volunteer host families and group leaders enable students to experience living in a different culture, both within the United States and internationally.

### Student Government and Service Clubs
Students from elementary school through college may volunteer to participate in school decision-making, curriculum development, or student grievance procedures, or club members may initiate community service projects of every description. Teachers and parents often assist these students on their own time.

### Issue-oriented Activities
Volunteers work for or against sex education, textbook censorship, religion in the schools, bilingual teaching, drug education, or other issues.

### School, College, and Library Management
Volunteers serve as school board members or trustees or members of curriculum review committees or scholarship organizations.

### Alumni Associations
Alumni volunteers raise money, recruit new students, or plan reunions or special group tours.

### Professional Associations
Volunteer members of both faculty and school administration do the work of mutual-interest organizations, both generically, such as the American Association of University Professors, and in specific subject areas, such as associations of math or English teachers.

### Groups Fostering Special Fields of Knowledge
Expert and lay volunteer members further specific areas of study with research, funds, and conferences. Examples include the American Anthropological Association, the National Geographic Society, and the Center for Short-Lived Phenomena.

### Historical Societies
Volunteer members work to identify and preserve local and national historic sites; collect, catalogue, store, and display historic documents and artifacts; gather and contribute to oral history projects; or create time capsules.

# Human Services

"Human Services" is an umbrella term for the myriad of organizations seeking to improve the quality of life for individuals and the community at large. Many of the problems addressed deal with poverty and basic human needs. Volunteers are often the first—and perhaps only—people to respond to a problem. As service programs are funded and institutionalized, volunteers continue to fill important roles in assuring that needs are met.

### Child Welfare

Volunteers run and assist in day care centers, become long-term and emergency foster parents, sponsor individual children on a one-to-one basis, counsel runaways, search for missing children, provide after-school programs for latchkey children, work for child abuse prevention, visit institutionalized children, or sponsor holiday activities.

### Senior Citizen Welfare

Volunteers deliver meals and visit frail elderly people in their homes, provide chore services, or assist in senior centers and nursing homes to supplement paid staff services. Older adults help themselves and each other by lobbying for legislation in their favor, soliciting discounts for merchandise and recreation, providing transportation, offering companionship and telephone reassurance, or running resident councils in retirement communities and home-sharing projects.

### Guardians

Volunteers serve as surrogate decision makers, often with the sanction of the court.

### Family Services

Volunteers assist victims of spouse abuse or families in crisis though counseling and legal advice, supportive contact during the divorce process, or parenting or single-parent support groups.

### Shelters

Volunteers establish and help staff temporary emergency housing or long-term shelters or soup kitchens for the homeless, street people, runaways, and abuse victims.

### Information and Referral

Volunteers locate and catalogue community resources, staff telephone hot lines, and make appropriate referrals.

### Crisis Intervention

Volunteers provide immediate counseling (such as for suicide prevention), aid to runaways, intervention to prevent gang warfare, and rumor control.

### Food and Clothing Distribution

Volunteers donate items, raise funds, or coordinate and handle distribution. Examples include Meals on Wheels, the Needlework Guild of America, the Salvation Army, Goodwill Industries, and thrift shops benefitting such organizations.

For food banks (centralized repositories of surplus food for redistribution to the hungry) volunteers conduct food drives and collect cooked leftovers from restaurants, hotels, and corporations. They also handle much of the government surplus food distribution, particularly of cheese and butter.

### Self-help

People with mutual needs and concerns aid each other through groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, the Adoptees Liberty Movement Association, Parents Without Partners, the Welfare Rights Association, or local tenant organizations.

### Disaster Relief

At home and abroad, volunteers provide emergency shelter, clothing, food, medical aid, cleanup materials and labor; aid in sending messages and locating missing persons; or staff search and rescue teams.

### Immigrant Welfare

Volunteers assist in the orientation of new Americans, using such skills as interpreting, teaching English, assistance in locating housing, or employment counseling.

### Policy Making

For any voluntary social welfare organization volunteers serve as board members or trustees, determining policy and raising funds.

# JUSTICE

There are many ways that citizens can become involved in crime prevention and in services to the courts and the correctional system.

## DELINQUENCY PREVENTION

Volunteers may work to prevent juvenile crime by providing constructive alternative programs such as supervising recreational and athletic activities in neighborhoods needing such positive outlets or sponsoring leadership development or youth employment projects. Adult volunteers may intervene in gang warfare, while adult offenders may counsel youth against crime. This type of intervention includes special volunteer involvement by police officers though such groups as the Police Athletic League.

## VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT

Volunteers may assist victims of crime as they go through the legal process. Others may offer similar aid to crime witnesses who agree to testify.

## COURT-RELATED PROGRAMS

Volunteers may serve in numerous supplemental capacities to assist court staff and to fill gaps in client services. They may handle assignments such as court watchers, probation and parole aides, one-to-one sponsors, tutors, clerical aides, temporary foster parents, counselors, or recreation aides. Teen juries of youthful volunteers may participate in disposition-making for juvenile offenders, while adult volunteers may staff arbitration boards. Individual lawyers may donate time and legal advice to low-income clients.

## PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Volunteers from the community may act as visitors, activity leaders, instructors, or counselors. They may also lead reform efforts to improve institutional conditions. There are prisoners' rights groups, and inmates may develop their own community service projects as volunteers.

## COMMUNITY-BASED REHABILITATION

Volunteers may assist with a variety of re-entry and service projects for ex-offenders, ranging from locating housing and jobs to supportive counseling. Also, ex-offenders may help each other through self-help organizations.

## ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING PLANS

In many communities, adult and juvenile offenders may receive the option to provide community service as volunteers in lieu of a fine or incarceration.

## ISSUE-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Citizens may advocate changes in laws and legal procedures by lobbying, public education, and community organizing; may work toward decriminalization of drug use or prostitution or the modification of statutes pertaining to rape, marriage, divorce, or domestic violence; or may take part in the death penalty debate.

**Volunteers may assist ex-offenders in their efforts to re-enter the job market.**

VOLUNTEERING IN

# Public Safety

MOST OF US HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED to a high standard of police, fire and emergency services. In many rural areas, however, these services would disappear if it were not for the involvement of volunteer community members. Even in our largest cities, volunteers are a critical element in insuring public safety.

## Volunteer Fire Companies

Volunteers account for 80 percent of the national firefighting force. Both men and women are involved in all aspects of firefighting, running the companies, or fundraising to purchase equipment.

## Community Emergency Services

Citizen first aid specialists may serve both industry and the community. They may serve staff volunteer ambulance corps and paramedical groups and may rescue people who are trapped or immobilized in some way. Also, anyone who donates blood is a voluntary participant in community health care.

## Crime Prevention

Citizens may police their own neighborhoods for mutual protection, provide volunteer safe houses for children along school routes, or cruise streets in car patrols to alert police to potential trouble.

## Police Support

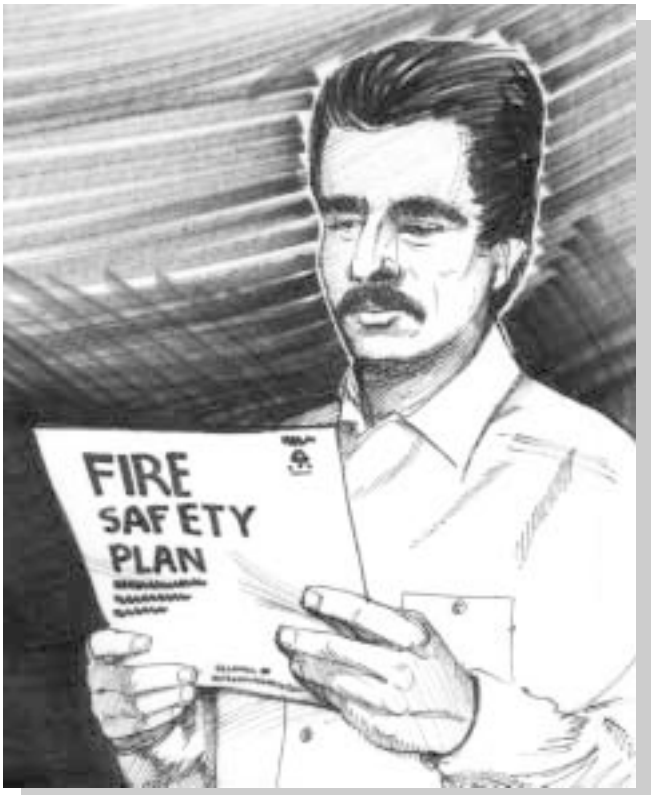
Volunteers may handle nonemergency police functions such as switchboard duty, assisting at parades and public ceremonies, or traffic control. They may staff police reserve units and auxiliaries, or gather and analyze statistics. Crime solver projects encourage witnesses to provide clues to apprehend criminals. Volunteers may also help search designated areas for missing persons.

## Civilian Review Boards

Volunteers may monitor police department practices to ensure compliance with legal standards and human rights.

## Disaster Aid

Volunteers may mobilize to assist officials after a flood, fire, earthquake, tornado, or hurricane; may help build barricades and dikes; may provide emergency shelter and care; or may clear debris and help rebuild structures.




Volunteers are involved in public safety efforts in many communities.

VOLUNTEERING IN

# Recreation/Sports/Leisure

Volunteer youth group leaders oversee recreational and community service projects.

**Volunteering is a leisure-time activity** that people may do whenever they are not committed to a paying job or to another obligation. So there is a recreational element to all volunteer work. It should be fun as well as worthwhile. But a large number of people choose to contribute their volunteer services to causes and organizations that both increase recreational opportunities for everyone and are recreational by nature.

## Parks and Forest Services

Volunteers may blaze and maintain trails, repair buildings and shelters, conduct classes and interpretation walks, form "friends" groups to raise funds and lobby for government support, provide special programs for school children and the disabled, patrol campgrounds, staff visitor centers, and help fight forest fires. For example, volunteers currently maintain the Appalachian Trail.

## Sports Enthusiasts

Volunteers may seek to improve facilities and standardize methods and rules by forming biking clubs, hiking and backpacking groups, boating groups, and hunting clubs. They can also address such issues as gun control.

## Amateur Athletics

Volunteers may be team players or individual competitors, coaches, or fund-raisers. They may also support their country's participation in the Olympics.

## Recreational Safety

Volunteers may provide safety education about athletics and specific sports or voluntary emergency aid to accident victims, as, for example, is done by the National Ski Patrol.

## Nationwide Recreation Coordinating Groups

Members promote and organize public recreational opportunities. Such volunteer organizations include the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission and the National Recreation Association.

## Youth Programs

Adult volunteers provide leadership for all of the major recreational and service organizations that are so much a part of the fabric of modern life. Consider the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Boys and Girls, Boys and Girls Clubs, Little League, and clubs of all sorts at YMCAs, YWCAs, and neighborhood centers. The young members of such groups also often conduct volunteer community service projects.

## Hobby Organizations

There are volunteer networks of people with similar leisure-time interests, such as stamp and coin collecting clubs, antique car owner groups, associations of hot air balloonists, organizations of pet owners and breeders, contract bridge leagues, or travel clubs.

## Holiday Observances

Some citizens organize and carry out public events such as parades, historical re-enactments, festivals, memorial services, or the setting up of displays.

## Fraternal Organizations

Many voluntary associations, whose purpose is primarily one of social enjoyment or ethnic fellowship, also sponsor an impressive array of service projects for which members can volunteer. Such projects extend into all areas of community life. Examples include the Loyal Order of the Moose, the Knights of Pythias, the Sons of Italy, the Daughters of the American Revolution, Free and Accepted Masons, and the Fraternal Order of Eagles.

VOLUNTEERING IN THE

# Cultural Arts

MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THE cultural arts add to the quality of life in a community. It is considered a sign of growth and prosperity to provide citizens with opportunities to sample the fine arts and performing arts. But these are also seen as luxuries in a tight economy, and adequate funding is always a concern. Without volunteers, the arts community could not exist. To the volunteers, it is rewarding to support artistic expression. Here are some of the things volunteers do:

**Visitor and Audience Services**
Volunteers may act as guides or docents, give tours of collections, interpret historical sites, demonstrate traditional crafts and skills, or usher at events. They may also develop programs for people with special needs, such as hands-on art galleries for the blind.

**Museum and Performing Arts Group Management**
Volunteers may serve as trustees, advisers, or board members. They may have have input regarding new acquisitions, tour schedules, or fund-raising campaigns.

**Public Commissions and Trusts**
Citizens may serve without pay as commissioners or trustees, making policy, or allocating funds. Examples of organizations that use such volunteers include the National Endowment for the Arts, Public Committee on the Humanities, and the Historical Museum Commission.

**Arts Support**
Businesses and individuals, such as Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, assist performing arts groups with financial or technical advice, legal expertise, publicity, or other skills.

**Self-help Groups**
Artists themselves may form voluntary networks to increase communication, share resources, or achieve recognition. Such groups include the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and American Black Artists.

**Charitable Contributions**
Volunteered services by artists and performers may support a charitable cause, such as performing at benefits, donating art objects for auction, or chairing national fund-raising campaigns.

In community drama groups, bands, or orchestras, citizens may perform free of charge or accept payment through donations or work exchanges.

**Public Art**
Volunteers may beautify neighborhoods by painting outdoor murals, often as part of an antigraffiti campaign. They may organize art exhibits or crafts fairs to highlight the work of local artists.

VOLUNTEERING IN

# Communications

In response to new technologies of the twentieth century, volunteers can became involved in all forms of communication.

## Ham Radio and Citizen Band (CB) Radio

Individually or collectively, volunteers may provide emergency communication and early warning services, especially during disasters. Examples of groups for such volunteers include Radio Emergency Associated Citizens Teams (REACT) and the American Radio Relay League.

## Broadcasting Policymaking

Volunteers may serve on public television or radio station boards or on advisory programming committees or participate in fund-raising projects or membership drives. Volunteers may also advise commercial and cable stations.

## Public Access Television

Volunteers can produce their own cable television shows on a wide range of public service topics. Most cable stations make video equipment and air time available at no charge.

## License Review

Volunteers may review and approve broadcasting license applications both on the local level and for the Federal Communications Commission.

## The Internet

From Webmasters to newsgroup hosts, the Internet could not function without volunteer time and effort. Volunteers act as "sysops" (system operators) to run electronic bulletin boards and community freenets. They also share information and give support online on every conceivable topic.

## Professional Associations

Volunteer organizations may be people involved in communications for the mutual benefit and professional development of members and for community service. A typical trade association would be the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

## Corporate Support

Businesses may underwrite Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) programs or provide volunteers to staff on-air auctions and telethons to raise money for local PBS affiliates.

## Monitoring and Protest

Individual and collective volunteer efforts may arise to curb violence on television, censor pornography, ensure the representation of ethnic or minority groups, or improve programming for children. One example is Action for Children's Television. Also, countergroups have often formed to fight censorship and encourage freedom of speech.

## Computer User Groups

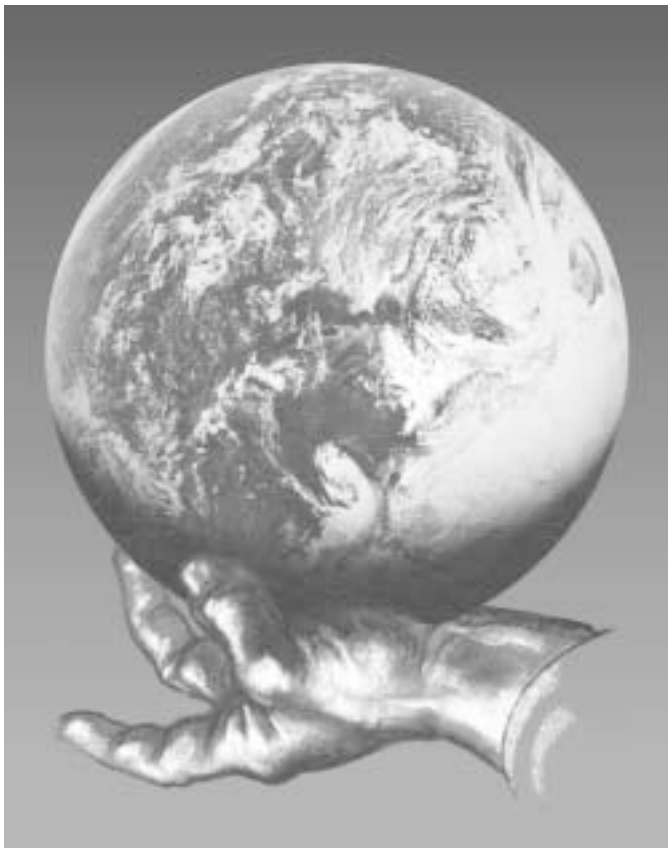
Self-help associations of personal computer owners generally organize by brand of computer owned to share skills and software. Volunteers also often create public domain software available for free. Other volunteers may run community or special interest computer bulletin boards, safeguard privacy in the face of mass computerization, or monitor computer viruses.

## Postal Advisers

Volunteers serve on the Postal Service's Citizen Advisory Committee, selecting the nation's commemorative stamp designs. Over 4,000 citizens submit designs each year for consideration.

# *Volunteering for Environmental Quality*

THE VERY WORD "environmentalism" is in our vocabulary because of the efforts of volunteers who made us all aware of the dangers to our planet of our wasteful technology. Because some of the solutions to global environmental problems involve changing the way governments and businesses conduct their affairs, public education and protest may be necessary. But very few people are paid to make waves. So volunteers are at the forefront of advocating the proper stewardship of natural resources and animal life.



### Conservation

Volunteers may advocate the protection of wilderness areas or endangered plants and wildlife through, for instance, public information, lobbying, research, or the protest against the fashion use of fur, leather, and skins.

### Animal Protection

There are volunteer efforts to protect animals from abuse and scientific experimentation, to run animal shelters, and to find homes for unwanted pets.

### Zoo Support Services

Volunteers may serve as trustees, supervise petting zoos, act as guides for the public, assist the animal keepers, or work in special projects. One example is the San Francisco Zoo's bird of prey program called Raptors Lib, in which volunteers train captive eagles and hawks to live in the wild.

### Pollution Clean Up

Acting as environmental watchdogs, volunteers test and identify polluted water, air and soil areas, file class action suits, and monitor clean-up compliance. They lobby for everything from reducing the use of nuclear power to greater use of solar energy, and freedom from excessive noise. Volunteers protest nuclear waste transportation and dumping sites.

Environmentalists may utilize public meetings, mass letter-writing campaigns, e-mail alerts, and petition drives to obtain necessary legislation and prosecute pollution offenders. Volunteers also form anti-litter and anti-billboard campaigns, or fight for nonsmoker rights and issues such as proper disposal of hospital waste.

### Recycling

Individual families may voluntarily collect and deliver glass, aluminum, paper, and other substances for recycling. Volunteer groups may also lobby government officials or inform the public about biodegradable substances, aerosol can dangers, or overpackaging.

### Voluntary Simplicity

Individuals may choose to live a more simple, environmentally aware, and self-sufficient life-style.

### Population Control

Volunteers may advocate planned parenthood on a global basis help to solve the problems of overpopulation.

### Weather Observation

Unpaid weather watchers, recruited by the National Weather Service, may give spot-check reports on weather conditions around the country.

### Horticultural and Garden Clubs

Members may voluntarily sponsor exhibits, workshops, local cleanup and beautification efforts, or the planting of community or historic gardens.

### City Planning

Volunteers may serve on area planning councils and zoning committees, ensuring appropriate civic growth and development.

# VOLUNTEERING FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ACTION

Ever since the Sons of Liberty threw the tea into Boston Harbor, political activism has been enshrined in the American character. It is the way we get things done. We expect to be able to influence our government and community leaders by demonstrating the rightness and popular support of our point of view. This is what "participatory democracy" is all about.

## Political Campaigns

Regardless of one's political party, volunteers are critical to the entire election process, beginning with the primaries and continuing through the nominating conventions, elections, and inaugural celebrations. Volunteers may gather signatures for candidates' petitions, distribute leaflets and posters, raise money, work in campaign headquarters, register and inform voters, act as poll watchers, assist voters in getting to the polls, and organize victory parties.

## Town Government

Volunteers may serve on the local school board or on various commissions or task forces. They may staff the fire or emergency response departments or support the work of the police, watch over local government to ensure accountability and efficiency, or organize block associations. In some communities, citizens hold public office without salary.

## Public Interest Activism

Volunteers may work on behalf of state and federal government reform, political ethics, or quality-of-life priorities, launch letter-writing campaigns, lobby, collect petitions, raise funds, or propose alternative legislation or procedures.

## Protesters

People who protest government actions or who urge reform are volunteers who picket, organize, or participate in marches, write letters, or engage in civil disobedience or tax resistance.

## Human Rights

All the activities supporting a particular human rights cause may rely on volunteers: consciousness-raising, public education, efforts fostering group solidarity, lobbying, and demonstrating. Volunteers committed to a cause create a "movement" to ensure the civil rights of African Americans, women, Native Americans, Hispanics, Asians, sexual minorities, religious minorities, and any other group considering itself oppressed or exploited. Frequently, goals are self-help and self-determination, but groups may also seek the involvement of other concerned citizens, as with the American Civil Liberties Union.

## Consumerism

Volunteers try to protect and benefit consumers; organize boycotts, public information campaigns, or cooperatives for purchasing food and goods; or participate in research on product ingredients or manufacturing processes.

## Financial Counseling

Volunteers may counsel individuals or families on budgeting, the use of credit cards, dealing with debt or bankruptcy, or income tax form preparation for senior citizens, artists, or new small businesses.

## Individual Action

Citizens who freely participate in public opinion polls and surveys are volunteers. Also, anyone who writes a letter to the editor or who presents an editorial reply on the air can be considered a volunteer—as is anyone who starts a Web site to express political views.

Likewise, volunteers may be lobbyists, who advocate a range of causes and make their personal opinions known to Congress or their state legislatures. Lobbyists can range from a group of Washington teenagers persuading Congress to vote more money for their dilapidated schools to a woman urging the adoption of the corn tassel as the national floral emblem. These are the mavericks of our communities. Sometimes they are viewed as mildly off-beat, but when they are effective in communicating their position, they move to the front-line of change.

Volunteers are critical to the election process: they work in campaign offices, gather signatures, and raise money.

## Volunteering In

# International Aid

As a nation of immigrants, Americans have always understood their ties to the rest of the world. There may be political debate over economic and military aid abroad, but humanitarian relief always garners volunteer support.

### Relief Efforts

Volunteers may organize activities to raise goods and money for people overseas, either in response to a natural disaster, war or other political crisis, or ongoing needs. Such activities can take the form of benefits, door-to-door collections, church appeals, or group donations. Volunteers also travel far distances to aid in rescue, clean-up, and rebuilding efforts.

### Technical Aid

American volunteers may share their technical expertise with developing nations through such groups as the Peace Corps, Volunteers for International Technical Assistance, or International Voluntary Services.

### Aid to Foreign Children

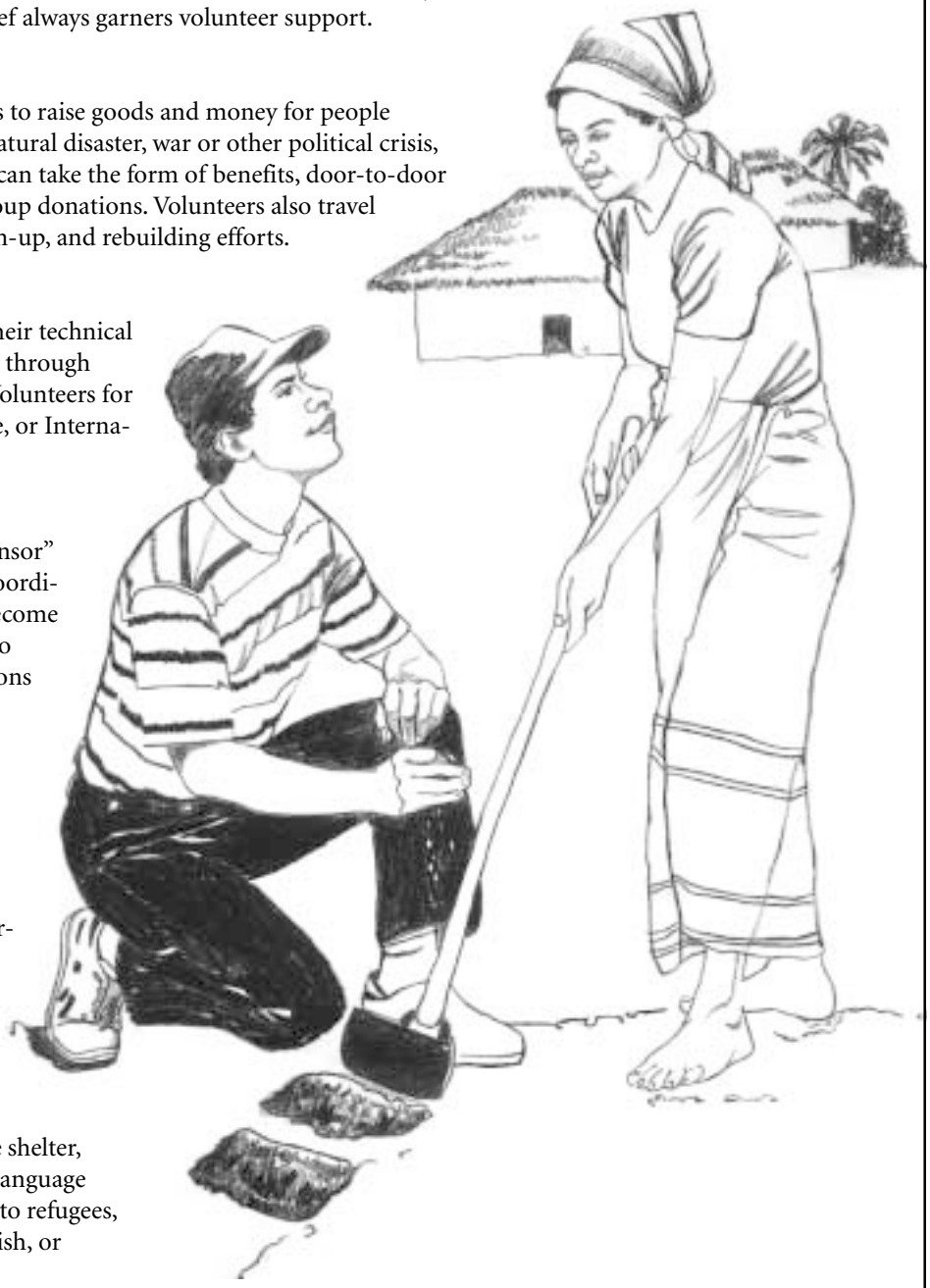
There are many programs to "sponsor" needy children. Volunteers may coordinate programs, raise money, or become individual sponsors. There are also fund-raising drives for organizations such as UNICEF.

### International Cooperation

Volunteers may support United Nations agencies, peace efforts in areas like the Middle East or Northern Ireland, and student exchange programs fostering international understanding. There is also volunteer advocacy for an international language, primarily Esperanto.

### Services to Refugees

American volunteers may provide shelter, food, employment, financial aid, language classes, or adjustment counseling to refugees, notably Indochinese, Russian Jewish, or Central American families.



VOLUNTEERING IN

# Business & Economic Development

ALTHOUGH THE WORLD of business is motivated by monetary profit, it is a mistake to assume that no volunteering is connected to it. In fact, volunteers create the climate in which successful business can occur.

### Social and Civic Associations of Business People

Volunteers have formed local chapters of national organizations to foster communication among business people, promote local commerce, advise local government, and provide social outlets. Groups representing all types of businesses include the Jaycees, Kiwanis, Soroptimists, Rotary Clubs, Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Lions Clubs, and Chambers of Commerce. Such groups are involved in a vast variety of civic projects, including eyeglasses for the needy, scholarships and camperships, holiday parties in hospitals and nursing homes, and local athletic events.

### Trade Associations

Cooperative, voluntarily joined organizations of people in the same industry deal with mutual problems. Such associations usually have a product to sell. These groups include bodies as diverse as the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Automobile Dealers Association, and the American Association of Advertising Agencies. The people who serve as officers and committee chairs usually volunteer their time.

Business leaders often contribute their services to civic groups for mutual benefit.

### Professional Associations

Volunteers in the same business may seek to develop and maintain standards, increase communication, or share expertise. They usually are marketing a service. Fields range from banking to public relations. Members become officers and may participate in a wide range of charitable community service projects. Examples include the American Bar Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

### Private/Public Partnerships

Business leaders may join with civic leaders and government officials to plan community development, find funding for needed local projects, or act as a "think tank" to solve social concerns together.

### In-kind Services and Donations

Corporations or individual business people may contribute services or products to needy welfare or cultural organizations. This can take the form of free products or labor related to the donor's business, such as a donation of food from a processor or canner or a fund-raising brochure designed at no cost by a commercial artist.

### Corporate Volunteer Programs

Businesses may encourage their employees to volunteer in the community. This may include release time and can range from a few hours a week to a year's sabbatical. Examples of such programs include the Xerox Corporation Social Service Leave Program and projects by the Advertising Council. Company-sponsored volunteer programs for retirees also fall into this category.

### Stockholder Action

Groups of stockholders may mobilize to resist unpopular decisions by corporate leaders. Such actions may be closely connected to those of volunteer consumer protest groups pressuring the corporation. Socially conscious investing and watchdog groups concerned about ethical bioengineering are other examples of voluntary actions dealing with business and industry.

In fact, anyone who agrees to answer market research survey questions is giving their time for what they hope will be an improved business or consumer climate.

VOLUNTEERING IN

# Labor and Agriculture

It took the involvement of countless volunteers to gain acceptable working conditions for employees, end child labor practices, and assure compliance with health and safety standards. Whether in the factory or on the farm, workers helped one another and were, in turn, helped by concerned outsiders.

## Unions

While most union officials today are salaried, volunteers still serve as local shop stewards and union representatives, handling their union liaison tasks in addition to their regular, paid work. Many unions also sponsor community service projects.

## Employer/Employee Relations

Employees may volunteer to provide feedback to management on work policies and procedures, assist with employee grievances, or ensure standard and safe working conditions. Such volunteer work may take the form of employees joining quality circles.

## Mutual Benefit

Employees may plan parties and group travel tours or offer aid in times of family illness or crisis (as "sunshine" clubs do).

## Advocacy and Reform

Volunteers may lobby for a variety of industrial legislation issues.

## Optional Work Plans

Volunteers may advocate the adoption of split shifts, a four-day work week, or other innovations.

## Credit Unions

Volunteers may establish and manage these alternative banking systems.

## Farmers' and Ranchers' Cooperatives

Operated locally by farm-owning volunteers, but affiliated nationally, such associations may share information, support or strike for farm legislation, coordinate marketing and pricing, and offer social activities.

## Associations of Farm Workers

Patterned after labor unions, a typical farm worker association would be one for migrant workers, in which volunteer efforts aid transient or seasonal workers. Efforts may include self-help activities by the migrants themselves.

## Hardship Assistance

Farmers may volunteer mutual aid among themselves to battle drought or fend off foreclosures.

## Youth Groups

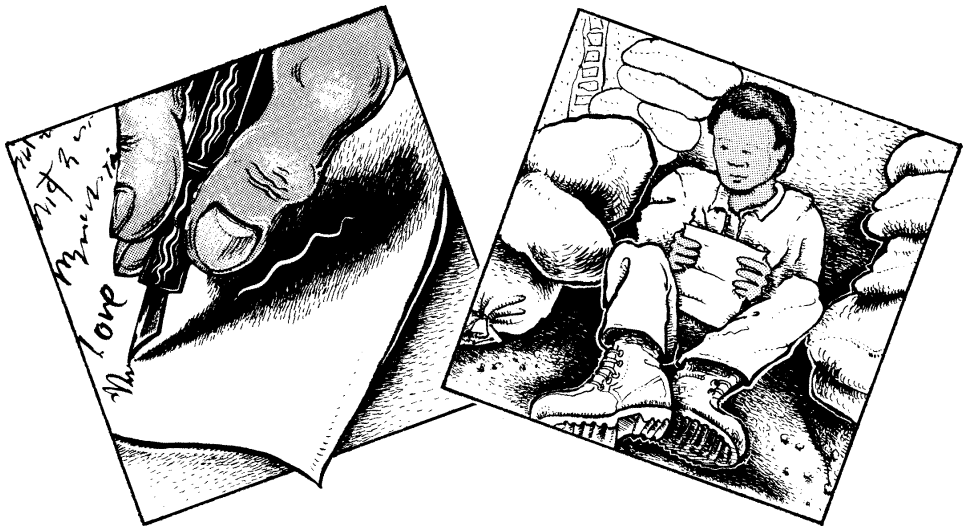
Designed to foster the agricultural education of rural young people and to provide recreational outlets for them, adult volunteers may serve as group leaders, program developers, or fund-raisers. The youth themselves may volunteer to be club officers or to participate in a range of community service projects.

## Gleaning Projects

Volunteers may go into the fields after mechanized harvesting to gather remaining crops for distribution to food banks.

Labor and agriculture workers organize themselves to deal with work or community issues.

# WAR & PEACE



Throughout our history, volunteers have been on the front-lines and on the home front in support of war efforts or to protest the use of military force. Not only do we have a "volunteer army" (which really means "not drafted"), but we have a wide system of military reserve units, National Guard companies, and civil defense programs.

In times of war, volunteers have provided a wide range of support services to those at the front. USO and other entertainment tours have visited the troops. Today, such groups still offer lounge facilities and social activities during leaves. Reception programs at major airports often rely on volunteers too.

Keeping communication ties open is always a major project. Letter writing and holiday gift giving mobilize thousands, usually including elementary school students and civic club members. Support is also offered to families awaiting the return of loved ones in the military. Just think about all the events that were held in relation to Operation Desert Storm. It was volunteers who put up all those yellow or red ribbons.

Every military engagement also evokes strong responses from peace advocates. Whether the scale of activity is small, as in writing individual letters to Congress, or large, as in joining a protest rally in Washington, DC, all such activism is done by volunteers. Other frequent peace projects include sponsoring public debates, picketing arms manufacturers, or counseling conscientious objectors.

It is a sign of a healthy democracy that debate about military engagement can occur publicly. Despite often heated confrontations, both those in favor or and those against a war share a common vision of their right to express their opinion. And both sides use the same tactics: petitions, marches, rallies, and the efforts of as many volunteers as possible.

American citizens also involve themselves in the military affairs of other nations. Because so many people still have family ties to original homelands, emotions can run strong when reading the news of foreign events. The causes Americans participate in range from the strife in Northern Ireland to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and South African self-determination struggles. Volunteers raise countless dollars for compatriots in other lands, send supplies of all kinds (although it is illegal to buy armaments), or even go abroad to offer on-site assistance. And they lobby legislators to encourage the United States to support whatever side of the issue they believe in.

# FOOD • HUNGER • HOMELESSNESS

OFFERING FOOD TO THE hungry is one of the most basic acts of charity. Every culture throughout history has valued those who share their bounty with those less fortunate. Food has not only been given from individual to individual. In times of famine or other crisis, whole communities have responded to the needs of their neighbors. This remains true today. While volunteers are frequently in leadership capacities in international hunger relief efforts, these are often officially-sponsored by government agencies.

Perhaps more important in solving the problem of hunger is the involvement of volunteers in addressing the causes of poverty and famine. These types of activities may challenge governments or large corporations and so require the collective efforts of concerned citizens. Volunteers identify domestic and foreign food shortages, develop mechanisms for food distribution despite political turmoil, provide technical assistance for improved agricultural techniques, and protest nutritionally unsound practices such as replacing breastfeeding with commercial infant formula in developing countries.

Corporations can also be part of the solution to hunger. They donate large quantities of surplus food and fund the transportation of it to areas in need. Charitable food distribution centers, often called "food banks," now operate in most American cities, receiving donated food centrally and redistributing it to a wide variety of shelters and food "pantries" so that it can reach the hungry. Restaurants and supermarkets offer unsold produce and other leftovers to feed people instead of being thrown away. Volunteers are integral to all of these efforts—including home delivery of hot meals to the frail elderly or others too ill to cook for themselves.

Volunteers are always to be found wherever a new social problem emerges. This is because they see needs and respond faster than institutional bureaucracies can. As the number of homeless people grew in the 1980s, volunteers were the first to offer services. Soup kitchens, midnight coffee and sandwich distribution, and outreach services to encourage self-help are all activities done by volunteers.

Individuals, families, and student groups provide many types of assistance to the larger shelters. They help with cooking and serving meals, tutoring children who are often far behind in their schoolwork, mentoring adults who are seeking permanent employment, and other types of support. In some communities, church congregations have focused their collective energies on helping the homeless, especially in the winter months. The church opens its facilities as a shelter or links with local social service agencies to "adopt" homeless families with encouragement, donations, and other support.

Attention is also given to eliminating homelessness. Volunteer groups buy and rehabilitate housing, raise money to offer low-interest mortgage loans, and advocate for innovative programs such as "urban homesteading." Because the homeless are often victims of domestic violence or are drug and alcohol abusers, other volunteers have increased their efforts to combat the root causes of homelessness.

Food banks welcome donations and volunteers to redistribute the food.

# *Volunteering in Religion*

BY DEFINITION, EXERcising one's freedom of religion is voluntary in our culture. Worship is not, in and of itself, an act of volunteering. To be a volunteer on behalf of religion, a person must become more actively involved in service to others. Some denominations refer to this religiously motivated volunteering as "lay ministry."

### Congregational Activities

Sisterhoods, brotherhoods, guilds, and a variety of committees within individual churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples may run fundraising and membership drives. Members may also volunteer as deacons, ushers, officers, altar boys and girls, choir members, or child care workers; plan holiday programs; prepare post-service refreshments; or donate memorial ornaments, windows, or pews.

### Religious Education

Congregation members may volunteer to teach Sunday school, support Hebrew schools, advocate public funds for parochial schools, or join in religiously based recreational programs such as the Catholic Youth Organization, the Methodist Youth Fellowship, or B'nai B'rith Girls.

### Missions

Volunteers may serve as missionaries at home or abroad or provide financial or material support to missions.

### Interchurch and Interdenominational Activities

Volunteer clergy and laity may create or manage ecumenical projects to foster unity and meet mutual goals. Such activities may be local, as in joint holiday services, or nationwide, through the National Council of Churches, the National Board of Rabbis, the Friends Yearly Meeting, or the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Campus-based centers for social and intellectual religious interaction or dialogue include U.S. Student YMCAs and the Hillel Foundation.

### Issue-oriented Activities

Congregation members may work for or against current concerns such as abortion, religious discrimination, homosexuality, world hunger. Other efforts may be aimed at religious reform, including a role for female clergy or providing sanctuary for political refugees.

### Charity

Volunteer-run, church-affiliated work camps may provide short-term aid to those in need. Volunteers may also contribute or distribute food and clothing, especially at holiday time, or donations toward foreign relief.

# VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT THE

# MILITARY

We speak of our military as a "volunteer army." What we mean, of course, is that it is made up of people who voluntarily chose to enlist rather than those who were drafted. Military service is a job, and for some it is a career, since it pays a salary and may offer lifelong financial benefits. But there are also volunteers, unpaid supporters, connected to the military.

## Assistance to Members of the Military

Each branch of the armed services maintains a social service delivery system that utilizes volunteers in counseling service people and their families, particularly for marital problems and spouse employment. Examples include the Army Community Service and the National Guard Family Support Program.

## MIA, POW, and Hostage Concerns

Families and other volunteers may work to obtain information about, and speed the return of, captured Americans. Supplies and messages of hope may also be sent to identified prisoners.

## Support Services for Military Personnel

Civilian volunteer projects may provide recreation, entertainment, or counseling to those in the service. Examples include the USO, local hospitality centers, and the United Seamen's Service.

## Veterans Projects

Military veterans may volunteer to help other veterans in areas of employment, psychological counseling, health, social programs, or leisure-time activities. Examples include the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Vietnam Veterans of America.

## Paramilitary Groups

Volunteers may foster military and civil defense preparedness, such as the Civil Air Patrol, whose members also teach youth and adults how to fly airplanes.

## Community Service

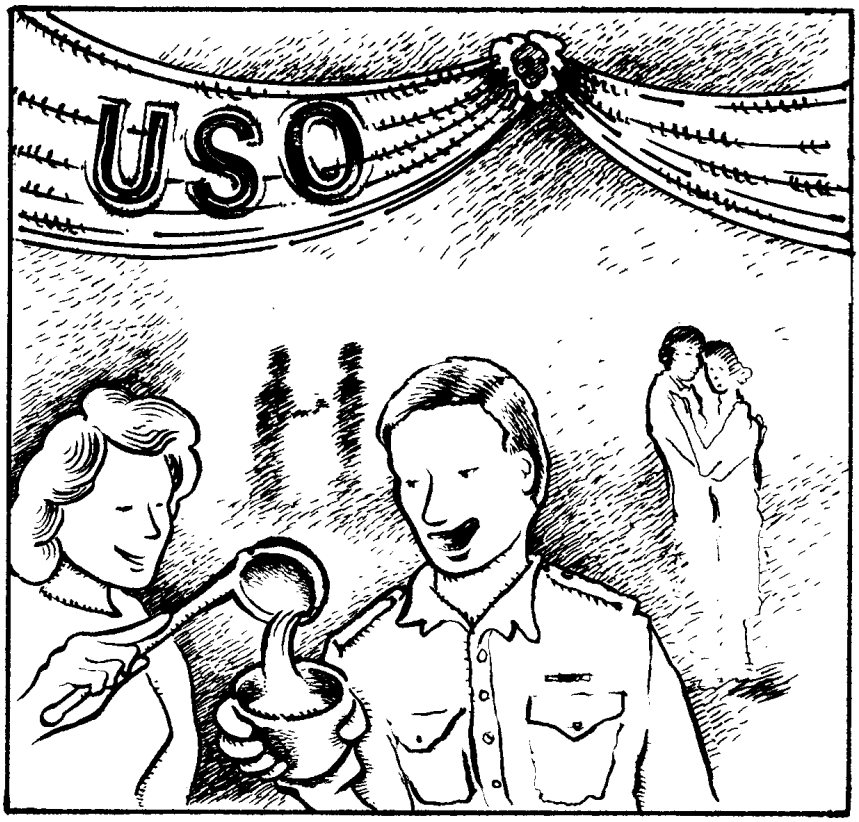
Military personnel may volunteer community work at home or abroad while stationed nearby. Special holiday programs, building projects, or support of orphanages or schools are handled by such groups as the Navy's Operation Handclasp.

## Exploration

Volunteers may support and participate in efforts to reclaim lost cargoes, raise sunken ships, and add to the knowledge of little-known geographic areas or support the continuation of the space program.

## Peace Organizations

Citizens may work to end war and international conflict, limit nuclear weapons, or influence American military support abroad.



# Municipal Government and Transportation

In our large cities and counties, "public servants" are generally paid employees who conduct the business of the government. Full-time government officials develop legislation and fiscal policies. They provide the police services, fire fighting, street cleaning, trash collection, and other public health and safety services. Employees also do social service and public assistance work, run the schools and libraries, and handle everything from senior centers to tourist information booths. But volunteers are also part of this service-delivery system by helping in specific departments and by serving voluntarily on a wide range of commissions, advisory councils, and task forces.

For smaller and more rural communities volunteers play an even more critical role. Because many local government services are not needed on a daily basis, it is not necessary to employ as many full-time workers. In some areas, being elected to govern means assuming a part-time volunteer position. Town meetings may also bring out vocal and active citizens who directly influence the policies that affect their lives. Volunteers run the fire and emergency services departments, expand the hours of the local library, or operate an adult community school.

While some of the above examples of volunteering are easily recognized, the involvement of volunteers in other areas of town management may be less visible. Consider the area of transportation, in which volunteers do quite a variety of things:

### Traffic Safety

Concerned citizens may advocate additional stop signs, traffic lights, pedestrian crosswalks, bike or bus lanes, play streets, or public education campaigns for automobile safety awareness.

### Adopt-a-Highway Programs

Volunteer groups or individuals select a two-mile stretch of highway to keep free of litter. Similar adopt-a-pothole programs monitor street repair.

### Railroad Advocacy

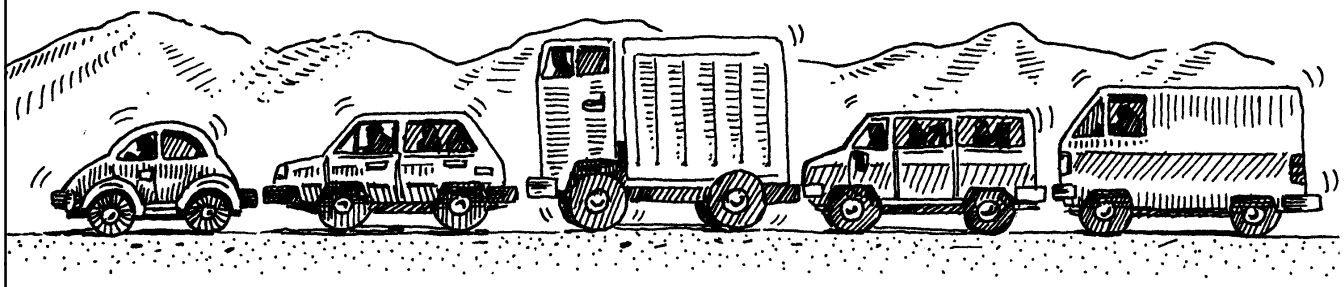
Individuals and groups support the continuation of railroad services both for energy conservation and out of nostalgia.

### Commuters

Volunteers lobby independently and in coalitions for improved transportation services, car pools, and van pools.

### Travelers' Assistance

Volunteers provide reassurance, information, shelter, and service referrals to stranded travelers. When you consider the diversity of ways volunteers are involved in this one area, it is evident that citizens do indeed participate in government services, regardless of the size of a community.



**Traffic decisions affect everyone. Volunteers in rural and urban areas are often active in traffic planning.**

# Volunteers as Fund-Raisers

Volunteers do an incredible variety of tasks on behalf of causes and organizations in which they believe. Many of these activities are considered direct services because the volunteer works personally with those in need. Another major area of volunteer work is the underpinning of all nonprofit organizations: raising the money needed to keep the group afloat.

## The Neighborhood

Fund-raising by volunteers takes many forms. In its simplest, grassroots form it is symbolized by the bake sale. Homemade cakes and cookies, baked and then donated by volunteers, have generated quite an astounding amount of profit for local groups. So have flea markets, sales of craft work, and raffles of handmade quilts.

The creativity of fund-raising ideas can be fun, such as having teams of young people go door to door, requesting an egg from the first house, selling it for 50 cents at the second house, and repeating the process until a tidy sum is amassed! Some door-to-door appeals are actually national in scope, such as Halloween drives for UNICEF.

## The Community

When the need for money grows beyond what such simple activities can generate, volunteers move to a more intensive level. They may plan and staff major special events, such as carnivals, golf tournaments or rock concerts, at which funds are raised through ticket and refreshment sales, and donors are found to contribute as much of the necessary items as possible so as to maximize the event's profit.

Volunteers also appeal for funds directly through letter writing, booths at shopping malls, house parties, or visits with prospective donors. It has been proven that volunteers are more successful at asking for money than the paid staff of an organization. This is because volunteers are perceived by donors as soliciting funds without any vested interest. Since most fund-raising volunteers give their own money as well as their time, they can use the effective line, "I'm only asking you to do what I've already done."

## Beyond the Local Level

The cumulative effect of simultaneous fund-raising in many communities is to create publicity and visibility for a national cause or organization and to gather in even more money as the momentum grows. Mass media events, still relying heavily on volunteer involvement, stimulate pledges and donations. Telethons and radiothons put volunteers to work as performers and in answering telephone calls offering pledges of financial support.

It is also important to remember that volunteers raise money by lobbying government officials to apply public funds to needy causes. Some social issues, such as homelessness or the growing number of people with AIDS, have elicited a government response as well as the help of non-profit organizations. When citizens urge legislators to appropriate public dollars to such causes, they are putting participatory democracy to work.

# Volunteering on Behalf of Youth

One of the ways that a society shows its concern for the future is to assure that as many children and young people as possible grow up in the best way. This has always been a job too important and vast to leave solely to parents. Today the need for wider community involvement in the raising of children is even more pressing. Dual working parents, divorce, single-parent homes, teenage pregnancy, and preteen drug abuse all require the sharing of responsibility for our youngest citizens. Volunteers may respond in incredibly diverse ways:

### School-Based Programs

Volunteers work as classroom aides and tutors to increase the attention given to individual students. They run after-school activities and even programs for children needing supervision before school hours. They raise money for scholarship programs and provide many types of classroom "enrichment" activities. Business volunteers offer worksite internships.

### Youth Organizations

While most youth organizations employ a core staff to coordinate programming, they all rely heavily on volunteers as adult leaders. The members and types of such organizations are enormous: Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, 4-H Clubs, Campfire Boys and Girls, Boys and Girls Clubs, Ys, and all the other groups that give young people the chance to form friendships, learn new things, and have fun—with adult supervision. Many of these organizations also stress service by their young members to serve others in the community.

### Sports

Youth sports activities mobilize thousands of volunteers to coach teams, organize leagues, and run tournaments. Whether as formalized as the Little League or simply local sandlot summer play groups, it is hard to imagine childhood without volunteer-led sports programs.

### Religion

Most denominations seek to involve their youngest congregants in religious activities, both to educate them in the precepts of their faith and to encourage moral development. Once again, volunteers are deeply involved as Sunday School teachers and youth group leaders.

### One-to-One

In a number of settings, young people are helped on a one-to-one basis by concerned volunteers. This may mean acting as a mentor for a student, additional supervision of a teenage probationer, vocational counseling by a local business person, or being a Big Brother or Big Sister.

Volunteers who deal with young people offer them attention and guidance that youngsters need as they develop.

# The Exchange of Volunteering

SOME PEOPLE are uncomfortable with the notion that a volunteer "benefits" from doing volunteer work. There is a long tradition of seeing volunteering as a form of charity, based on altruism and selflessness. The best volunteering does involve the desire to serve others, but this does not exclude other motivations as well.

"Noblesse oblige" referred to the obligation of the wealthy class to do something to improve the condition of those poorer than themselves. It tended to maintain the class distinction between people. Today's volunteering is much more democratic. It brings people together around mutual causes and is a way to capture a true sense of community— "we're all in this together."

Instead of considering volunteering as something you do for people who are not as fortunate as yourself, begin to think of it as an exchange.

Consider that most people find themselves in need at some point in their lives. So today you may be the person with the ability to help, but tomorrow you may be the recipient of someone else's volunteer effort. Even now, you might be at both ends of the service cycle: maybe you are an experienced reading tutor for someone who is illiterate and you may be receiving counseling and emotional support from another volunteer whose child has the same learning disability as your own child.

There are also many examples of volunteering that include self-help. So if you are active in your neighborhood crime watch, your home is protected while you protect your neighbors' homes. Adding your effort to the work of others makes everyone's lives better.

## Interpersonal Exchanges

On the individual level, you can receive much when you give. Your benefits may include a sense of satisfaction, knowing that you are needed, seeing that you are making a difference in someone's life, or the advancement of a cause.

Or your benefits may be even more tangible. You may learn a new skill, make a new friend, or be able to put something important on your resume.

As long as you are truly serving through your volunteer work, isn't it wonderful that such an exchange can occur? In fact, it tends to strengthen your commitment to volunteering when you can see the benefits to both the recipient of your efforts and to yourself. And it is much more comfortable than "charity," because it maintains the self-esteem of those for whom you volunteer.

# Transitional Volunteering

Every person goes through periods of transition. These are times in which you re-examine yourself, your talents, and your emotional needs. Some transitions are forced on you by crises, others are simply the result of necessary change. For example:

- following the death of a loved one or close friend;
- after a divorce;
- following a serious illness (yours or a close family member's);
- when children enter new stages of maturity and then ultimately "leave the nest;"
- losing one's job unexpectedly;
- changing careers;
- the initial stage of retirement;
- recovering from an addiction;
- becoming acclimated to a new living environment;
- returning to full-time student status;
- graduating;
- and release from prison or some other institution.

Consider volunteering as a way to cope with a transition such as retiring from your job.

Volunteering is one way to cope with transition. The act of reaching out to others is reciprocated by the sense of belonging and accomplishment gained in return. Although it is unfair to ask an organization to be your "therapist" while you work through personal problems, it is absolutely legitimate to view volunteering as therapeutic.

How can you do this?

First, consider volunteer assignments that put you in contact with people. Such interaction has social value and will help you take your mind off of your concerns for a while. You even have a good chance of making new friends or valuable contacts for your professional network.

Second, look for volunteer work with concrete goals. Seeing what you accomplish will help to build your temporarily-diminished self-esteem. If you know that you have made a difference as a volunteer, then it is easier to believe that you can make a difference in other aspects of your life too.

Third, offer your services for physical work as well as "brain" work. The exercise is healthy for your body and clears your mind. This type of volunteering is frequently done in groups on a one-time or short-term basis (such as cleaning up a vacant lot or painting a rec room), so it also has the benefit of getting you active without a long-term commitment right off the bat.

Depending on your own needs, volunteering can also:

- show you that others value your skills and talents,
- prove you can still learn something new and be good at it,
- let you honor the memory of a loved one by helping a cause he or she held dear,
- or build your resume.

You are not being selfish by considering the personal benefits of volunteering. Remember that you will be helping others while you help yourself. And after you complete your transition, your volunteer involvement can become a bridge to your new life.

# TAKE ALONG A FRIEND


DO YOU SOMETIMES FEEL THAT your days are so busy you barely have time for work and family, let alone to see your friends?

When you see a recruitment poster proclaiming "volunteers needed" do you think "who has the time?"

We all know that the busiest people seem to be able to squeeze the most things into their schedules. One reason is that they have learned the art of "doubling up"—making sure that at least some of their activities accomplish more than one goal. You can approach volunteering that way too.

Consider making a commitment to volunteer with a good friend. Think about it: knowing that you will have the chance to spend time with someone you care about while doing good for the community.

Volunteering with a friend can be an occasional or a long-term practice. Lots of volunteer activities have a recreational component to the work: staffing a fund-raising bazaar; providing the entertainment for a party in an institution; building a playground; clearing a nature trail. Instead of coordinating dinner and a movie, ask your friend to spend a Saturday with you helping a good cause. (Then carpool for even more time to talk before and after the activity.)

If you and your friend share concern for a community need, seek out a volunteer opportunity that lets you work together to address it. Go to the prospective volunteer interview or orientation together and make it clear to the organization that you are coming as a pair. This might be done on a seasonal basis, with each recipient organization gaining your dual attention at its peak busy time.

If you are both already active as volunteers you might barter an exchange of services—you offer time for your friend's cause and he or she gives time to yours.

It's your choice, of course, whether or not to accept the same assignment as that of your friend. If you stay together on the job you'll really be sharing the experience. Also, if it should happen that one of you needs to be absent, the other can try to fill in. If you job-share something, such as being volunteer co-chairpersons of a committee, it's almost like being in more than one place at a time. What's more, this setup benefits the agency.

On the other hand, you could volunteer on the same shift (commuting together) but then do the individual tasks most suited to each of your talents.

Regardless of how you handle the details, volunteering may be the best way yet to maintain your circle of friends and to strengthen your relationships through shared experiences. Have fun!

# Volunteering as a Family

If you are like most people, there are simply too few hours in a day. You have many demands on your time, from doing what your boss wants to doing what your children want. And with such a full schedule, you can't see how you can become a volunteer, even if you want to help solve community problems.

Here is a unique idea that has many benefits: become a volunteer along with some or all of your family members!

Family volunteering can be done by one parent and one child or teenager as a special "twosome" project. Or it can be several siblings together. It can involve both parents or one parent and an extended family member such as a grandparent or aunt or uncle. The mix-and-match possibilities are endless.

The agency receiving your volunteer services benefits by having more helpers at one time. If you volunteer on a regular schedule, and occasionally one family member cannot come one week, at least there are others to help fill in.

What do you gain by volunteering together as a family? First of all, you assure that elusive but much-sought goal of quality time with each other. You share a common bond while doing something worthwhile for others. You get to know your children in new ways, and vice versa. The process of demonstrating skills and learning new ones gives all age levels the chance to respect one another, work together towards the same goals, and have something to talk about all week!

If you are already active as a volunteer somewhere, you can continue your participation with less guilt about the time you spend away from your family. Now you can be with them, and the organizations you care about will receive even more volunteer help!

## Choosing a Volunteer Project

Call a family meeting and take time to consider this whole idea. Make sure everyone, no matter how young, participates in the discussion. You might want to proceed this way:

**1.** Make a list of all the volunteering each member of the family is doing now. Would the others like to help with any of these activities?

**2.** What causes interest you? Allow everyone to suggest a community problem of concern to him or her. If some of the ideas intrigue the whole family, start exploring what organizations in your community are already working on these. Use the yellow pages, go to the library, visit the Volunteer Center, or surf the Web.

**3.** Also consider what types of work everyone wants to do. Make two lists: one for "Things We Know How to Do" and one for "Things We Would Like to Learn How to Do." Make sure something is listed for each member of the family. This is a great chance to acknowledge the talents of parents and children. These lists will also prove useful when you interview with an agency.

It may take several family meetings to complete these steps, but the conversations should be very interesting!

You will then be ready to offer your services as a family volunteer team. Call several organizations for appointments and screen your options. See whether the agency representatives are comfortable talking to your children as well as to the adults in the family. Does the agency have something meaningful for you to do as a group?

You may want to begin with a one-time activity. This will "test the waters" to see how everyone really feels about volunteering together.

Once you have committed to a volunteer project, take it seriously. Show your children that volunteer work is important and meaningful. Talk about the activity during the week and plan ahead to do it, even when things get hectic. Some of the work may introduce your children to new ideas and possibly to people different from themselves. What a wonderful opportunity to pass along your values and ethics—but only if you take the time to talk about everyone's reactions. You too may be challenged by what you experience as a volunteer. Share your feelings with your children to complete the circle of family communication.

# Divorced Parents as Volunteers

Divorce is a fact of life for a growing number of Americans. And although there are many models for joint child custody arrangements, in the majority of cases one parent becomes the primary custodian of the children. The noncustodial parent faces the prospect of short-term "visits," often over weekends or school holidays. Parenting becomes an even bigger challenge when it has to be done sporadically.

One of the frequent complaints about child/parent visits is that the noncustodial parent becomes only a playmate. The period spent together is scheduled to coincide with the child's free time, so the youngster is seeking recreation as well as what adults would label quality time.

All of the reasons why volunteering as a family unit is a good idea go double for divorced families! By selecting a mutual volunteer project, the noncustodial parent and his or her children have the chance to share something they consider special—something not done with the primary caregiving parent.

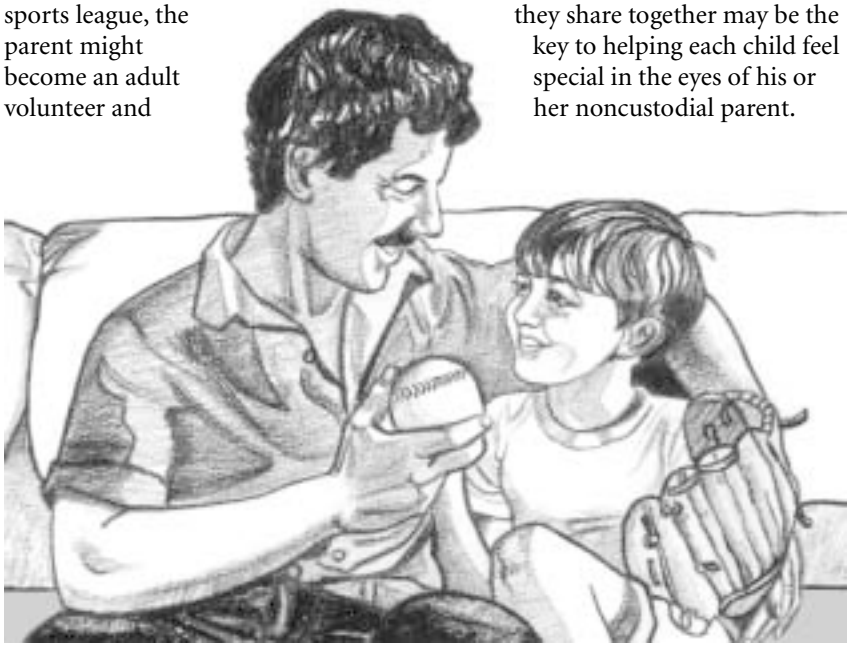
The parent and child have a purpose to some of the time they spend together beyond filling the hours with play. Of course the volunteering should be fun, but it has a meaning beyond the enjoyment of the volunteers. The parent can demonstrate values and ethics to his or her children, passing along important parental expectations that might otherwise not be elicited from an afternoon at the ballpark.

Noncustodial parents can lose track of how fast their children develop. By teaming up as volunteers, the parent can observe the youngster's skills, interpersonal ease, and other personality traits. Similarly, the child has the opportunity to get to know his or her parent in completely new ways.

Because time is precious during a visit, divorced families may not want to commit to a volunteer assignment requiring weekly attendance. Volunteering can be scheduled once a month or even seasonally at first. If the noncustodial parent lives in the same community as the children, it may be possible to arrange for joint volunteering at a time in addition to the predetermined visits. For example, if the child is active in a youth organization or sports league, the parent might become an adult volunteer and join his or her child at regularly-scheduled group activities.

As children grow into teenagers, the rationale for parent/child volunteering becomes even stronger. The much-discussed communication gap is a problem even when a teen lives under the same roof as the adult. When a parent is separated from the daily growth process of the son or daughter, it is important to find ways to become reacquainted as each new stage of maturity is reached. If the volunteer work is truly selected out of mutual interests—or perhaps in support of the younger person's concern for a cause—the volunteer activity becomes an anchor around which to maintain a relationship.

If there are several children in the family, volunteering together as a full group can be wonderful. The time may come when the parent wants to focus on an individual child, and a volunteer project they share together may be the key to helping each child feel special in the eyes of his or her noncustodial parent.



▶ A divorced father may remain active in his son's life as a volunteer to a sports league they both enjoy.

# Community Service and Academic Credit

Many high school and college students already know that volunteering is a wonderful way to explore possible careers, put classroom learning to use, and gain experience to put on a resume. Quite a number of schools, at all levels, offer students the option of receiving academic credit for community volunteer work. A growing number of schools are now requiring the performance of community service before graduation.

At the college level there is a well-established tradition of "internships" in certain academic fields. In the past, teachers, doctors, nurses, and social workers, for example, all accepted intensive field work in which to apply their academic studies.

Today, however, students with just about any major can seek courses in which community experience is valued. Sometimes this will mean having the option to volunteer for a few hours a week as a substitute in order to write a research paper. Other courses are designed specifically to support a semester's worth of community service in which the student designs a project, records progress, and submits a final report on the experience. The common denominators among the many variations of community service plans are that the volunteer work combine service and learning and that there be an opportunity for reflection during or after the experience so that the scholastic learning and volunteer experience can be mentally integrated.

At the high school level, many private and parochial schools have required community service by their students for decades. Most often such volunteering was seen as training in citizenship and moral virtues—service to others to help mold a responsible, caring adult. Today, public schools are recognizing the importance of community-based learning and the possibility of volunteer work as a motivator of students.

When public school districts enact the requirement of a certain number of hours of community service as a prerequisite for graduation, there is always debate. Some people feel that "mandated" volunteering is a contradiction in terms. They fear that students who are forced into community service will be "turned off" from the experience so that it will backfire. Instead of training the young person to engage in life-long service, the student may never want to try it again. Also, the opponents of required service point to already-overburdened schedules and question how and when students can squeeze in the time. There is also the issue of whether or not community agencies can develop truly meaningful work experiences for young volunteers.

But those in favor of requiring community service point to the positives: students gain invaluable real-world experiences and begin to understand the relevance of classroom curricula; they are motivated to study; and they gain self-esteem and new ways of interacting with adults. Apart from personal and educational growth, the students' efforts truly help community agencies—so everyone wins.

An increasing number of school districts are turning to even younger students as service providers. Programs are springing up in junior high and middle schools, while some districts have inaugurated K through 12 plans. If your children's schools are becoming involved in community service, here are a few elements to insist on to create a quality experience for everyone:

- Define "community service" clearly so that everyone agrees on what constitutes a volunteer assignment worthy of academic credit. Develop criteria for why certain agencies or assignments can and cannot be accepted for credit-bearing experience.
- Assign at least one faculty member per school to coordinate the service-learning effort. This person can work with community agencies to develop good volunteer assignments for students and can help teachers to design effective classroom support for the service work.
- Make sure there are a variety of assignments from which students can choose the agency and type of work they most prefer. This makes the opportunity more of a volunteer effort.
- Train community agency representatives in how to make students welcome and how to monitor the students' levels of learning.
- Thank everyone involved for their efforts: the students for their service to the community, the teachers for their support of the students, and the community agencies for their time in bringing students on board.

It should be noted that educators refer to student field experiences by several terms: service-learning, experiential learning, internships, and community service. The last is gaining in popularity, though it runs into the problem that the justice system uses the same phrase of "community service" to describe the work done by offenders in court-ordered or alternative sentencing programs. The recipient community agencies tend to prefer the word "volunteering" to describe all of these activities—largely because the workers they receive do not have to be placed on the payroll. From the perspective of the agency, students getting academic credit and offenders working off their sentences are both volunteers to the agency.

Whatever vocabulary you prefer, the best community service programs develop in students the desire to continue volunteering and to recognize service as a life-long option for addressing issues of concern to them. It is this learning that makes community service the ideal way to teach participatory democracy.

# Volunteering as Life-Long Learning

The pace of change is getting faster. Our formal education becomes obsolete within a decade of graduation. How do we keep up? Many social commentators have spoken of the need for "life-long learning," the process of continuing to acquire current information and skills regardless of age. Some of this can be accomplished by reading or even by observing our children. But we also learn by doing.

Volunteering is an important way for adults to engage in updating their knowledge. Surveys have shown that one motivator of new volunteer recruits is the desire to learn something new as a volunteer. Because most people volunteer in activities separate from their paying jobs, their community service offers exposure to a whole different world of experiences.

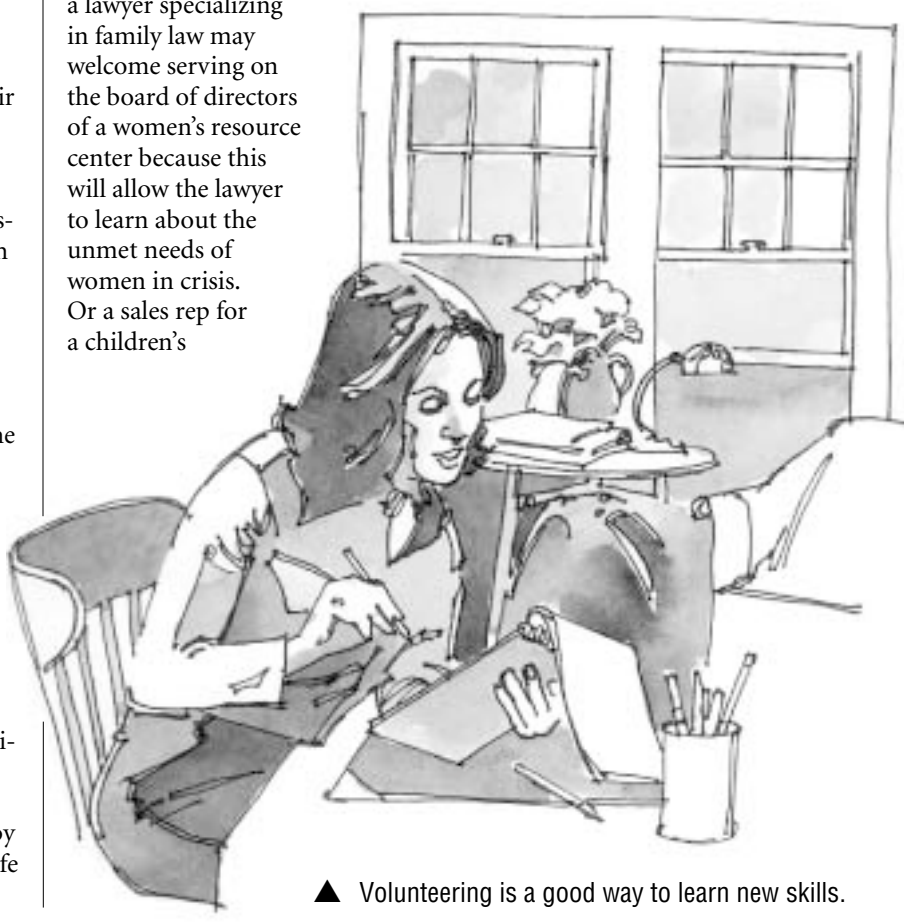
As our society grows more pluralistic, the ability to feel comfortable with diversity may be one of the most crucial skills people need to develop. Volunteer work often involves interaction with people of different backgrounds, ages, economic status, nationality—a real-life exposure to the variety of our culture.

Volunteering can also give participants hands-on practice with new technologies: computers, fax machines, teleconferencing, etc. Senior volunteers, in particular, have the chance to stay current with machines that did not exist when they were younger.

Some volunteers come to appreciate the concept of life-long learning as more colleges offer the chance to qualify for credit towards a degree by demonstrating that they have had life experiences relevant to classroom theory. This is often done through a portfolio process in which the prospective adult learner submits documentation of each life experience to be considered for college credit. Volunteer work is welcomed as an indicator of what skills the adult has learned and demonstrated.

People with career aspirations have also discovered that volunteering is part of the "fast track." Volunteer work related to their job is a low-risk way to stay in touch with trends and issues in a field as well as a source of information and contacts. For example, a lawyer specializing in family law may welcome serving on the board of directors of a women's resource center because this will allow the lawyer to learn about the unmet needs of women in crisis. Or a sales rep for a children's clothing manufacturer might volunteer in a county parks program and observe how children dress for outdoor play. These are not selfish motivations. They are legitimate by-products of volunteer service.

For all volunteers, community service provides a look behind the headlines, the chance to see first-hand exactly what problems exist in a community. Often volunteer work is the only way that someone can come in contact with certain needs or agencies. For concerned citizens this is critical learning.



▲ Volunteering is a good way to learn new skills.

# Explore a Career as a Volunteer

THERE ARE THREE STAGES at which a person might consider selecting or changing a career: as formal schooling ends; when a chosen career is no longer satisfying; or at certain major points in life, such as one's children no longer needing attention, divorce, widowhood, or retirement.

Volunteering is a marvelous way to explore possible career options. It is relatively risk-free in that you can sample a work field or setting without making a long-term commitment to it. This allows you to discover whether or not you like the work or are good at it—and if the answer is in the negative you can move on without a large investment of time.

If the answer is positive, you can increase your volunteer commitment so that you learn even more about the work and your talent for it. Eventually, volunteering can lead you to a paying job by providing contacts, references, and something tangible to show on your resume.

For new graduates, volunteering can place you a notch above your colleagues who may only be able to show prospective employers that they studied in the classroom and held minimum-wage summer jobs. Your volunteer work will demonstrate that you have practical skills, can function in a work environment, and care about your community.

For those who are tired of their present job, volunteering is a welcome change of pace. It allows you to test yourself in new situations and to see what truly interests you. It gives you the luxury to fail—the chance to risk doing something you've never done before and to learn from it, even if it doesn't work out. And again, volunteer work can go on your resume. It shows employers that you not only want to make a change in your job, but that you have already made a change and now want to expand your "extracurricular" activities into a full-time career.

If you have been out of the work force while raising a family, or took a leave due to illness or bereavement, volunteering is a door back into the workplace. It gives you the opportunity to develop self-confidence and prove that your skills are still sharp or lets you get back up to speed on newfangled developments, such as new computers or fax machines.

For the active retiree, volunteering is a second (or third or fourth) career—the chance finally to do what you thought was closed off to you because of job choices you made long ago. Experiment with volunteering and keep your talents youthful.

Volunteering can serve as the exploration of a new career if you consciously select assignments that place you in the type of setting you want to learn about, that let you work side by side with professionals you can observe and who can answer questions you may have about their career, that give as much training as you can get, and that lead to "promotions" to more challenging tasks, which you can then document to a prospective employer.

Don't approach career exploration as an end unto itself. It is a terrific benefit you derive from doing volunteer work that will also help others. By involving yourself in causes and agencies you want to succeed, you yourself will be motivated to learn more. So it is a win-win situation.

# Make Your Dreams Come True as a Volunteer

Volunteering at a hospital may fulfill your dreams of helping others.

ONE OF THE EXCEPTIONAL things about volunteering is that it allows people to live out their fantasies. Many of us secretly wish we could spend our days on Broadway, or taming lions, or saving lives. But our career paths, and maybe our true talents, may have steered us in more mundane directions. Volunteering is a way to make your dreams come true.

Instead of selecting a volunteer assignment that makes use of your professional skills, consider finding a form of community service that taps the "inner you."

Do you love show business? Well there are innumerable community theater groups, local telethons, and performing troupes that might welcome your involvement. If you can't act or sing, you might stage manage, sew costumes, or help make bookings. The point is that you would be part of the company and could at least "smell the greasepaint."

Do you love animals? There are very few paying jobs that give you lots of contact with animals. But you can volunteer at the zoo to do everything from helping the keepers to giving tours. The humane society would welcome your help in caring for unwanted pets and finding adoptive families for them.

Do you envision yourself in a white medical coat? If you can settle for blue or rose, you can volunteer at almost any hospital and be where the action is. You won't be practicing medicine, but you certainly will be helping patients to recover quickly by adding all the nice, human touches that a friendly face can provide. If you are willing to undergo intensive training, you can join an emergency squad and, even as a volunteer, you will truly save lives.

For some people, their dreams are not so dramatic. A secretary or cashier may want the chance to be a manager. By chairing a volunteer committee, coordinating a special event, or being a team captain of other volunteers, that person can finally be in charge.

Or a desk-bound person might volunteer for the National Ski Patrol and spend volunteer hours out of doors. An executive might relish the tangible accomplishment of painting a senior center after workdays spent on long-range goals. A young married couple, not yet ready to become parents, might find it "reality-testing" to volunteer supervising children and see how they all get along together.

Everyone's dreams are different, but there is a volunteer opportunity to match each one. Give yourself a change of pace. Follow the inner you.

# Volunteer Vacations

*Habitat for Humanity* volunteers use their vacation time to build houses for those in need.

Looking for a different way to spend your vacation this year? Have you considered volunteering?

A growing number of people have discovered that special volunteer projects combine travel, fun, meeting new people, and accomplishing something important all in one package. There are some organizations offering individuals and families the chance to spend a week or more helping others in an intensive way.

The options are many:

## Scientific/Archaeological Expeditions

Scientists around the world depend on the help of amateur (but dedicated) helpers to do a wide variety of tasks: work at "digs" and excavations; be the crew on sailing vessels; sort through data and artifacts; photograph activities; collect samples; conduct interviews. Volunteers often do the lowliest of assignments because special training is needed for the more advanced work, but vacationing helpers enjoy being where the action is and feeling a part of scientific work that may have a long-range effect on the globe.

## Community Improvement Projects

At any given time there are countless house-building efforts, cleanup/fix-up projects, and neighborhood beautification activities going on in the United States and around the world. Organizations sponsor work crews to come into a community, working side by side with the residents, to put intensive "sweat equity" into a local area. Volunteers do everything from pounding nails to painting fences to sowing gardens. It is hard labor, but the fun comes from communal effort, group meals, and letting off steam in the evenings.

## Medical Assistance Teams

Doctors and nurses travel around the world to bring modern medical care to underdeveloped nations. They perform operations, give inoculations, and teach disease prevention methods. Most often the medical staff are themselves volunteers on "vacation," and lay volunteers are welcomed to be assistants. Nonmedical tasks include registering patients, staffing the waiting areas, keeping children occupied while parents are being treated, and comforting patients during recuperation.

## Technical Assistance Projects

Often organized under the official sponsorship of the government, many countries request specialized assistance in technical areas of expertise, such as computers, engineering, or agriculture. If you have a needed skill, there may be an assignment for you.

## How to Find a Volunteer Vacation

Certain organizations, such as EarthWatch or Habitat for Humanity, exist specifically to match volunteers with projects needing help. Try the Internet or the library for more information. Call your local college or university science or archeology departments to see if they have notices that were sent to students. Contact the national headquarters of the major religious denominations, since some of the people-to-people projects are organized under religious auspices.

If you are interested in the work of a specific organization, try calling them directly and explaining your desire to develop a volunteer vacation. They may well create an opportunity just for you.

The majority of volunteer vacations require that you spend your own money on travel expenses though there may be scholarships available in some cases. Lodging and food are often provided on site. This vacation may not be less expensive than sightseeing somewhere, and you may return home more tired than when you left, but the memories and sense of fulfillment will be extraordinary.

# Virtual Volunteering

Virtual volunteering is the newest way to contribute your talent and obviously required the invention of the Internet to evolve. Please note that the term is not "virtual volunteers." The people are real! It's their volunteering that takes place via a computer and modem. Virtual volunteering is a variation on the theme of off-site workers and is connected to the modern employment trend of telecommuting.

Electronic methods of contributing time and talent do not substitute for real-world volunteering. Virtual volunteering allows agencies to recruit more diverse volunteers for new types of assignments. Many people want volunteer opportunities they can do at home or work, because of time constraints, personal preference, physical disabilities or home-based obligations that prevent them from volunteering on site. Virtual volunteering allows anyone to contribute time and expertise without leaving his or her home or office computer.

There are two distinct forms of virtual volunteering: technical assistance provided to paid staff or volunteers and direct contact between a volunteer and a client/recipient of service.

## Technical Assistance

Here are some examples of what volunteers can do online to contribute to the work of an agency. The list will undoubtedly expand as we all become more practiced at electronic interaction.

- Conduct online research of:
  - items/data for newsletters or grant proposals
  - information on government programs or legislation affecting agency clients
  - Web sites of similarly focused organizations
- Provide professional consulting expertise.
  - Answer human resource or other management questions.

  - Write or edit a speech.
  - Develop a marketing plan.
  - Review policy statements.
- Design a logo, newsletter or brochure, or copy edit a publication or proposal.
- Translate a document into another language.
- Prepare information for an agency's Web site.
- Register the agency's Web pages with online search engines and directories.
- Make sure a Web site is accessible for people using assistive technologies.
- Provide an online orientation to new volunteers, or survey volunteers via e-mail about their experiences with the agency.
- Conduct online outreach and advocacy:
  - Post information to appropriate newsgroups and listservs.
  - Prepare legislative alerts to be sent via e-mail.

Recruit a "cyber deputy" and experiment with some of these ideas. Remember, too, that many teenagers are intuitively comfortable with new technology and often quite capable of completing needed online projects.

## Direct Client Service

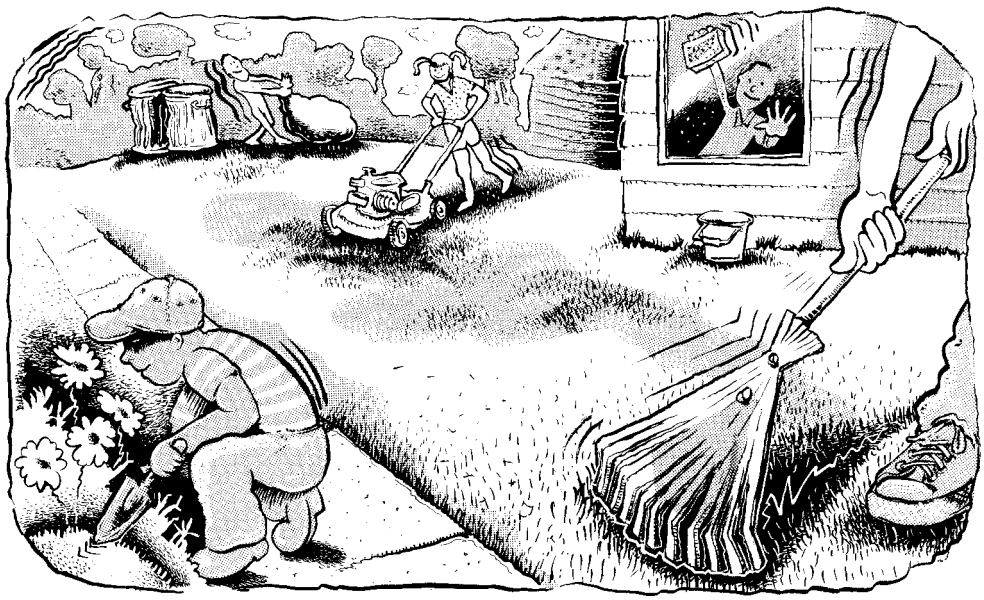
Virtual volunteering projects are exploring—and discovering—ways to offer direct services to a client/recipient of service. Some contacts may be entirely online, with no face-to-face meetings. In other cases, virtual contact is in addition to more traditional services. For example, a volunteer via e-mail or a chat room could:

- electronically "visit" with someone who is homebound or in a hospital or a rest home.
- provide online mentoring and instruction via e-mail or private electronic bulletin board (helping students with homework questions, helping an adult learn a skill or find a job or tutoring prison inmates).
- help with foreign language practice (for instance, "chat" with people learning English).
- run an e-mail or chat room answer/support line, like a phone answer/support line, where people write in questions and trained volunteers answer them.
- offer advance "welcoming" to people about to go to summer camp, enroll in a college or enter the hospital—and then, via e-mail or a special Web page, offer post-service follow-up to the same group.
- work on an online project, such as writing about the news of their neighborhoods, schools or special interest groups.
- train volunteers in a subject via the Internet (distance learning).

Another major category of virtual direct service is electronic support groups. The more unique the focus of the group, the more valuable the outreach to find isolated individuals who share the common cause. Online support group members provide comfort and advice to each other via chat rooms and e-mail, much the same as their physical world counterparts. But electronically, such support can be exchanged at any time of the day or night, with people anywhere in the world.

The Virtual Volunteering Project studies the ways volunteers are active in cyberspace and how organizations are managing them. For more detailed information, visit the Web site: www.serviceleader.org/vv

# CHILDREN AS VOLUNTEERS



EVERYONE knows that there are young volunteers, but the most common image that springs to mind at the thought of "young" is the teenage worker. The fact is that even children, 14 and younger, are active as volunteers. Sometimes we just don't see them.

Have you ever been to a fund-raising carnival or holiday bazaar and not been aware of children helping out? They may be carrying boxes or taking tickets or putting your purchase into a bag, but they are there. Sure, they are brought along by parent volunteers as a natural extension of a family event, but once on site they actively participate.

Why not take advantage of this great situation and make the process more conscious? For example, welcome the children with name tags or buttons proclaiming "volunteer." Give them some choices as to where to be stationed during the day — do they have to help where their parents are working or can they spend time at another spot? Thank them when the event is over. All of this encourages children to feel good about volunteering. It builds up a personal tradition of service that, studies show, will continue throughout adult life. And it sure makes it easier to get youngsters' help with other activities.

Apart from such occasional events, children can participate as volunteers in more formal, ongoing community service work. They can accompany other family members who do volunteer work. You might be amazed at what parent-child teams can accomplish together. They can engage in projects with youth groups ranging from Scout troops to Sunday school classes. Children have accomplished impressive things as volunteers. Just a few examples are:

- recording oral histories from senior citizens in a community;
- teaching computer orientation classes to adults;
- sharing personal experiences by writing guidebooks and making video programs for children who are in the hospital, undergoing special treatment for an illness, or coping with bereavement;
- visiting nursing home patients;
- helping people in wheelchairs on shopping mall trips;
- welcoming new immigrant children to a community;
- supporting their illiterate parents who are being tutored;
- painting murals in public spaces;
- planting flowers or vegetables in community gardens;
- raking leaves or shoveling snow for the homebound elderly;
- and collecting canned goods for food distribution programs.

Children respond enthusiastically to recruitment campaigns. They love to be needed and they know exactly when their labors have been a help to someone else. It does take time and work to coordinate young volunteers, but the rewards to the community and to the children themselves make the effort worthwhile.

# Seniors as Volunteers

VOLUNTEERING has some unique aspects when it is done by senior citizens. First, seniors bring all of their life experiences to their volunteer work and so are a remarkable source of knowledge to community agencies. They also usually have more discretionary time than younger adults and therefore can help with projects that require intensive service on weekdays.

For the senior volunteers themselves, such work may provide an opportunity to keep skills alive, to learn new things, to interact with people of all ages, to be needed, to remain active physically, or to contribute in ways the paying work world no longer welcomes. A person can volunteer for as long as she or he feels able to participate, even if the number of hours each week decreases over time.

In many ways, volunteering is a life enhancer. Studies have shown that older people's minds need to be stimulated or else a kind of atrophy can set in. Even homebound people can be active as volunteers. They can help in telephone reassurance programs or receive work to be done at home, such as crafts projects or clerical tasks.

Seniors comprise the fastest growing age group in the country. The category of "senior" is defined variously as beginning at age 60, 65, or even 55, and it continues until death. This means that a person is considered a senior for as much as 40 or more years, certainly the widest range of any stage of life.

As people get older, they develop different interests, and their physical abilities change. Volunteer work should be adapted to the changes people will undergo as part of the aging process. Some volunteers will want to remain committed to the same organization but vary their assignments. Others will switch agencies as their interests change with the decades.

Seniors have every reason to view volunteering as the opportunity of a lifetime. It is a chance for a whole second (or even third or fourth) career. As a volunteer, a person can return to interests and dreams laid aside during the years of paid work. Or a senior can explore fields unheard of when she or he was young. Volunteering keeps a senior current and involved in the future instead of in the past.

For this reason, some corporations have included volunteer work in their preretirement counseling programs. Just as people need to plan for their financial well-being after retirement, they need to organize their time. By finding a challenging volunteer assignment before ending their jobs, people find the transition into retirement easier. When they are already productively involved in new volunteer activities, they do not feel the loss of their paid work so strongly.

Staying young is a state of mind. As long as people can contribute to others and feel connected to their communities, age is relative. Many senior volunteers speak of aches and pains that disappear or at least are forgotten for a while on their volunteer shift. It is never too late to help others...and the "payoff" is a greater enjoyment of life.

Volunteering keeps a senior current and involved with others in the community.

# Twenty-Somethings as Volunteers

In the 1980s, it was in vogue to refer to upwardly mobile "young urban professionals" (the tail end of the Baby Boomers) as "yuppies." This was not an affectionate term and connoted a degree of selfishness, preoccupation with making money and lack of concern with social problems. By the 1990s, the newest group of twenty-somethings were unflatteringly labeled "Generation X" or "slackers." But the evidence shows a rediscovery of community involvement by this age category.

Certain types of volunteering attract young adults and the reasons seem clear. This age cluster wants to advance their careers and socialize with the opposite sex. So volunteer assignments with the opportunity to do one or both find the most takers. Group activities are popular, especially if a person can commit to one event at a time. Everything from staffing the phones at a telethon, spending a day rehabbing an old house or hugging a Special Olympics athlete is appealing to young adults with little discretionary time. They can contribute their sincere efforts in exchange for recreation that does someone else some good.

Because career-minded young adults often postpone parenthood while on the fast track, they are attracted to volunteer work with children. Youngsters and people in their 20s seem to relate together well on both sides. For the volunteer, this is a chance to "test" being a responsible adult with a child. When the activity offers a recreational or sports outlet, there is even more motivation to participate.

It has been noted that young adults are often skeptical of traditional forms of service delivery and prefer to practice "social entrepreneurship," creatively innovating new projects. This includes for-profit ventures with charitable goals.

Environmental concerns are important to young adults. They volunteer in disproportionate numbers for advocacy groups protesting such problems as nuclear waste removal, water pollution or wildlife destruction. Fund-raising efforts to support such causes again allow for socializing while doing good. Today's career-builder needs an excuse to enjoy leisure time.

A backlash against the career-at-all-cost values seems to be evolving. Many professionals no longer want to have their lives dominated by their corporate bosses. Transferring every year to move up the career ladder is not as appealing as growing roots in a community. Finding a "balance" between public and private life is also a concern. For all of these trends, volunteering is part of the solution. It allows people to explore new aspects of themselves and to "re-create" their energies. It seems that the busiest people do indeed need to volunteer the most.

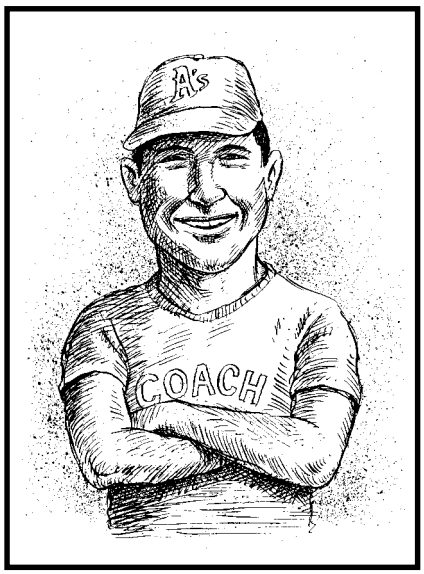
# MEN AS VOLUNTEERS

ONE OF THE STEREOTYPES about volunteering is that it is largely "women's work." Actually, men have always done a great deal of volunteer work, but when they did it they called themselves "coaches," "trustees," or "firemen." So the image of who is a volunteer revolves around labelling.

Men have always led public lives. Through their historical role in commerce and business, men became involved in all aspects of community building. They controlled the purse strings and so made decisions about how money would be spent. When the first nonprofit institutions such as colleges and hospitals were inaugurated, businessmen, clergy, and government officials gave their time as a logical extension of their civic duty.

Such volunteering enhanced the leadership status of the participants and had the added benefit of giving the men additional business contacts with each other. Most nonprofit board rooms reflected the gender of for-profit board rooms: men only. Even organizations in which women played an instrumental role, such as the Red Cross or Girl Scouts, were dominated by male board members at the start. But remember that volunteering reflects the society as a whole. Women did not have the vote, could not conduct financial affairs in their own name, and gained identity largely as wives. So it is not surprising that volunteerism perpetuated the division of labor as women handled the front-line work while the men made the decisions.

Volunteerism continues to reflect our culture today. Women have made great gains in serving on the boards of nonprofit agencies and government




commissions, while men have wider options for volunteering at every level of the organization. At one time, groups such as the Parent-Teacher Association met during the weekday, and men were therefore effectively removed from participation. Today such organizations meet in the evening or on weekends, making it possible for both sexes to join in.

Individual men express their interests and talents in just about every possible form of volunteering. They are present in all types of projects, addressing a wide range of cultural, political, and human rights issues. They can volunteer to express their nurturing side (being a Big Brother or a nursing home visitor) as well as their management-oriented skills. But there are some areas of volunteer work in which men outnumber women.

The world of sports has the active support of male volunteers. Were it not for volunteer coaches and other league organizers, youth sports programs would not exist. From Little League to playground basketball, all nonschool-based sports rely on adult volunteers. Many are males who get involved as an extension of parenting or to keep their own athletic skills going.

On the adult level too, volunteers organize amateur leagues, officiate at tournaments (particularly charity benefits), and maintain community playing fields. While women are beginning to feel welcome in such activities, men continue to comprise the majority of the volunteers.

Since most little boys want to be firemen when they grow up, it is no surprise that 80% of the nation's firefighting force is still all-volunteer. Despite the physical danger involved, this is one form of volunteering that continues to attract people. Again, women are also becoming firefighters today, but this continues to be a predominantly male activity. The same is true for emergency response teams, volunteer police auxiliary work, and neighborhood crime watches.

One of the interesting things about male volunteering is the various terms that are applied to the work — everything except the word "volunteer." For example, when doctors or lawyers give their services for free, it is labelled *pro bono publico* work (meaning "for the public good"). When businessmen serve as trustees of institutions, it is called "corporate social responsibility." Some soccer coaches whose own children are on the team would tell you that their activity is "fatherhood."

Regardless of what it is called, men give their time and efforts freely to things in which they believe. They are a valuable part of the volunteer force that aids every segment of our society.

# People with Disabilities as Volunteers

JUST AS PEOPLE WITH disabilities have demanded their rightful place in the job market and in all social contexts, they also seek involvement in the volunteer activities of their choice. People with disabilities have traditionally been the recipients of volunteer service by able-bodied people. They now want to be seen as givers as well.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates a wide range of open opportunities and public accessibility for people with many types of physical and mental differences. The terminology to describe "people with disabilities" is in flux—everything from the "differently abled" to "those with special needs" has been suggested. From a volunteering perspective, the important thing is understanding this great talent pool capable of tackling many needed jobs.

Some people are temporarily disabled. They may use volunteer work as a transition from illness to full recovery. Volunteering can be therapeutic mentally as well as physically. It can demonstrate that a person is still able to contribute, even if his or her capacities are diminished or changed. Because volunteering offers freedom of schedule, the volunteer can do as much work as he or she is able.

For those whose disabilities or differences are permanent, volunteering is one more way to integrate into the mainstream of a community. By working side by side with all types of people, the disabled volunteer broadens his or her contacts and friendships, just as any volunteer does. The diversity of volunteer assignments filled by people with disabilities is

endless, because the talents and interests of such volunteers cannot be categorized simply because they have a physical or mental problem.

One important arena for volunteer work by people with disabilities is self-help. People in wheelchairs join with others in wheelchairs to advocate for barrier-free buildings, accessible public transportation, and special activities such as wheelchair basketball. Associations of the blind, the deaf or people with a particular condition, allow members the dignity of self-determination and sharing of life experiences. Sports leagues for athletes with special needs are growing in popularity and volunteer involvement.

People who have overcome the obstacles of a disability are uniquely suited to handle certain types of volunteer assignments. For example, delinquent teenagers respond positively to the mentoring of adults in wheelchairs. Older people fearful of diminished capacity welcome the support of young volunteers for whom reduced vision or difficulty in walking has not been so limiting. Elementary school students, whose curiosity is unbounded, learn a great deal more than reading skills from volunteers who role model the potential of the future despite difficulties.

Most recently, Internet technology has opened up a whole new type of community service: virtual volunteering. Fulfilling assignments online places the able-bodied and the differently abled on an equal playing field.

Because the involvement of people with disabilities in the whole society is still a recent achievement, there are some disabled older people who have lived their lives in seclusion. They may lack the social skills necessary to join in mainstream activities. Volunteering is a great way to contribute something at one's own pace and ability while overcoming many obstacles to interaction with others.

# *Pro Bono Publico* Work

ONE SPECIAL CATEGORY OF VOLUNteering is called *pro bono publico* work. This is volunteering done by certain professions in order to provide their services to people who otherwise could not afford to pay for it. In some circumstances, pro bono work means a reduced or discounted fee, but most often it is free to the recipient. Every professional has the option of when to charge for services, and much charitable work is done on an individual basis without fanfare or publicity. But there are also projects for which members of a profession are actively recruited to contribute their services as volunteers.

The legal profession has developed many highly organized programs. The American Bar Association has a Pro Bono Involvement division, as do many of the state and larger county bar associations. Providing ease of access to legal assistance is considered a responsibility of the profession. Public law projects, storefront legal clinics, and law school community service programs all make lawyers available at no or low charge to people with limited incomes. Lawyers accept assignments on a rotating basis from the courts of litigants needing legal representation but having no funds with which to pay for it. Such arrangements may help relieve overburdened public defenders, court-appointed attorneys paid to represent defendants who are unable to afford their Constitutional right to a lawyer.

Similarly, doctors serve as volunteers in community clinics and international medical aid projects. In times of natural disasters, physicians and nurses often make themselves available to help without concern for payment. Medical professionals also offer their pro bono services to innumerable health-related nonprofit organizations, either to foster public health or to address specific diseases. They volunteer in many capacities, from serving on the board to giving speeches to schools to monitoring health and safety at special summer camps.

Almost every profession has developed similar opportunities for its members to give their skills to the community. Certified Public Accountants may help set up the financial records for minority business owners or new grassroots organizations. Architects may design public spaces such as playgrounds. Advertising firms may provide promotional campaigns for local causes.

Pro bono publico work provides volunteer assistance of all kinds. For the professionals who contribute their time, the payback can be tangible. Not only do they get the chance to truly help others, but they can demonstrate the skills of their profession to prospective clients. And over time, the respect the volunteers gain from community leadership reinforces their status within their profession.

The legal profession encourages lawyers to work on a pro bono basis for clients with limited incomes.

# Corporate Social Responsibility

The old adage that "the business of business is business" may have some truth, but it has also led to a very narrow view of the role of for-profit ventures in our society. By the 1960s, corporations, especially the largest ones, had been cast as villains—money-hungry entities without concern for their workers or for the communities they exploited.

Whether or not such an image was justified, the polarization of "big business" and the "little consumer" needed to be addressed. One response was the development of the concept of "corporate social responsibility." This concept meant that a company should become more aware of the morale of workers and of the need to open promotional opportunities to minorities and women. It meant that a company should show its concern for the environment and the proper disposal of industrial waste. And it meant an increase in corporate philanthropy.

The majority of large companies in the United States have some form of corporate charitable giving program, often organized as a separate foundation. The "giving" means money as well as in-kind donations of products, furniture, equipment, or services. The last includes offering nonprofit and government agencies a company's expertise in everything from computers to brochure design. Printing and mailing costs may also be absorbed in-house as charitable contributions.

In addition to the things that the business itself gives, there is a growing interest in encouraging individual employees to volunteer in the community. Sometimes this volunteering is supported by the company through what is called "release time"—allowing the employee to do the community service as part of the regular work day without losing pay. There are a few large corporations that have formalized this idea into an extensive "executive leave" program under which management volunteers can request up to a year's leave of absence, with full salary, to work on a special community project.

Release time is still comparatively rare in most companies, but employers can encourage volunteering in other ways too. Some businesses allow community agencies to advertise their need for volunteer help in the company's employee newsletter or through "volunteer fairs" held on-site. Other businesses have designated an employee to coordinate the company's volunteer efforts and to seek out projects for teams of employees to do together. The volunteering may take place on weekends or evenings, but the company may contribute such things as transportation, insurance, supplies, and t-shirts.

Many businesses provide recognition through banquets and awards for employees who volunteer. They may also offer support to the organizations their employees care about by "Dollars for Doers" programs in which a certain amount of cash is given to a community agency for every hour an employee volunteers there. This is comparable to employer-matching agreements, in which a company will match its employees' donations to an organization or charity.

Companies can also bring a volunteer opportunity on site by hosting a special event (like a fund-raiser, Special Olympics, or a health fair) for which employees contribute their time. Similarly, school children can be brought to the work site for tutoring or career planning.

Apart from supporting their current employees as volunteers, many businesses encourage their retirees to stay active through community work. Because pension checks keep the company and the retiree in contact, there are a variety of ways that retirees can be recruited as volunteers.

There is a growing interest in encouraging employees to volunteer in the community.

# Alternative Sentencing as Volunteer Work

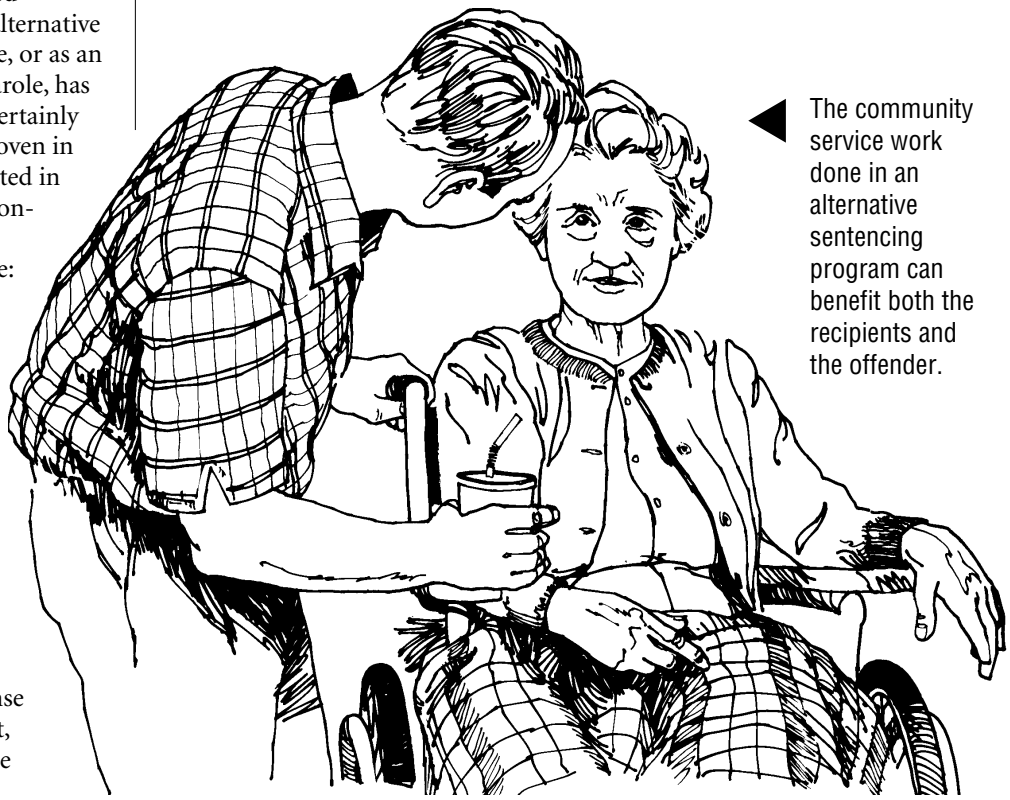
THE JUSTICE SYSTEM attempts to mete out justice. Time in jail or prison may not rehabilitate an offender or pay back a victim or the community for any wrongs done. Fines can be unjust if the wealthy pay without difficulty while the poor are forced into unnecessary incarceration. Add the issues of overcrowded correctional facilities, the desire to give first offenders the benefit of the doubt, the large number of what are considered victimless crimes, and the huge cost of constructing prisons, and the need for alternatives is clear.

The use of court-ordered community service as an alternative to a fine or prison sentence, or as an adjunct to probation or parole, has become widespread. It is certainly not a new idea and was proven in Europe before being accepted in the United States. The rationales for court-ordered community service include:

- It is a form of reparation in which the person "pays back" the community for crimes committed.
- It forces the offender to think more about misdeeds than a quickly paid fine does.
- For some offenders, the service opportunity builds self-esteem and possibly employable skills.
- Depending on the offense and the service assignment, the "punishment can fit the crime" and therefore be more fair than another sort of sentence. For example, if a purse snatcher is assigned to help in a nursing home, he or she may come away with a greater respect for the vulnerability of older people.
- For young offenders or first offenders, successful completion of a community service stint can prevent a court record.

There is some debate about whether or not alternative sentencing program participants are "volunteers." From the perspective of the judge and of the person under orders to do community service work, probably not. But from the perspective of the recipient community agency, the person is indeed a volunteer—someone who will contribute services without going on the payroll.

What is most interesting is that studies have shown a high percentage of people who begin to work in a community agency under a court order remain active as true volunteers long after their mandated time has expired. So there may be more positive motivations at work than originally expected.



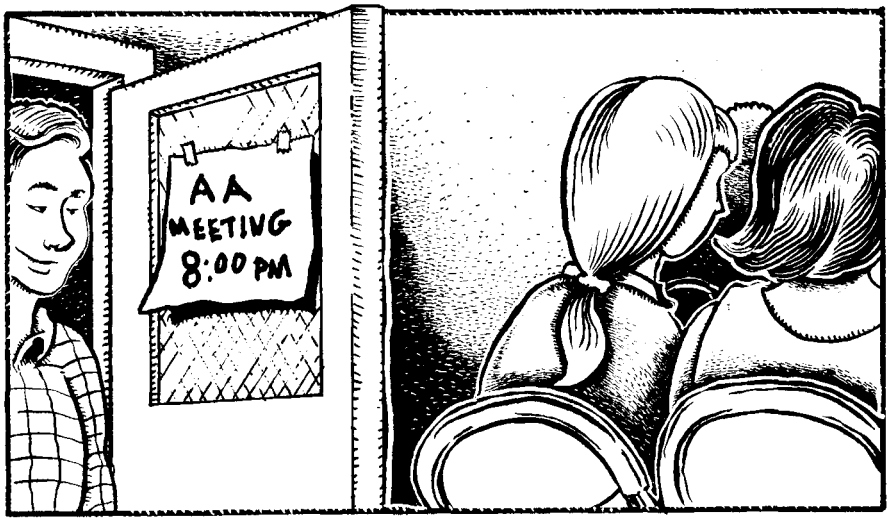
The community service work done in an alternative sentencing program can benefit both the recipients and the offender.

# Self-Help Groups and Volunteering

When we think of volunteering, we commonly think of working to help others. But an important segment of the volunteer community is what we call "self-help" groups. These are all of the organizations, often based on "12-step" programs, formed by people who share the same need and link together to benefit mutually.

By being part of a self-help group, a person finds support, understanding, and ideas for coping with problems. So there is a clear level of self-interest that motivates someone to join in the first place. But the fascinating part of the process is that, in seeking help, each member must also participate in sharing their problems with, and giving input to, the group, thereby helping the other members. So there is an exchange of support, which is why self-help groups are a form of volunteerism.

Successful self-help groups also require members to plan meetings, invite speakers, bring refreshments, develop mailings, and do all of the work necessary to keep the activity going. Rarely is anyone paid to do these tasks. Dues generally reimburse cash expenses, such as postage. Some self-help groups are sponsored by an institution or benefit from donated meeting space. This is especially true of medically-related self-help groups.




## Types of Self-Help Groups

Perhaps the oldest and best-known self-help group is Alcoholics Anonymous. It is based on the premise that people who have an addiction are best suited to help other people who have the same addiction. There are similar organizations for different addictions, such as Gamblers Anonymous and Overeaters Anonymous. Self-help efforts are also aimed at smokers, drug users, and compulsive shoppers.

Another well-established type of self-help group is for people recovering from or coping with the same disease or medical condition. These can be people who have undergone mastectomies, open-heart surgery, or other serious treatments. They may be learning to live with a lifelong condition such as arthritis, paralysis, or diabetes. AIDS and its related family of diseases have spawned a wide variety of self-help support groups for people with AIDS, for their family members, and for those with HIV infection.

Mental health problems are also often the focus of self-help groups. Some are for people who themselves suffer from an emotionally charged condition such as depression or are coping with divorce or bereavement. Others support family members who have to deal with troubled loved ones.

Self-help groups do not have to be problem-oriented. Some are formed to explore mutual spiritual and religious questions. Others are adult learning opportunities, such as computer user groups, book discussion clubs, or travellers networks.

The common denominator among all of these associations is that they are voluntarily formed, meet the needs of their members through mutual participation, and stay alive as long as volunteers do the work necessary to make them thrive.

# How to Find the Best Volunteer Work for You

Sometimes you will find yourself doing a volunteer activity just because a friend or a family member invited you to join in. Or your neighborhood, church, or synagogue planned an event, and you wanted to do your part. This type of "spontaneous" volunteering is a wonderful thing, and lots of important community work gets accomplished as a result. For participants, the activity is recreational—something fun to do on a weekend, for example.

But you may also be seeking volunteer work on behalf of a cause in which you believe. You may be willing to make a longer-term commitment so that you can see positive change. Because there are so many worthwhile causes to support, and because service organizations are often complex, you need to begin your search by doing some self-evaluation:

### What need or problem concerns you enough to give your time to it?

There may be many social issues that worry you. Which are a priority for you? Do you know what organizations address these issues in your community? Do you think they are doing a good job and deserve your support? Have you, in fact, already given them a financial donation? Or are you concerned about a cause that no one else seems to be tackling? Are you willing to be the founder of a new effort? All of these questions will help you to focus on the type of organization you want to approach with your offer to volunteer.

### What skills do you have to offer?

What types of things are you very good at (and like to do)? These can be professional skills that you apply in your paying job or hobbies that might be applicable to a community agency. Almost every type of skill is needed somewhere. The better you are at explaining exactly what you can offer, the easier it will be to find the right type of volunteer work for you.

Keep in mind that some volunteer positions will require prior knowledge of a task (such as working with a computer), but that there are a lot of volunteer assignments needing great people skills too—the ability to be a good listener, or to be nonjudgemental, cheery, or supportive.

### Do I want to use these talents in a volunteer capacity?

If you really are looking for a complete change from your everyday job, then you might not want to select volunteer work that calls upon the same skills you use every day. Be honest with yourself. It's all right to tell an organization that you would rather not "work overtime" and would prefer to contribute talents not tapped in other ways.

### What would you like to learn by volunteering?

As a volunteer, you have the freedom to experiment with new activities. Is there something you wish you had the opportunity to learn? Some organizations will gladly assign you to something out of your normal area of expertise because they know that you will be motivated by tackling something new. This is one way that volunteering is "recreational." By thinking about yourself in a different way, you approach your regular responsibilities with a fresh perspective.

### How much time do you want to give?

Before you seek volunteer work, think about your time availability. The people for whom you volunteer will need to know that they can count on you to maintain your scheduled commitment. It may be better to start with a limited number of hours of volunteer work and later expand your schedule, rather than promising many more hours than you later will be able to give.

Also, are there times during which you know you will not be available? Does your job demand extra attention at certain seasons? All of this will affect the type of volunteer work you seek.

### What are you sure you do not want to do?

It is OK to identify certain things you want to avoid as a volunteer. The happier you are about what you will be doing, the better volunteering you will perform. So don't feel that you have to say "yes" to any assignment offered. Feel free to negotiate.

Looking for volunteer work is very much like looking for a paying job—only better! Expect volunteering to be a fun way to spend your valuable time, with the added benefit of helping others. The more you know about what you want to do, the more valuable you will be to the organization you join as a volunteer.

# What to Look for in a Volunteer Assignment

IN EVERY COMMUNITY there are hundreds of organizations needing volunteers. Most of these agencies and associations are providing important services and deserve help. How do you choose the one for you? If you have done some self-evaluation before starting your search, you will know what causes you most want to support, what skills you have to offer, and what types of things you would most like to have the chance to learn. So your initial screening of the many possible places to volunteer will be based on whether you will have the chance to do what matters most to you.

Once you have narrowed the number of prospective organizations down based on your own preferences, it is time to schedule some interviews. After all, you are planning to contribute many hours to your volunteer work, so isn't it legitimate to take the time to make sure you volunteer at the best place for you? If this sounds a bit selfish, it is! But the result is that you will work harder, be most committed, and stay longer at a volunteer assignment that is right for you. The organization benefits all the more from your serious screening at the beginning.

You will learn a lot about each organization by the way they respond to your first call. Is there someone in charge of working with volunteers? Is everyone friendly? Do they know exactly what they need volunteers to do? Are they going to interview you?

## Your Role

Consider the atmosphere of the work site. Is it friendly and active? Is adequate work space available? Do you feel comfortable with the staff and other volunteers you have met during the interview process? Most importantly, will you have the chance to do what you truly want to do?

If the organization is not able to provide the elements just listed, but you are really supportive of the group and its cause, you may want to help them become more organized in the way they involve volunteers. Along these lines, be prepared to write your own volunteer job description.

Expect to interview for your volunteer position and be prepared for a possible "no, thank you" to your offer of help. You may not match their needs, and they do not want to waste your valuable time. On the other hand, be selective yourself and do not settle for a volunteer assignment that is less than what you want.

You can ask for a tour of the facility or for the opportunity to observe activities before making a final decision to volunteer. Discuss the extent of your initial commitment, including the number of hours per week needed to do the work well. Take your time now, before you begin, so that later you will be happy with your choice and dedicated to the volunteer work.

## Assessing the Organization

You can expect several supportive things from any organization with which you might volunteer. These include:

- A clear (preferably written) description of what they want you to do as a volunteer. This should include a title for the position.
- Goals and objectives for each assignment, including manageable deadlines.
- Someone who is identified as your contact within the organization, so that you know who to go to with your questions and concerns.
- An orientation, plus opportunities for training and for exposure to new experiences.
- Periodic, two-way feedback on how the work is going.
- Open acceptance of your thoughtful input, including suggestions and criticisms as well as a desire for your physical help.
- Honesty in explaining the amount of time and effort necessary to be successful.

# What Is a Volunteer Center?

More than 400 communities in the United States and Canada have a Volunteer Center to help organizations and prospective volunteers find each other. Volunteer Centers do not all share the same name. Some variations are: Voluntary Action Center, Volunteer Bureau, or Volunteer Placement Service. There is also a wide variation in the types of services Volunteer Centers provide, but the basic services include the following:

- Volunteer Centers collect information from agencies and organizations about their volunteer needs. They then maintain databases, often on computer, so that prospective volunteers can identify possible placement sites. This "clearinghouse" function can include publishing various directories or lists of volunteer opportunities in print and, increasingly, online.
- Volunteer Centers will help individuals and groups seeking volunteer work by offering them the use of their databases, talking to them about what is happening in a particular community, and sometimes conducting an initial personal interview. They may sponsor "volunteer fairs" at shopping malls or places of business, bringing together displays and representatives of agencies seeking volunteers so that the public becomes aware of the opportunities.
- Volunteer Centers coordinate annual "thank you" events to recognize the efforts of community volunteers. This is often done in April, during National Volunteer Week (when much national and local publicity is generated about volunteers, starting with a Presidential proclamation).
- Volunteer Centers provide training and consultation to leaders of volunteers in how to work effectively with their nonpaid staffs. This can include workshops and conferences as well as on-site technical assistance.

Apart from these basic, core services, Volunteer Centers do many other things, depending on the needs of their communities. They may organize holiday toy drives, place court-referred volunteers, run special projects for students or seniors, or provide the local newspaper with a weekly column of volunteer opportunities.


## How to Find Your Volunteer Center

Volunteer Centers are listed in the telephone book. Try any of the variations in name listed to the left. You can also access a list of Volunteer Centers by state online at http://www.pointsoflight.org.

Volunteer Centers may be found through their sponsoring agency if they are a division of a larger group. The most common sponsor is the United Way, so try your local United Way if you do not find a telephone listing for a separate Volunteer Center. Other sponsors may be the American Red Cross, the Junior League, or your municipal government. A growing number of Volunteer Centers are run by the Mayor's Office or as a part of county government.

If you are a senior citizen (or trying to help one), see if you can find a listing for RSVP, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program. Although RSVP is not a full Volunteer Center, its purpose is to help older Americans find meaningful volunteer work. If you are placed through the RSVP you receive the benefit of travel reimbursement and insurance.

If you are a college student, see if your campus runs a volunteer placement service. As more and more universities try to encourage students to do community service as well as study, there are a growing number of programs designed to connect students with local agencies needing their help.

# What Is a Director of Volunteers?

Very often when you contact an organization to offer your services as a volunteer, your call will be referred to the Volunteer Department or to a person with the title of "Director of Volunteers." There are many variations on this title, such as "Coordinator of Volunteer Services" or "Community Resources Director." In some agencies the person who fulfills this role may be responsible for other functions as well: human resources, resident activities, chaplaincy, or some other direct service to clients. Regardless of the name of the department, the person who serves as the "director of volunteers" will be an important link between you and the organization.

As organizations grow in size and complexity, it becomes necessary to structure how individuals can participate as volunteers. Think about it. How realistic would it be to turn up in a hospital lobby with a bowl of chicken soup and ask "who needs a hand?" You need an avenue for learning what work there is to be done and whether or not you can help. That's the most important way the director of volunteers serves you.

A director of volunteers does the following things to enable volunteers to be productive:

- works with the employees, volunteers, and clients to identify needs;
- writes volunteer job descriptions to clarify assignments, requirements, schedules, etc.
- recruits new volunteers and interviews candidates;
- helps candidates determine if the volunteer work is right for them;
- orients new volunteers and makes sure that each person gets some training in their particular assignment;
- maintains records on all contributed volunteer service;
- makes sure that all volunteers are thanked for their work;
- acts as a liaison between volunteers and permanent employees or any other volunteers who supervise them;
- evaluates the success of volunteer involvement and the impact of individual volunteers;
- provides a channel for volunteer input, such as new ideas, recommendations, or criticisms.

In many ways, the volunteer office acts just like the personnel office, although it is only for "nonpaid personnel." Consider the director of volunteers your ally in advocating change. But don't forget to share praise and good news too!

# If You're Under Age 18

Are you interested in becoming a volunteer but wonder what's available for you because you're under age 18? Good news! Volunteering gives you the chance to work to your level of competency, not your age.

## Ways to Get Involved

You have choices. One option is to join a youth organization that includes service to others in its mission. As a member, you'll get to participate in group volunteer projects with other young people. This gives you a circle of friends as well as service opportunities. Look into youth groups at the YMCA, your place of worship, Girl or Boy Scouts, Camp Fire, etc. Even if some of these organizations sound like they focus on younger kids, you may find that their programs for teens open lots of new doors.

Another option is to become involved through your school. Is there a club or extra-curricular service group that does volunteer work? What about student government? If you are required to do community service before you graduate from high school, there is probably a resource or a coordinating office to help you find nearby agencies that accept student help.

Do your parents or other family members volunteer? Have you ever asked them if you can go along? They may be surprised that you want to share their interests.

Last, but certainly not least, you can volunteer on your own. The most important thing is to figure out what interests you—which causes, agencies, types of work. Then you can focus your search on those organizations that meet your wishes. There are so many ways to make a difference—take your time to find the one that's right for you.

## Offering Your Services

There are many volunteer programs that will welcome your participation, either in special youth assignments or side by side with adult volunteers. Most of the time you will begin by talking with the agency's "Director of Volunteers," the person responsible for interviewing and placing people who want to get involved.

- Expect to complete an application form that asks about your experience and interests. During the interview, answer questions honestly, and don't be afraid to ask questions of your own. Talk about what you most want to learn by volunteering or about the things you most want the chance to do. If you hoped to work directly with young children but the Director of Volunteers says that you'll be doing messenger work, speak up. Remember that there are many agencies, and you can keep scheduling interviews until you find volunteer work you want.
- Be sure to discuss any special needs you have. How will you get to the work site? Does your volunteer schedule have to coincide with a bus schedule? Will you be able to work during school holidays? What about the summer? Do you need reimbursement for any transportation or clothing expenses ?(Some agencies can pay for these things.)
- You should expect to be given a permission slip for your parents to sign. Don't be offended. Many agencies feel required to make sure that your parents are aware of and agree with your volunteer work. The law (and most insurance companies) hold your parents responsible for your actions. Note, however, that you do not need working papers to do volunteer work.

## Sell Yourself!

You may find that some organizations are reluctant to offer you a volunteer job because of your age. If you are really interested in their work, sell your qualifications! Let the Director of Volunteers know if you have good grades, have held part-time jobs or have done other volunteer work.

Describe your skills. The following are all very appealing to agencies needing volunteer help:

- speaking a foreign language
- understanding computers—something that many adults don't know
- being friendly and liking people
- not minding work that's dusty or requires wearing old clothes.

If you meet someone who is really prejudiced about young people—move on! But sometimes you can show an adult that you'll be a great member of a team. And then you'll have created a new role for yourself as a volunteer.

# Taking Volunteering Seriously


IF YOU HAVE SPENT TIME seeking out the best volunteer opportunity for yourself, be sure you are the best volunteer possible. Take your commitment as seriously as you do for any other responsibility you accept.

Keep your promises. Honor your volunteer schedule, even if other things demand your time. People count on your presence and being undependable hurts the work that needs to be done. If you cannot volunteer as planned, call to give as much notice as possible.

Follow through on tasks you have accepted. Many types of volunteer commitments require independent action in between committee meetings or other on-site activities. Progress is possible only if each volunteer completes his or her portion of the work within agreed deadlines. Say yes only to tasks you can handle and make every effort to contribute equally.

Another responsibility of a good volunteer is to express dissatisfaction so as to improve things—not keep quiet and ultimately leave out of frustration. In most cases, everyone in an organization shares a mutual concern for achieving goals. Therefore, if you feel something is wrong or have a suggestion for doing things in a better way, you can make an important contribution by advocating change. One of the benefits of being a volunteer is that you can offer criticism with greater freedom than an employee can—so make use of your position.

As long as you volunteer for an organization, its members have the right to expect loyalty from you. This includes voicing any disagreement you have directly to the leadership, rather than complaining to others who have no power to make changes. It also means keeping internal decision-making confidential until the time is right for announcing plans publicly.

If you are asked to complete paperwork as part of your volunteer assignment, be cooperative. Many groups ask volunteers to "sign in" or submit regular written reports about their activities. Although you may find such tasks tedious, understand that the organization needs to document the involvement of volunteers. By helping in the collection of data you may actually be doubling your contribution to the agency, since many funding sources give extra dollars to "match" the amount of donated volunteer time. If you really dislike filling out the report forms, offer to work on revising them to be less tedious but still useful.

Talk about your volunteer work with your friends and family. The best recruiting campaign is one-to-one. As a satisfied volunteer, you can motivate others to help too. Encourage further support of the organization in which you volunteer by inviting friends to become active with you.

# Making an Impact as a Volunteer

As a volunteer, you have power. Because you share your time and energy with an organization, you earn the right to be heard. How can you exercise this ability?

## Influencing the Organization

Volunteers tend to see themselves at both ends of the "organizational chart." Board members are at the top, with real authority to make decisions. It is the legal responsibility of board volunteers to run the organization in the best possible way, ethically and financially. If you are a member of a board, be sure you exercise your leadership.

But many "front-line" volunteers feel they are at the bottom of the decision-making ladder, particularly when a paid staff handles most of the daily workload. In reality, any volunteer can influence an organization by making suggestions, voicing constructive criticism, and sharing the comments made by others. Learn the chain of command and work within it. Offer practical recommendations, not complaints.

## Influencing Legislators

As a volunteer, you are an "insider/outsider." This means that you understand, first hand, what the organization does and needs, but you also remain a concerned citizen. This gives you the right to lobby on behalf of the organization: write letters to legislators or attend or testify at hearings. The paid staff is heard differently than you are because they may be perceived as trying to save their jobs. You, as a volunteer, are seen as having no vested interest in advocating the cause. So you may be able to influence legislators more effectively.

## Influencing Donors

In the same way, fund-raising is much more successful when a volunteer asks for money than when an employee does. You can present the "case" for a donation on the basis of true concern for the cause. You have already given your time to this group (and probably also some money) and thus speak from sincere commitment. You are simply asking others to join you.

## Influencing the Public

As a volunteer, you are the best public relations agent an organization can have. Do you talk about your volunteer work with others? Do you encourage people to give money or to volunteer themselves? Are you informed about all the services your agency offers so that you can connect people in need with those services? This type of active support is one more way you can make a contribution to your organization.

# Putting VolunteerWork on a Resume


When you are looking for a job, the purpose of your resume is to get your foot in the door. It is your first "representative" to a potential employer, and you want it to stand out from the resumes of the other applicants. One way to capture the interest of an employer is to demonstrate that you are an involved citizen—someone who works to make the community a better place to live. In other words, make sure your volunteer work shows up on your resume.

It is a common misconception that there is only one "right" way to design a resume. Actually, particularly as you get older, the most important thing is to present the information in such a way as to document and support your career goal. If you tell a prospective employer that you want a particular job, your resume must prove that you are the right candidate to fill it. Sometimes your paid work history may not be as important as what you have done as a volunteer in demonstrating that you have the necessary job skills.

One approach used by many people is to add a section to their resumes called "Community Service" or "Volunteer Work." They list the highlights of their volunteering here to show that they have interests outside of their employment history. This is certainly better than ignoring volunteer experience on a resume, but it is not the best way to use what you have learned as a volunteer.

Consider integrating your volunteer work into the section of your resume called "Work Experience." This is not a lie—even if you were not paid a salary and did not consider the volunteering to be "employment," it certainly was productive work and should count as experience. The key is to translate what you gained from the volunteer activity into the language of the paid work world.

First, do not use the word "Volunteer" as though it were a job title. It should be used as an adjective, not as a job title. If you were a tutor, use the title "Tutor." If you coordinated a project, identify your work accurately as "Project Coordinator."

Next describe the volunteer work in terms of your accomplishments, highlighting the skills that you learned and demonstrated. What would be important to the work world about what you did? For example, did you raise $100,000? Did you manage a budget, supervise a staff of people (even if they too were volunteers, you still needed the ability to be a motivating leader) or accomplish goals on time? All these sorts of things impress an employer.

Take the time to analyze what you learned as a volunteer. Did you have the chance to practice public speaking, write reports, news releases, or newsletters, plan projects, coordinate subcommittees, or train others to do the work? Such skills are applicable to just about any professional setting.

Describe your activities and achievements fully. You do not need to say they were done as a volunteer, though you are welcome to do so. If you feel uneasy about representing volunteer work as equivalent to a full-time paid job, you can identify the volunteering as being part-time. Be honest, don't overstate what you did, but also be sure to give yourself the credit you deserve.

If you are a student seeking a first job, being able to show volunteer work on a resume demonstrates that you had interests beyond the classroom. If you are returning to the paid work force after some time away, your volunteer activities prove that you kept yourself sharp and involved, even if on a chosen schedule. If you want to change career fields, it may be your volunteer work in the new field that tells a prospective employer you're worth the risk, even if all your paid employment history is in some other field.

Be unapologetic in giving space on your resume to volunteering. Since the whole goal of a resume is to get you an interview, think how more interesting your face-to-face conversation will be when you add in all those community activities to show who you really are.

# The Role of the President

As the top elected officer of an all-volunteer group, you have taken the risk of putting yourself in front of your peers—not to mention accepting the time-consuming responsibilities of the position. And you are a volunteer yourself! The specific job description of president or chairperson will vary from organization to organization, but the following are general considerations in setting the best tone for member/volunteer participation.

- Being a volunteer leader of a volunteer group is a balance between being fair to everyone and being in charge.
- The president expresses the vision of the organization and must therefore be articulate about its mission, purpose and activities.
- The president's responsibility is to the will of the majority of the members—while finding ways for minority opinions to be heard and incorporated.
- The president is allowed to have an opinion, too, but this should not always represent one point of view to the exclusion of others. All discussions should be moderated fairly, and the leader should actively encourage different perspectives to be voiced and heard.
- It is critical to conduct organization business in the open. Every member should know who is influencing the leader and have an equal chance at such influence. Avoid insider circles.
- The leader is the one to whom problems are brought. Dealing with problems directly when they arise and with the people involved is only momentarily painful. On the other hand, allowing problems to fester hurts everyone and blocks progress. Remember that you provide support to every volunteer who is doing things right when you deal with a member who is doing things wrong.
- *The president has internal responsibilities:*
  - motivating members
  - stimulating discussion at meetings
  - setting goals
  - delegating tasks
  - encouraging future leaders
  - abiding by policies
- *The president has external responsibilities:*
  - representing the group to the public
  - representing the group to similar organizations
  - developing collaborative relationships
  - learning new trends and issues and reporting them back to the group (…which returns us to the list of internal responsibilities!)
- ***The president is both a maintainer of the traditions and decisions of the past and an innovator of new ideas. These may be conflicting challenges at times.***
- ***The leader should be cautious of the reputation of the organization but should also accept necessary risk. This means encouraging members to be public advocates for important issues of mutual concern.***

Finally, personal interest shown by the president is very important to members. It is genuine recognition for the individual and builds commitment to the organization. Future leaders will rise from the ranks only if officers seek out promising members and encourage them to test their potential. A leader is a mentor.

# MEETINGS...UGH!

Do you dread meetings? Would you enjoy volunteering more if you could just do the work and not have to sit and talk about it? You are not alone if meetings frustrate you. Some common complaints are:

- too much talk and not enough action.
- not sticking to the agenda.
- starting late and ending late.
- absent members delaying decision-making.
- the chairperson losing control of the meeting.
- certain people monopolizing the discussion.
- hidden agendas.
- so little is accomplished that the meeting is a waste of time.

Meetings are not planned to be frustrating. In fact, there are some excellent reasons why it is important to hold a meeting:

- It permits consistent communication at the same time to everyone involved in a project.
- It allows for consensus on objectives and strategies.
- It evokes brainstorming—one idea triggers another idea and the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.
- It provides for group decision-making, which leads to shared responsibility for actions taken.
- It helps to divide the work equitably.


So how can you make sure the good things happen while the negative things are minimized? If you are responsible for arranging or running a meeting, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Make sure there is a good reason for holding a meeting. If there is nothing new to say, cancel it.
- Develop a realistic agenda (with a suggested amount of time for each item of business) and stick to it.
- Keep minutes that record decisions reached and work assignments made, and begin each meeting by reviewing progress on previous assignments.
- Decide in advance your expectations of one another in terms of attendance at meetings and work to be done in between meetings. What will be the consequences of not doing the work?
- Ask for progress reports from everyone, including members who cannot attend a particular meeting.
- Remind everyone in attendance that any committee member—not just the chairperson—can keep a meeting on track by returning to the agenda, reviewing the minutes, or asking to move on.
- Applaud progress as it occurs so that everyone can feel good about the work already done. A large project won't usually be completed quickly, so it is important to feel some sense of accomplishment along the way.
- Treat one another with respect for the fact that you are volunteers, doing this work above and beyond all of your other responsibilities.
- Have fun at your meetings. It is possible to be serious about the task at hand and still enjoy doing it together. Humor is a great motivator.

# If You're a Committee Chair...

BEING AN ACTIVE VOLUNteer probably means that you have attended zillions of meetings. You've probably also found yourself thinking: "If I were chairing this committee, I'd do things differently." One of these days you may get your chance.

What is the role of a chairperson? Every organization will assign some specific responsibilities to those who chair committees, but some functions are universal regardless of the type of committee involved.

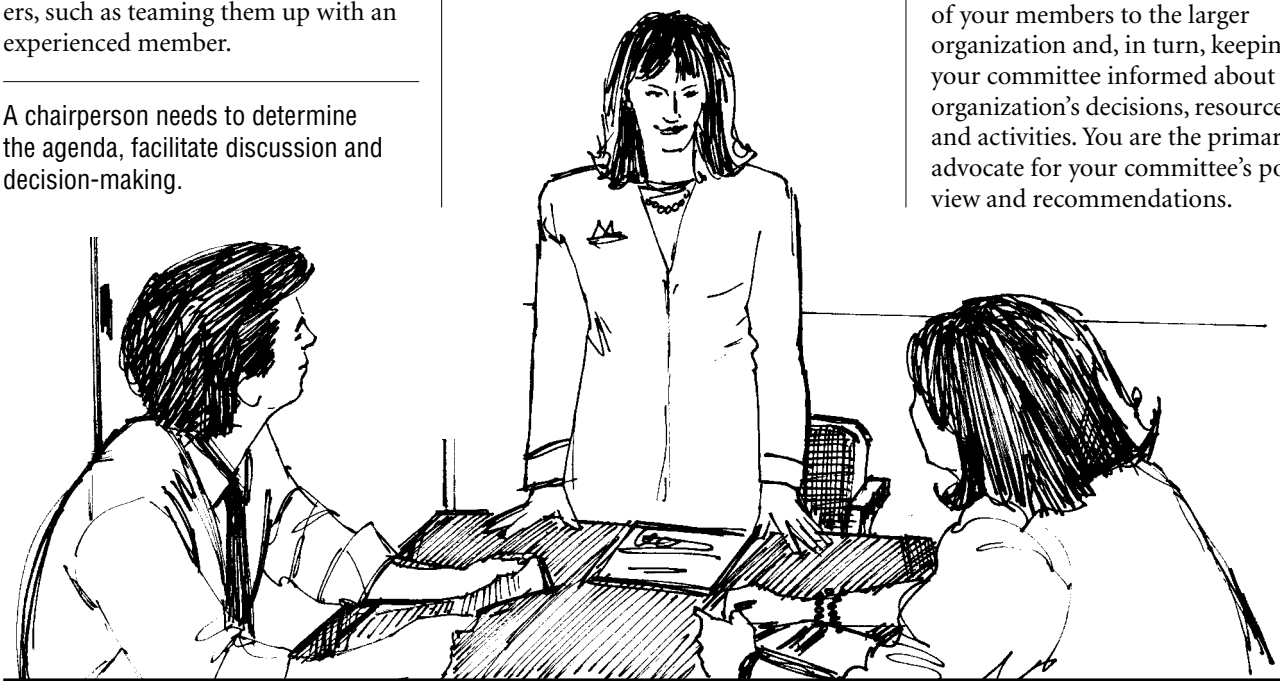
Usually, the chair has a major role in recruiting committee members and making sure that newcomers are brought up to speed. You can be most effective if you tell the truth about the amount of work you expect from committee members. It does you little good to convince someone to join by minimizing the effort required. Have a written job description of the role of the committee and of each member. Develop a plan for orienting newcomers, such as teaming them up with an experienced member.

The chairperson also organizes and conducts committee meetings. This includes several critical tasks:

1. Determining the agenda: selecting the most important things to discuss, making sure they can be handled in the time available, sequencing them logically, etc.
2. Watching the clock: starting on time, moving through the agenda efficiently (but not rushing important discussions), leaving time to review decisions made and tasks assigned, and ending on time.
3. Facilitating the discussion: assuring that everyone has a chance to speak, limiting those who tend to monopolize discussions, maintaining an open, welcoming tone, containing (but not stifling) disagreements. The chairperson also serves as a good listener and helps to restate important points, synthesize different comments, and clarify differences of opinion.
4. Assuring that decisions are reached: sensing when enough discussion has occurred to call for a vote and not moving on to another topic before closing out the one at hand.
5. Recognizing the contributions of members: thanking members for their reports and efforts and acknowledging special accomplishments.

Equally important as your role at meetings is following up between meetings. As chair, you need to contact absent members to urge participation and to learn about their progress on assigned tasks. You can also motivate members and offer help on work to be done. Committee members will most likely want you to be accessible to answer questions.

There is one more responsibility of a chairperson: representing the committee to the sponsoring organization. This means reporting the work of your members to the larger organization and, in turn, keeping your committee informed about the organization's decisions, resources, and activities. You are the primary advocate for your committee's point of view and recommendations.



A chairperson needs to determine the agenda, facilitate discussion and decision-making.

# The Role of the Volunteer Treasurer

Almost every organization, no matter how small, collects and spends money to conduct its activities. Someone has to keep the books and pay the bills. If the organization is large enough to have a paid staff, such tasks may well be handled on a day-to-day basis by an employee. For smaller groups, a volunteer treasurer normally does these things. If you are elected treasurer, what are your responsibilities?

In a nonprofit organization, all members of the volunteer board of directors are equally responsible for financial management. The treasurer of the board is elected to focus on this critical area as a primary assignment, but the entire board shares accountability. One of the more important aspects of being a treasurer is to make the board understand that what has been delegated to you is simply more detailed oversight of the organization's financial transactions. Everyone must read your treasurer's report, ask questions, and be knowledgeable about the financial status so as to make appropriate management decisions.

What is the job description of a volunteer treasurer? Your main purpose is to manage and report on the organization's finances in addition to carrying out the responsibilities common to all board members. A treasurer has several important duties:

- **Maintain all bank accounts.**

This means such tasks as selecting a bank, signing checks, and making sure excess funds are invested prudently.

- **Provide oversight of all financial transactions.**

Are bills being paid on time? Are there outstanding bills? Is there a system of internal control so that no one person is in a position to have unrestricted access to the organization's funds? Does anyone owe money to your organization? The treasurer needs to know the answers to these sorts of questions and to develop systems to keep the cash flow manageable.

- **Monitor the budget.**

The treasurer usually works with other leaders to develop the annual budget and then, throughout the year, compares actual revenues and expenses to what was budgeted.

- **Report to the board of directors and general membership on finances.**

The treasurer keeps everyone informed of the organization's financial condition. Are revenues and expenses more or less than expected? Is there enough money with which to conduct the programs of the organization? Are there sufficient reserves for unexpected expenses? Should the board anticipate increases or decreases in cash flow at certain times of the year?

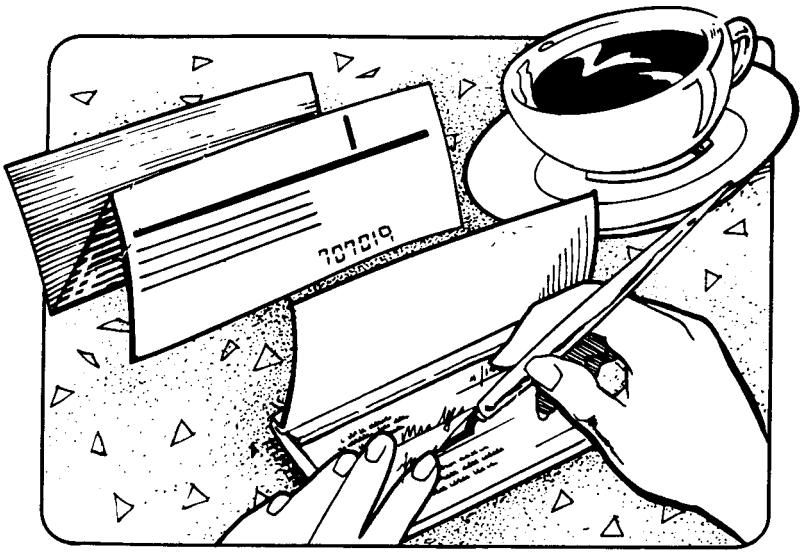
- **Prepare any required financial reporting forms.**

There may be required tax forms to submit to the state or federal government, audit reports to submit to funding sources, and other legal forms. The treasurer must be aware of reporting requirements and must see to it that the organization complies in a timely fashion.

While it helps to have a treasurer who can balance his or her own checkbook, additional qualifications are helpful:

- the ability to keep neat and accurate records;
- a willingness to pay attention to detail;
- availability to handle transactions on a timely basis;
- and a willingness to ask questions, even if this means being an irritant to some!

Always remember that you are handling other people's money: that of your members and donors. This is why board members are often called "trustees." They maintain the public trust and assure that an organization will be managed in an ethical, legal, and financially responsible manner. As treasurer, you are a critical leader in this effort.



# The Volunteer Secretary

## And the Value of Minutes

Have you ever tried to recruit someone to be a volunteer secretary for a committee or a board? You'll often hear a lot of moans and groans. This is because the secretary is usually the person who is supposed to take minutes, and this is seen as a thankless task.

Actually, there is something to be said for the "power of the pen." Taking minutes is a crucial responsibility, because those pages become the historical memory of the organization. The way a secretary records the discussion and decisions reached during a meeting often affects the long-range actions of those who come after.

There is a way to simplify the minute-taking process and, at the same time, transform minutes into much more important "action plans." After all, minutes have a more immediate use than to keep a record of what was done at past meetings: they document what the group wants to do as a result of decisions reached.

Consider creating a standardized Meeting Action Plan form, laid out in columns. (In case you are wondering, Roberts Rules of Order do not prescribe the "look" of minutes. You are free to write them in whatever format you choose.)

In a typical Meeting Action Plan form, column one is for "Subject." The secretary can develop key words for topics that come up frequently on the agenda. By using these key words at the left, the first column becomes a quick-reference "index" to the minutes.

Column two is the widest and is labelled "Discussion." Here is where the secretary summarizes points made during the discussion of each subject.

The next three columns are the most important: "Decision Made," "Next Steps," and "Who and When." The secretary can make sure that no committee or board moves on to a new subject without completing these three columns first — a real help to the chairperson in controlling the agenda.

The "Decision Made" column forces the group to conclude the discussion and either vote, reach consensus, or formally postpone a decision on the issue. (If required, the secretary can write in the actual motion made, the mover, the seconder, and the vote tally.) Once a decision is reached, the group should consider what steps must be taken next to put that decision into effect.

The last column is critical. The group must determine who will do these action steps and by when. If a task is delegated to someone absent from the meeting, the minutes should also record who will ask that member to do it.

If a group has discussed a subject, reached a decision, and listed the necessary steps to implement it, but then no one wants to do it, maybe the group has reached the wrong decision. Too often meetings end with lots of talk but unclear follow-through delegation. The secretary can be invaluable in assuring that a group sticks to its planning task, simply by using this type of minutes/Meeting Action Plan form.

The time to approve these minutes is not at the next meeting. Then it will be too late. Take a few moments before adjourning to review the last three columns. This will make everyone clear about the decisions made at this meeting and will affirm that everyone knows what they agreed to do before the next meeting. (People without an assigned task might also be recruited to help.)

At the start of the next meeting, begin by reviewing the action plan from the previous meeting to refresh everyone's memory again on their previous assignments.

Doesn't this sound like a much more active role for a secretary?

# Being a Good Committee Member

Have you ever said: "I don't mind being on that committee, but I don't want to chair it?" This is because we think of the chairperson as having a much bigger role to play than the ordinary member of a group. Of course, there are added responsibilities in accepting a leadership position, but there is a lot to do as a committee member too.

Good followers are as important as good leaders. After all, organizations have far more ordinary members than officers. Without active, participating members, organizations cannot accomplish their goals. How can you be a good member?

Organizations require active and participating members to accomplish their goals.

- Participate with enthusiasm.
- Offer your time and your good thinking. Don't wait to be asked.
- Contribute as many creative ideas as possible.
- Voice your concerns openly at meetings, not behind the scenes afterwards. Recognize that thought-out dissent is healthy and usually leads to better decision-making.
- Give your leaders feedback on their actions. This includes thanking them for their hard work on your behalf.
- Read material that is sent to you ahead of time. Come prepared to talk at meetings.
- Respond to mailings as soon as possible, including paying dues on time. Save your leaders the time and expense of second notices.
- Make every attempt to attend meetings on time. If you must be absent, call in advance to explain, and send in your report anyway.
- Help the chairperson to stick to the agenda and to control members who tend to go off on tangents.
- Follow through on your commitment to complete work.
- Know your limits and say "no" if you truly cannot handle a task requested of you.
- Tell others about your organization and encourage them to join too (or to give a donation).
- Welcome new members warmly. While you have a right to volunteer to be with people who are already your friends, try to avoid forming an "insiders" clique.
- Volunteer to implement some of your good suggestions.
- If you do not know how to do something, ask for training.
- If you are experienced in doing something, offer to be the trainer.

Passive members give their leaders more work than is necessary. Members who participate on their own initiative help their organizations to prosper and have more fun too.

# A Report Card for Board Self-Assessment

The following is a tool for opening up a discussion among board members as to their performance collectively and individually throughout the year. Using the old grade-school "report card," ask everyone to assign a grade (A to F) to each board function, first to the board acting as a group and then to himself or herself individually. You can do this anonymously, if desired. Later collect the cards and tally the grades. Then talk about the different perceptions. Make plans for improvement where needed.

## BOARD REPORT CARD

**For Period Ending:**_____

### *Performance of the Entire Board*

| **Everyone's:** | **GRADE** |
|---|---|
| 1. dedication to the organization's mission | _____ |
| 2. effectiveness of meetings | _____ |
| 3. knowledge of the organization's history, bylaws and policies | _____ |
| 4. performance in a crisis | _____ |
| 5. teamwork and interpersonal relations | _____ |
| 6. monitoring of organization activities | _____ |
| 7. working relationship with the executive staff | _____ |
| 8. ability to deal with conflicting opinions | _____ |
| 9. fiscal accountability and oversight | _____ |
| 10. representing the organization to the community | _____ |
| Overall Performance | _____ |

Three adjectives that describe the present board are:

_____

_____

_____

Two achievements of the board this year are:

1. _____

_____

_____

2. _____

_____

_____

### *Personal Performance*

| **My:** | **GRADE** |
|---|---|
| 1. dedication to the organization's mission | _____ |
| 2. attendance at meetings (including tardiness and early departures) | _____ |
| 3. knowledge of the organization's history, bylaws and policies | _____ |
| 4. willingness to share opinions openly at meetings while difficult subjects are under discussion | _____ |
| 5. personal relations with other board members | _____ |
| 6. amount of preparation done for board meetings | _____ |
| 7. amount of follow-up work done between meetings | _____ |
| 8. openness to change | _____ |
| 9. personal financial donation to organization | |
| 10. representing the organization to the community | _____ |
| Overall Performance | _____ |

Three adjectives that describe my own approach to board membership are:

_____

_____

_____

The reasons I am still on the board (or just joined) are:

_____

_____

_____

# GETTING OTHERS TO VOLUNTEER

If you have been asked to recruit others to volunteer, don't worry. After all, someone was successful in recruiting you, right?

Here are some tips in motivating people to say yes:

- Be motivated yourself. Sincerity wins out over technique every time.
- Be clear on what you want people to do. Use written volunteer job descriptions whenever possible. These tend to raise the status of the work to be done and assure that you tell the same information to each candidate in the same way.
- Use titles. The word "volunteer" is a pay category, not a function. It is much more appealing to be asked to become a "tutor" or a "picnic coordinator" or something else definable, than to simply be asked to become a "volunteer."
- The more specific you can be, the better. If you ask the general question "Who wants to volunteer?," what are you telling people about the job you need to fill? On the other hand, if you ask "Who wants to prepare for the legislative hearing next month?," you give people a chance to consider if they might be interested in a specific task they might be ideal for.
- Be honest. Tell prospective volunteers what the work entails, even if you think it may sound like a lot. Be careful to avoid minimizing the work, such as saying "this will only take a few hours," or "try it and we'll see." If you need someone available for several hours a week or for a full year's commitment or willing to drive 25 miles, say so. It may take longer to find someone willing to fill the position, but once you have that person you'll have the right person.
- Share deadlines up front. When does the work have to be finished by? Are there intermediate deadlines?
- Define the training and supervision or support the volunteer will have. Many prospects are reasonably cautious of having to sink or swim. If they know they will get help while they learn the ropes, they may be more likely to give something a try.
- Identify and express the benefits to the volunteer of accomplishing the task. Every job has its payoffs and it is OK to discuss these. The best volunteering occurs when the giver benefits as well as the recipient.
- Explain why you decided to ask this particular person to help — what skills or personality traits make him or her a good candidate for the position. Keep in mind that you can never insult people by asking them to volunteer. In fact, you are usually flattering them because you imply that they have the talent to do the job.
- If possible, paint an honestly upbeat picture of the work. Volunteering should be fun.
- Hold the perspective that you are giving the person the marvelous opportunity to participate in an important project, and you don't want them to be left out. (Isn't this much more positive than asking someone to do you a "favor?")

Finally, the best way to recruit volunteers is to ask people to help. If you never have the conversation, how can someone say yes? And if you are turned down, keep in mind that you have still helped others by reaching out to new people, explaining projects underway, and making others feel important for having been asked.

Identify and express the benefits to the volunteer of accomplishing the task.

# Being a Volunteer Consultant

Increasingly, organizations seek volunteers who have specialized expertise and are willing to help with quite specific problems. If you are recruited as this type of volunteer consultant, there are some ways you can be most effective.

Your job as a volunteer consultant is to build the capacity of the organization to solve or handle the problem itself.

## Define the Problem and the Project

The first thing you will have to do is help the organization define its problem. Ask for written materials giving you as much background on the organization and this situation as possible. Set up a meeting (it may take more than one) with key decision-makers and be a good listener.

In your expert opinion, has the real problem been accurately identified, or are you hearing a description of symptoms instead? Are there larger institutional issues that must be addressed in order to solve the precipitating concern? Discuss your reactions candidly.

Having agreed upon the problem, you next need to outline the project you will volunteer to complete. This means writing a work plan for solving the problem or for completing one or more phases of the project.

## Define Your Role

Because you are the one with the expertise, you need to describe exactly what you can do for the organization — and what you can't do. Nip unrealistic expectations in the bud to avoid disappointment later.

On the other hand, just because you are skilled in this specialty does not mean that you can walk in and "fix" things. The organization's staff and volunteers bring their own mix of skills and talents to the consultation process as well as their first-hand understanding of their work. Ask for an orientation to bring yourself up to speed. Learn the backgrounds of the people with whom you will be working. Be as willing to admit what you don't know as to tell what you do know.

It is natural for the organization to view you as their "savior" and assume that having you on board means their problem is now in good hands. But, just like a paid consultant, you must discuss which aspects of the work you will actually do yourself and which duties you will only advise the staff on. Your job is to build the capacity of the organization to solve or handle the problem itself, not to make them dependent on your assistance. Ask for one key person to be your designated liaison so that you can communicate easily, request necessary support or information, and assure accountability.

Develop a realistic timetable for completing the work. Approach it as a project, with a definite product or end point, rather than as an ongoing volunteer assignment.

## Structure Your Time

Help the organization to make the most of your consulting time. Establish an agenda for each meeting in advance, including a list of materials, data, personnel, or other things you will need to get something done that day. Keep your own minutes of your sessions, both to record your discussions and to keep track of who has agreed to fulfill a particular task.

As the project ends, submit a written report summarizing the work done, recognizing those who helped to reach the goal, and recommending what may need to done to build upon the initial steps. Request an exit meeting with the director or president to be sure he or she is aware of your recommendations. In this way, your volunteer consultancy will leave something lasting for the organization.

# Executive-Level Questions to Consider… and Answer

### *Why do we want volunteers?*

This is not a frivolous—nor easily answered—question. It is the cornerstone of developing a working philosophy about volunteers to translate into a meaningful program. Just as a mission statement articulates why an organization exists, so too must you be able to express, in concrete terms, why volunteers are a desirable part of your operation.

### *What kinds of volunteers do we want?*

Do we want volunteers to represent the clients/audience we serve? Are we seeking specialists or generalists? People with clout in the community? Do we recruit for diversity of gender, age, race or other characteristics? Unless you decide what you want, you won't design work and plan a recruitment campaign to find these types of volunteers.

### *What are our expectations of volunteer accomplishments?*

What are our goals and objectives for involving volunteers? What outcomes do we want them to achieve?

### *What is our vision for the volunteer program?*

What will be the scope and size of volunteer involvement a year or two from now? In ten years?

### *What work will volunteers do and not do, and why?*

What criteria will we use to determine assignment areas? Will volunteers be assigned to top-level work as well as supplemental tasks?

### *Who will coordinate volunteer efforts?*

Are we ready to hire a full-time director of volunteers, or will we appoint someone already on staff to handle this responsibility part time? What exactly does "part time" mean? Where will the leader of the volunteer program fit on our organizational chart (in the chain of command)? Volunteers need to feel directly tied in to the organization's administration or else they will suspect (correctly!) that they have no effective voice.

### *What resources will we allocate to support volunteers?*

Volunteers are not free help. Develop an appropriate budget for necessary expenses, ranging from printing and postage to transportation reimbursement and insurance. One way an organization demonstrates its commitment to volunteers is to acknowledge that these expenses are real and plan for them in the overall organizational budget. Beyond money, consider resources such as space, training and supervision time.

### *Is staff willing and able to work with volunteers?*

Never assume that people know how to work effectively with volunteers—or that they are happy to do so. Most employees do not learn about volunteer management in their professional education, nor is being a volunteer enough training in supervising other volunteers. Develop a plan to prepare everyone to work together. Allow negative feelings to surface, and deal with concerns such as setting—and enforcing—standards for volunteer performance.

### *Have we considered possible problem areas and how we might react if problems occur?*

Good management practices will limit problems, but the unexpected will happen. Do you insist on screening applicants before they become volunteers? Are you willing to "fire" a volunteer?

### *At what level of growth will we reconsider the resources we have allocated to volunteers?*

Schedule regular status reviews to assess whether and how the volunteer program is changing over time. Are the original goals and objectives for the volunteer program still relevant? Is it necessary to add more paid coordinating staff?

### *Is planning for volunteers integrated with agency planning?*

Do you discuss the ways volunteers might help in new projects while the projects are still on the drawing board? Do you expect the director of volunteers to be a part of your strategic planning team, helping to identify needs as well as solutions? Do you see the connection between fund-raising and "people-raising"?

### *Do I demonstrate my support of volunteers in tangible ways?*

As executive, you have the opportunity to model your enthusiasm about volunteers for everyone in your organization. Do this with more than words: Ask for and respond to reports on volunteer activities; periodically meet with representative volunteers and ask for feedback; develop volunteer assignments that directly help you in your work; reward employees who are especially effective with volunteers assigned to them. Show that you think about volunteers as part of the team.

# Are You Managing Volunteers as a Part-Time Responsibility?

Have you been asked to coordinate your organization's volunteer program as an addition to your regular job description or on a part-time work schedule? Although you may have grasped the magnitude of the job of directing volunteers, it's quite likely that no one else in your organization has! Ask for planning time with your organization's executive staff and/or board—those who can make policy decisions and enforce them. It's never too early nor too late to map the boundaries. Ask the following questions:

### *Why do we want volunteers?*

This is not a frivolous—nor easily answered—question. It's the cornerstone of developing a working philosophy about volunteers to translate into a meaningful program. Just as a mission statement articulates why an organization exists, so, too, must you be able to express in concrete terms why volunteers are a desirable part of your operation.

### *What is our vision for the volunteer program?*

What will be the size and scope of volunteer involvement a year or two from now? In 10 years? It is important to clarify such expectations because they're directly related to the amount of time allotted to direct volunteers. If you can only devote a few hours to volunteers, program growth will be limited. Conversely, if a larger or more complex program is desired, consideration may have to be given to expanding your available time.

### *What are our expectations of volunteers?*

What are the goals and objectives for involving volunteers? What exactly do we want them to accomplish? How many volunteers are anticipated at any given time? Bringing what skills?

### *What does "part time" mean?*

Exactly how much time is "part time"? Can you block out specific times of the week to be designated for the volunteer program? If applicable, will your other responsibilities be reduced to allow for this? (Something has to go.) Will you have schedule flexibility for evening and weekend meetings, external speaking engagements and training sessions?

### *What is my title?*

You need a title that appropriately represents your role with the volunteer program. Some options are: Coordinator of Volunteers, Director of Volunteer Resources/Services, Community Resources Director, Volunteer Program Manager, Outreach Coordinator, Member Resources Chair. Without a title that specifically designates you as the person responsible for volunteers, you may find your various roles blurring together in everyone's minds.

### *What is the chain of command?*

You require access to the decision-makers in your organization since there will always be policy questions to be answered. The "higher up" your supervisor, the better. Volunteers need to feel that you're directly tied in to the organization's administration or else they'll suspect (correctly!) they have no effective voice. Similarly, employees also need to know that you, and therefore volunteers, have access to top administration. If many volunteers will be supervised on a daily basis by people other than you, you also need to define your role as liaison. When should a supervisor seek your help with a volunteer? If a volunteer feels he or she has been treated unfairly, what process do you want followed? If someone disagrees with you, who is next in line to handle the concern?

### *What are my priorities and do you understand my limits?*

Commitment to having effective volunteer involvement is demonstrated by an organizational decision to allow you to give the volunteer program priority at certain times each day and week. The attitude cannot be "fit this in when you find the time." You must deliberately make time. There will inevitably be demands pulling you into other work, but volunteers must be seen as equally important as everything else, not as the function that can always be postponed.

### *What are the volunteer program's budget and resources?*

Trite but true: Volunteers are not free help. You need to develop an appropriate budget for necessary expenses, ranging from printing and postage to transportation reimbursement and insurance. Though it may take some time to arrange for sufficient funds to cover such things, one way an organization demonstrates its commitment to volunteers is to acknowledge that these expenses are real and plan for them in the overall organizational budget.

### *How often will we schedule status reviews?*

Build in periodic re-examination sessions with your administrators to assess whether and how the volunteer program is changing over time. Are the original goals and objectives for the volunteer program still relevant? Is it necessary to adjust your job description to allow you more time with the volunteer program? Do you need additional paid assistance? Have volunteers been planned into new projects?

### *How will we assure organization-wide involvement?*

The designation of one individual (you) to lead your organization's volunteer effort does not relieve everyone else of responsibility for supporting and actively assisting the program. Everyone—from administration to maintenance, salaried or not—must demonstrate respect for, faith in and enthusiasm about volunteers.

Mapping the boundaries is an important responsibility—it comes with the territory of leading volunteers. Don't expect or wait for your higher-ups to define things for you. They may assume that everything is fine because you have not told them otherwise. As hard as it may be for you to initiate discussion about the sticky issues above, it's to your advantage to do so in the long run. If you avoid these issues, you're reinforcing the notion that volunteer management is quick and easy. Volunteers deserve more.

This material adapted with permission from *The (Help!) I-Don't-Have-Enough-Time Guide to Volunteer Management* by Katherine Noyes Campbell and Susan J. Ellis, Energize, Inc., 1995.

# Designing Volunteer Work Assignments

The single most important factor in the success of volunteer involvement is the design of the work to be done by volunteers. The challenge is one of "task analysis," breaking down a project into defined steps, since volunteer work is done in limited chunks of time. Your job is to examine the many services your organization provides and carve out meaningful assignments that can be accomplished in two- to four-hour intervals, perhaps weekly.

It is not enough to say "we need volunteer help." Unless work is defined specifically in advance, you run the very real risk of wasting volunteers' time. To meet your organization's goals and to respect the desire of volunteers to be productive, take the time to plan volunteer assignments.

## Ask the Right Question

Avoid asking "What can volunteers do to help us?" The answers you will hear will be based on the responder's stereotypes about volunteers. For example, if someone thinks of volunteers as pleasant but largely unskilled amateurs, he or she will most likely identify only low-level tasks or "busy" work for them.

The right question is "What needs to be done around here?" Begin by identifying all of the unmet needs of clients and staff. List both large and small projects, including the things that have been on people's "wish lists" for a long time. You are not promising that volunteers can be found to do all of these things. Only when you know what work is required can you develop a strategy for recruiting the types of volunteers able to handle those necessary tasks.

To get the creative juices flowing, ask yourself and other organization members some thought-provoking questions such as:

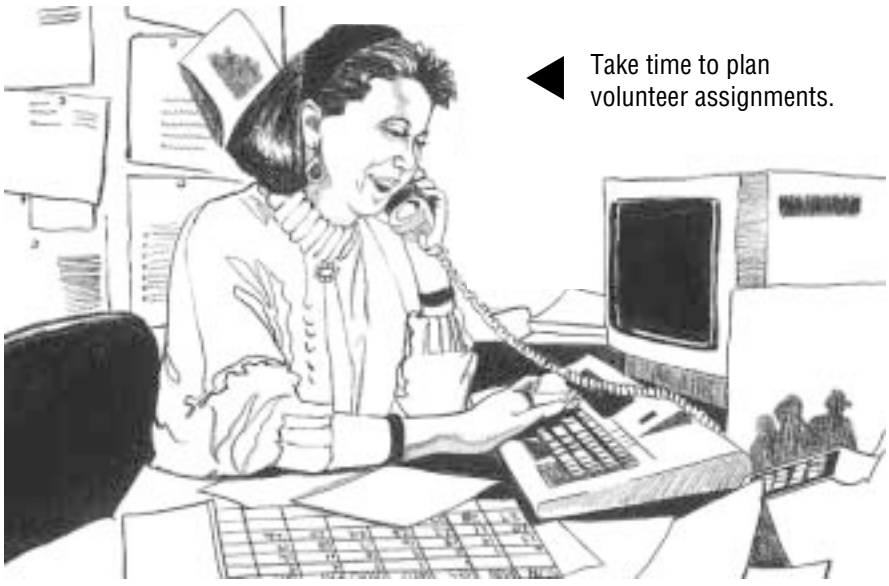
- What are we doing now that we would like to do more of?
- What unmet needs do our clients have that until now we have done nothing about?
- What would help the staff in their work?
- What might we do differently if we had more skills or time available to us?

## Volunteer Job Design Considerations

There are many ways to approach the development of volunteer assignments. Your goal is to have as diverse a set of volunteer job descriptions as possible, which will help you when you are ready to recruit. Think about:

- continuous, ongoing volunteer assignments, but also short-term and one-time work projects.
- things individual volunteers can do, but also what teams of two or three volunteers (family units?) or larger groups of people can do.
- work that can be done by anyone willing to be instructed ("generalist" positions) versus work that requires particular skills ("specialist" positions).
- assignments dealing with people, with things, or with ideas.
- and hands-on work, thinking/planning work, or work based on observation.

For each volunteer assignment you define, be sure to consider how many hours of coverage will be needed and what its priority is.



◀ Take time to plan volunteer assignments.

# How to Write Volunteer Job Descriptions

Some people resist the idea of writing volunteer job descriptions because this sounds so bureaucratic or because they are afraid a job description will scare prospective volunteers away. It also takes time to develop good descriptions and to keep them current.

Here are a few reasons the effort is worthwhile:

- The process of writing each volunteer job description makes everyone think about the work to be done. Is this really a job with enough to do? Is this too much work for one assignment? What training and supervision will the volunteer need, and is the responsible staff member or committee chair prepared to accept such duties?
- The job description is the basis for recruiting the most qualified volunteer.
- A written volunteer job description makes sure you (or whoever conducts screening interviews) will discuss the work to be done completely and consistently with each candidate. It allows prospective volunteers to first "self-screen" their willingness for the work.
- The job description becomes the basis for any ongoing supervision of the volunteer. Is he or she doing what was agreed to at the start? You can thank volunteers for accomplishing their job description. You can also use the written description to compare unsatisfactory work with what was anticipated.

## Elements of a Volunteer Job Description

Make sure every volunteer job is given a title. The word "volunteer" is only a salary category, not a title! If the work to be done requires, for instance, a tutor, tour guide, or picnic coordinator, assign a title that reflects such a position.

Next, outline the responsibilities of the assignment. Describe sample tasks. Your goal is to define both the potential and the limits of the job and to make it clear to the potential applicant what will be expected.

Include a section on the training and supervision the volunteer will receive. How will the person be prepared to do the work well and be supported in doing so?

Be clear on the timeframe you need. What are the minimum number of hours per week or month necessary to accomplish the task? Do these have to be offered on any special schedule? For what duration of time will the assignment continue? If the work is ongoing, what is the minimum initial commitment you can accept?

Do not be afraid of stating your needs definitively. It is better to have prospective volunteers know in advance what is truly needed to do the job well. That way, when they commit to an assignment, you will know that they are agreeing to do what you have requested. If they cannot fulfill your requirements, isn't it better to know that in advance instead of discovering it once it is too late? If a volunteer cannot do what is necessary to be the best at a particular assignment, you can always discuss another option with him or her.

The volunteer job description should also include a section on what progress reports will be expected, in what form, and how often. You can also identify how you and the volunteer will know when the job is being done successfully (performance goals).

Include a description of the qualifications needed to do the assignment, both in terms of skills and past experience and of personality traits.

Finally, it is also very worthwhile to have a section on benefits to the volunteer. What tangible benefits do you offer, such as transportation reimbursement, and what less tangible benefits will be derived, such as career exploration?

Keep volunteer job descriptions updated so that they accurately reflect the work volunteers do for your organization.

The job description is the basis for recruiting the most qualified volunteer.

# IDEAS FOR VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Recruiting volunteers is a challenge that can be easier than expected if you follow some basic rules.

First and foremost, the process can only start when you have a task or project that is really worth doing. Expecting people to volunteer simply on a plea of "we need help" is usually unrealistic. The better you are at explaining the work to be done and how the prospective volunteer will take part in accomplishing important goals, the more likely you will hear a "yes" to your request for help.

## Planning for Recruitment

Identify the work that needs to be done and write as many volunteer job descriptions as necessary. Think through such elements as:

- the qualifications that would be ideal,
- the personality of the ideal recruit,
- the number of hours of coverage it will take to handle or complete the work,
- the best schedule,
- the benefits to the volunteer (tangible and intangible)

Be aware of why people volunteer (the list of possible motivators is very long) and what stops others from coming forward. Try to point out the benefits of the job and don't overemphasize the negatives, (but remember that one person's fantasy job is another's nightmare—and vice versa.)

Next, for each volunteer job description, brainstorm a list of sources of potential volunteers. Such people may have the necessary qualifications, be geographically close, or have demonstrated some connection to this type of work. For example, if you need to find drivers or escorts, your list might include car washes, parking lots, the AAA, and drive-in windows. If you are seeking arts and crafts instructors you might list summer camp programs, craft supply stores, and painting classes at the Y. The success of your recruitment campaign rests in large measure on your creativity in considering where you might find likely candidates.

## Asking People

Once you have brainstormed possible sources of volunteers and prioritized your ideas, you can match the most appropriate recruitment technique to the source. For example, if you are going to try to find reading tutors at branch libraries, you might try putting your message on bookmarks. On the other hand, if you want to recruit in a college dining hall or at a late-night laundromat, it would be best to adapt to the demands of the setting, such as a public bulletin board.

Wherever you are looking, your goal is to make people aware that they have been asked to volunteer. There is a big difference between "publicity" and "recruitment." Simply telling people about your program does not necessarily motivate them to come forward. You need to offer them the opportunity to explore whether or not they fit into your organization.

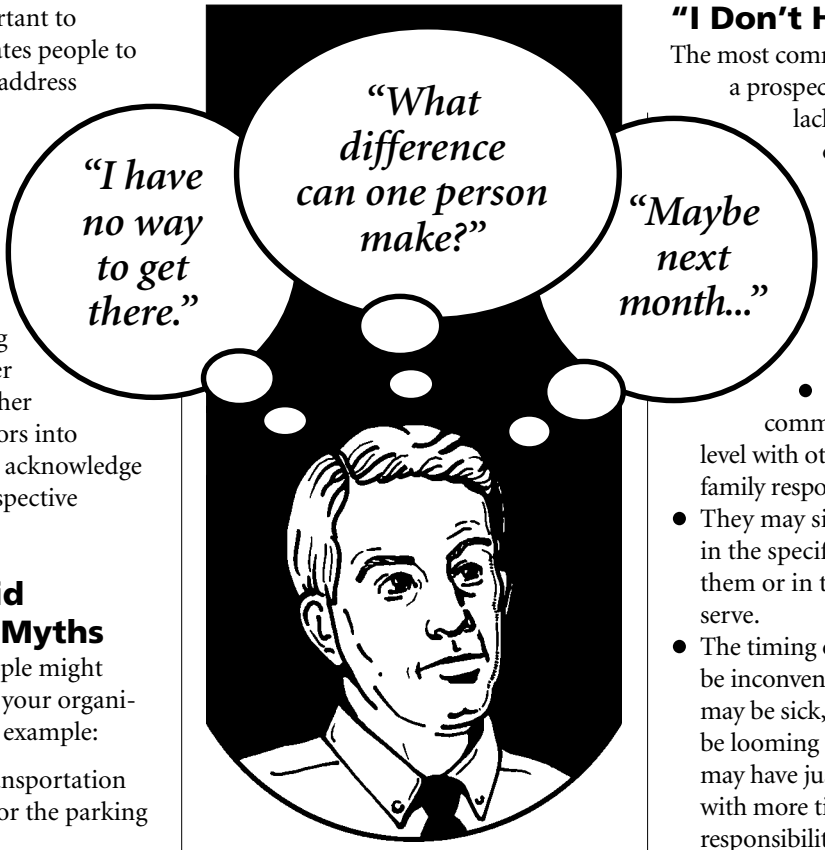
Some pointers:

- Be sure you're genuinely motivated yourself. Sincerity succeeds over technique every time.
- Whenever possible, speak to candidates one-to-one so that you can address their interests and concerns.
- Explain why you approached this particular person — what skills or traits he or she has that makes him or her a great prospect for this volunteer position.
- Be honest. Explain the job accurately, without minimizing it. If you expect a lot from volunteers, they may as well know it from the beginning. (The funny thing is that often people are more challenged by hard work than by being asked to do something that sounds too easy.)
- Express the benefits of volunteering. Talk about the impact or result of the volunteer's effort on your cause or client group. But also point out how the volunteer will learn new things, gain new insights, meet new people with similar interests, etc.
- Talk about the fun side of volunteering (the nice people, the camaraderie, etc.). After all, people volunteer in their free time, so enjoyment is a valid expectation.
- Remember that you are not asking people to do you a favor. Instead, you are offering them an opportunity to do something important, and you don't want them to be left out.

To sum up, the only way to recruit volunteers is to go out and ask people to join in. Even if you are turned down, you have helped your organization by publicizing it, and you have flattered people by implying they have the skills you want. If you succeed, it was worth the effort, right?

# What Stops People from Volunteering?

As a recruiter, it is important to understand what motivates people to volunteer. You can then address those desires in your recruitment campaign. But it is equally important to consider what might stop someone from accepting your invitation. By identifying the obstacles to volunteer recruitment, you can either change the negative factors into positive ones or you can acknowledge concerns before the prospective volunteer raises them.




## Distinguish Valid Obstacles from Myths

Some of the reasons people might hesitate to volunteer for your organization may be valid. For example:

- There is no public transportation close to your facility, or the parking situation there is bad.
- You need volunteer help at specific times, and some people are not available then.
- The work is repetitive, dull, physically difficult, or taken for granted.
- The problems you are addressing seem overwhelming.

Other obstacles may be based more on misconceptions, such as:

- a negative image about your agency's work in the past.
- incompatibility with the personalities of long-time volunteers already working there.
- thinking all volunteers are older, or women, or members of some group unlike the prospective volunteer's group.
- being afraid they will see something distasteful or frightening.
- fear of failure or that the work will be more difficult than they can perform.

## Address the Concerns

Is there flexibility in the assignment schedule so that you can accommodate a greater diversity of time schedules? Can you assign volunteers in teams so as to minimize possible fears about personal safety? Can you reimburse out-of-pocket costs? Will you provide training?

By identifying the obstacles and addressing the potential volunteer's concerns, you can turn resistance around.

## "I Don't Have the Time"

The most common reason given when a prospective volunteer says no is lack of time. Adults certainly are busy, but we often suspect that this is an excuse. Before you conclude that such people are uncaring or apathetic, consider that:

- They may already be committed to the maximum level with other community or family responsibilities.
- They may simply not be interested in the specific job you offered to them or in the client group you serve.
- The timing of your request may be inconvenient: a child or parent may be sick, the bar exam may be looming in a month, or they may have just accepted a new job with more time-consuming responsibilities.

On the other hand, the phrase "Sorry, I'm too busy" may be code for "What you just asked me to do has too little interest for me to make time in my life for it." As a recruiter, you need to be sure which factor is at work. Try a follow-up question, such as: "Would you prefer me to call back in a month?" or "Is there another type of volunteer assignment that you would prefer to do?"

Another approach might be: "If you had the time, would this volunteer assignment interest you?" If the answer is yes, you might negotiate a return call in the future. If the answer is no, you can follow up with other ways the person can volunteer with your organization.

# EVALUATING YOUR ORGANIZATION FROM A VOLUNTEER'S POINT OF VIEW

What do volunteers experience in your agency as they do their work? Do you know? It is useful to be aware of the way volunteers are treated because your success in recruiting and retaining the best volunteers depends on the support you give them.

One interesting self-analysis exercise is to do a "mental walk-through" of the kinds of issues that might arise from volunteer participation. If you are starting a new volunteer program or project, you might consider this a necessary step in answering the question "Are we ready for volunteers?"

For each of the numbered situations below, evaluate your organization's response to volunteers. None of these situations is unusual. Are you prepared?

| | | A | B | C |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **What would happen?** | **OR If you don't know, how will you find out?** | **How could this response to volunteers be improved?** |
| 1 | A prospective volunteer telephones the switchboard to ask about volunteering. | | | |
| 2 | Someone comes to the reception desk on the day of his or her interview. | | | |
| 3 | A volunteer arrives for his or her first day on the job. | | | |
| 4 | A volunteer wants to store a briefcase while working on another floor or in another office. | | | |
| 5 | A volunteer needs some work space to spread out papers. | | | |
| 6 | A volunteer needs a red pen. | | | |
| 7 | A volunteer is handling an assignment in the field and calls in with a question, but his or her regular supervisor is out for the day. | | | |
| 8 | A volunteer wants to make a suggestion about a new way to help a client. | | | |
| 9 | A volunteer does something wrong. | | | |
| 10 | A volunteer does something wonderful. | | | |
| 11 | A volunteer sprains an ankle carrying a chair into the conference room. | | | |
| 12 | A volunteer finishes a work assignment and has two hours left on his or her shift. | | | |
| 13 | A volunteer is told something is too "confidential" for him or her to hear. | | | |
| 14 | A volunteer reaches the milestone of his or her first year anniversary of service to the organization. | | | |
| 15 | An employee acts discourteously to a volunteer. | | | |

# PREPARING FOR THE VOLUNTEER'S

# First Day

Every volunteer has high hopes for his or her first day on the job. It may have taken some courage to offer to get involved with your organization, but your initial interview made the volunteer feel welcome. Now, how well day one goes will have a lasting impact on this volunteer's long-term commitment.

## The Greeting

Welcome the volunteer warmly. If he or she must first report to a receptionist, make sure that staffer knows that the volunteer is due and says something along the lines of "Oh yes...welcome aboard!" It's amazing how motivating it is to feel that you are expected.

## Physical Orientation

Apart from the things you will want to tell the new volunteer about the actual work to be done, recognize that all newcomers need to get their bearings in an unfamiliar environment. Show the volunteer such creature-comfort things as the coat closet, where a purse or briefcase can be left safely, the rest rooms, and where to get coffee. Begin your tour with the volunteer's own work space, pointing out where colleagues and supervisors sit.

Depending on the volunteer's job description, you may need to plan some time to demonstrate the use of basic office equipment. These days one can't assume that all telephone systems are intelligible (which buttons transfer calls?) or that every person knows how to operate a computer, a copier, or a fax machine.

## Initial Work Assignment

Nothing says "we need you" more effectively than having work prepared for the volunteer to do right away. Conversely, having the volunteer wait while you "pull something together to keep you busy" sends quite the opposite message. Select work that permits the volunteer to ease into your methods of doing things, having enough available to fill the volunteer's time segment. It is better to prepare more work than less work — again because volunteers want to feel there is really something with which they can help.

How much formal training volunteers need will vary with the demands of each specific assignment and with the background of each volunteer. But whether or not you offer "training," every volunteer needs good, initial instructions to do the job right. Be as clear as possible about your expectations for how work is to be done. Don't assume something is easy but don't insult the intelligence of the volunteer either.


Having basic procedures written out is useful. Be aware of jargon and abbreviations. Most of all, remain accessible to the volunteer as she or he begins the work. Some questions can't be formulated until the person has tried to do a task for a while.

## Formal Orientation

All volunteers, regardless of their assignment area, deserve to receive an orientation about the organization itself. This formal session may or may not be given on the volunteer's first day, however. As long as it occurs sometime within the first month or so, it has a positive effect.

Such an orientation usually includes a full tour of the facility, some history of the organization, a discussion of all the services provided and how volunteers participate, basic standards and expectations, and any other information that sets the context for each volunteer's contribution.

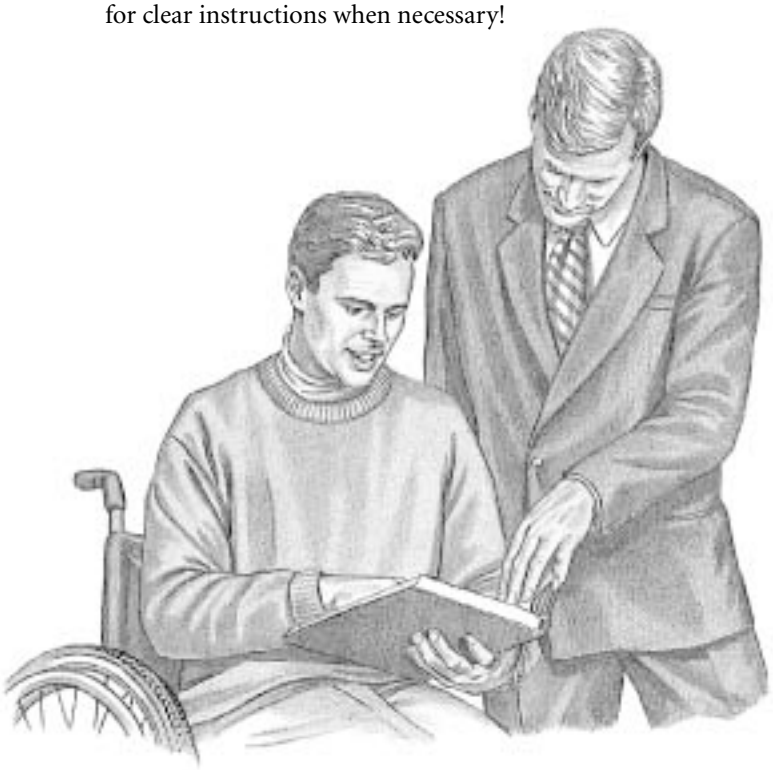
## Ending the First Day

Be around when the volunteer's shift is over. Review work done and give some feedback. If it is good work, say so. If there is something wrong, remind the volunteer that she or he is still in training and that improvement will come with practice. But do explain what was done wrong.

Thank the volunteer for the time spent and the work accomplished. Verify the next time he or she will be coming in and express pleasure at having a new member on the team. Such courtesies are not just for show. They are part of the process of making the volunteer want to return again and again.

# Volunteer Orientation Checklist

Orientation is an important first step in helping both employees and volunteers feel welcome in a new work environment. For volunteers with a short-term assignment, the time spent in a useful orientation saves time and confusion later. Consider the following checklist of possible subjects or activities to include in an orientation. Some need to be conveyed orally; others can be handled with written materials. And don't overlook the simple need for clear instructions when necessary!



## OVERALL NOTES

- ✓ Smile.
- ✓ Show enthusiasm.
- ✓ Help volunteers meet and get to know one another.
- ✓ Thank volunteers for beginning their commitment to your organization.

## Orientation Checklist for Preparing Volunteers

- ❑ Give tour of facility, including areas available to the volunteer such as cafeteria or lunch room, lounge, restrooms, coat closet, etc.
- ❑ Introduce to key staff members and administrators, either in person or by use of photographs if possible, but with an organizational chart at a minimum. Note chain of command and interrelationships with other organization units/staff.
- ❑ Give brief history of the agency and its mission and overview of services provided.
- ❑ Describe clients served. (Cover diversity issues if volunteers are different from the clients or staff by gender, race, social or economic status, geography, etc.)
- ❑ Explain funding sources.
- ❑ Go over what other volunteers do in the agency.
- ❑ Stress meaning and importance of confidentiality.
- ❑ Show designated place to work.
- ❑ Show designated place to store papers in between sessions and to receive mail, etc.
- ❑ Detail procedures for signing in, expense reimbursement and other required forms or reports.
- ❑ Demonstrate how to use telephone system and procedures for making long-distance calls, if necessary.
- ❑ Demonstrate any other equipment the volunteer is likely to use: copying and fax machines, postage meter, computers, etc.
- ❑ Give (and get) emergency phone numbers or systems.
- ❑ Clarify who to call or what to do if volunteer cannot come in on a scheduled day.
- ❑ Review volunteer's job or assignment description and clarify his or her role and role of paid staff member working with volunteer.
- ❑ Discuss background on specific project on which the volunteer will work.
- ❑ Determine reporting procedures: how often and in what form.
- ❑ Share staff schedules and when and how people can be reached if volunteer needs to communicate.
- ❑ Explain process for requesting supplies and clerical support.
- ❑ Give glossary of terms and abbreviations commonly used in agency.
- ❑ Encourage feedback and explain how and when to voice criticism, offer praise or make suggestions effectively.

# 12 Steps to Spectacular Workshops

If you are responsible for conducting formal training of volunteers or other audiences, your skills as a public speaker are secondary to your ability to plan and structure a training session. Follow these steps:

**1. Articulate what you want trainees to accomplish in the three distinct types of learning:**

- information/knowledge
- skills development
- changes in attitude

**2. Identify your audience:**

- similar or mixed interests?
- know each other or strangers?
- level of education and/or skill?
- age? gender? other demographics?
- literacy or language ability?
- readiness to learn about this subject?
- relevant life experiences?
- size of group?

**3. Develop learning objectives.**
Begin with the sentence: "At the end of this session, participants will be able to…" Objectives must be specific and observable or measurable.

**4. Select the topics/content of the presentation—what you will cover. (These must support the learning objectives.)**

**5. Pay attention to sequence!**
Does the information move logically from one point to the next? Do you provide an introduction or overview, then material in more depth and then a summary or conclusion? Hint: Think about your presentation as a gift box: You offer a beautifully wrapped box, allowing the audience to untie the bow, remove the paper, lift the lid, open the tissue paper and reveal the lovely present!

**6. Select the techniques/methods of your presentation, making sure these will deliver the content so as to achieve the learning objectives. Some choices are:**

- lecture/presentations
- large group interaction/exercises
- small group (buzz group) interaction/exercises
- audio-visual materials
- handouts: support or enlarge material; worksheets
- games and simulations
- practice sessions

**7. Consider the following factors in your design:**

*Timing*

- How much time is available per session?
- How many sessions can you schedule?
- When will the sessions occur? early? late? before or after a meal?
- Are there external constraints?
- Will you need breaks?

Note that timing may seriously affect your session because you may have to limit what you cover or how you cover it.

*The Facilities*

- space
- furniture: comfort of chairs; desks or tables; flexibility of arrangement
- lighting
- refreshments (or proximity to)
- overall comfort and tone

*The Trainer(s)*

- one or several; separate or a panel
- presentation skills (language ability?)
- comfort with using audio-visual equipment
- availability

*Ice Breakers*

- Do you have time?
- Will they be on subject or just for fun?

**9. Write a script: List each segment with content notes, minutes needed and materials needed. (Do not prepare a written speech!)**

**10. Make yourself comfortable first!**

- Arrive early and check out all equipment and room arrangements. Watch participants come in.
- Establish your presence at the front of the room.
- Check your assumptions about the audience before beginning.
- Set a welcoming tone by your own body language, warmth, eye contact, humor.

**11. Pay attention to the synergy and body language of your audience. Adapt as necessary during the presentation!**

**12. Consider how you will assess learning or evaluate the session.**

# Tips

## FOR SUPERVISING VOLUNTEERS

All of the principles that apply to supervising employees also apply to supervising volunteers. This is because supervision is an issue of human productivity, not of a paycheck. Every study that has been done on motivation has shown that people do not work hard or well because of how much they are getting paid. What spurs them on is their enjoyment of their job assignment, feeling recognized by those in authority, feeling some control over their work, and other intrinsic motivators.

When asked what they want from a supervisor, employees and volunteers are likely to list such characteristics as:

- fairness,
- support,
- a degree of independence,
- feedback,
- clear instructions,
- loyalty,
- a pleasant manner,
- respect,
- and recognition.

### Unique Aspects of Supervising Volunteers:

Having said that volunteers respond to the same type of supervision as that used for employees, it is also important to note that there are some aspects of supervision that require special emphasis when working with volunteers. These are due largely to the recognition that volunteers are most often part-time workers who arrive on the scene in fragmented segments of time. This focuses their need for support in order to make their limited schedule most productive for them and for the organization.

Here are some things to remember:

- It is inconsiderate to waste a volunteer's time. If you want to pay someone to have nothing to do, that is your bad management. But it is abusive to have someone come prepared to give time freely and then underuse the offer. Always have work — meaningful work — prepared, or call the volunteer in advance to change the schedule.
- Volunteers deserve a clearly-designated work space, including storage space for papers and supplies.
- Volunteers need accessibility to a supervisor or someone who can answer a question during the volunteer's work shift, especially if the question arises while the volunteer is in the field. Employees can wait for another time, but a volunteer who cannot move forward for lack of information may have just wasted an entire week.
- Because volunteers are not on-site all the time, things happen in between shifts that might affect a volunteer's assignment. Be aware of needing to bring volunteers up to speed on news and changes. One suggestion: add volunteers to the distribution list of all memos and other communications.
- Volunteers are allowed to say "no." One of the luxuries of volunteering is to focus one's energies on the things one most wants to do. Of course you have the right to ask for certain procedures to be followed, but a volunteer can also request to be reassigned to something more appealing.
- The key to the best utilization of volunteers is task analysis: breaking larger jobs down into discreet task clusters that can be accomplished in two- to five-hour shifts of work and listing instructions in sequence for accomplishing each task.
- Recognition should be continuous. Saying "thank you" is important, but recognition includes a friendly greeting and goodbye, including the volunteer in a social gathering of the staff, acknowledging the volunteer's input with proper credit on reports, etc. Having work prepared in advance is actually a form of recognition. It says: "We knew you were coming."
- Take action to correct the poor performance of a volunteer. No volunteer sets out to do unacceptable work, so you are making sure the contributed time is not wasted. Support the good job other volunteers are doing by maintaining standards.
- Create a self-fulfilling prophecy: expect the best, skilled performance from volunteers and see what happens.

There is an unexpected maxim to be derived from the above guidelines. Instead of trying to treat volunteers as though they were paid staff, your goal should be to treat employees the way volunteers should be treated. The result will be an organization with higher morale and greater enthusiasm.

# Successful Delegation


Your role as a leader is not to do all the things that have to be done, but to see to it that the tasks get done by someone. Delegation is therefore a vital aspect of volunteer management. While most of us accept the theoretical value of delegation, we often are reluctant to share authority as well as responsibility. We are torn between fear that others will not do as good a job as we might and the fear that they might do a better job!

The best approach to delegation is not "How do I get people to do this for me?" Rather, think about "What is the best way to share these tasks so that the entire organization can reap maximum benefits?" Here are some guidelines to insure successful delegation:

- Select the most appropriate person to handle the task. Don't fall into the trap of settling for the nearest available warm body.
- Formulate written assignment descriptions, tailored to the particular person if necessary. Do this for employees as well as for volunteers who will be helping you, especially if the delegated work is not already covered in regular employee job descriptions.
- Tasks you assign to others should be concrete and manageable, with clearly-defined timeframes and deadlines. Define complex tasks in stages so people can feel a sense of achievement as each benchmark is reached.
- Clarify what you will be doing while the delegated work is being done.
- Tell the truth about the time required to do the job properly and your expectations for when it should be finished. Similarly, whenever possible, assign the whole task at once, rather than revealing something new each week.
- Give people titles to match the responsibility they will be handling, and then consistently refer to these titles yourself.
- Give information that sets the task into context. People work more intelligently when they understand how their activities mesh with the activities of others.
- Identify resources and materials available to get the job done.
- Never underestimate the importance of good instructions. Don't assume that anyone, particularly a volunteer, is completely familiar with your office procedures, policies, legal regulations or anything else affecting a task. Show samples of past similar work so that people can be consistent.
- Discuss alternate contingency plans, should an original tactic not be successful.
- Set limits: At what point must you be consulted or involved, approve expenditures, receive progress reports?
- Remove limits: Encourage people to exercise creativity and initiative in those areas where there are no hard and fast rules to be followed or where you feel they have adequate expertise.
- Develop a reporting plan: How often and in what form (written, e-mail, audiotape) will you communicate with each other about progress? Negotiate the frequency of contact necessary to offer mutual feedback and support.
- Once you've delegated, don't undercut the independence of the team member. For example, refer all questions about the delegated project to the person responsible.
- Make it a condition of starting a task that the person commit to training his or her successor or replacement, including keeping a written record of procedures that can be passed on. Though this may not always work perfectly because of the frequent time lag between needing a volunteer and finding one, people should know they are expected to help maintain a project's continuity. Therefore, they might even return to your organization for a day or two to help train their successors. Passing the torch can be satisfying.

When you begin a new delegation, be sure to set a first time to meet or talk again fairly soon. This appointment provides an incentive to the team member to make some progress by then and gives you the opportunity to assure yourself that things are off to a good start. If the volunteer has not done the work you hoped, you can restate your expectations or reassign the work before the situation becomes a crisis. On the other hand, if the volunteer is moving forward effectively, you have an immediate opportunity to express your appreciation and keep the person motivated.

# Dealing with a PROBLEM Involving a Volunteer

No one volunteers to do a bad job. This simple truth should help you if you are ever confronted with a situation in which a volunteer is not doing work properly or needs to be corrected in some way. People give their time to be helpful. They want to support your cause, and they want to be part of the team.

But it may feel very hard to confront a volunteer about poor performance. This is because you may think it will sound ungrateful to be given free help and then criticize it. Repeat to yourself, "No one volunteers to do a bad job."

## Troubleshoot Early

Everyone feels "in training" during the first weeks or months of a volunteer assignment. Maximize this time by giving honest feedback from the beginning. If the new volunteer is not learning the ropes, say so in the spirit of teaching. If you keep saying thank you without expressing your reservations, you are misleading the volunteer.

Deal with mistakes the first time they arise. Correcting someone implies that you think the person can do better, which is actually a compliment.

## Keep It Objective

Your goal is to correct the problem, not the volunteer. You want to keep personalities out of the discussion and focus on the work that is being done. A critical tool is the written volunteer job description. This, after all, is what the volunteer accepted to do in the first place. If you have the job description as a starting point, you can open your discussion with:

"If we look at the job description that you accepted, how do you feel you are doing at fulfilling it?"

## OR

"Let's discuss your progress with the various aspects of your job description."

## OR

"As I look at your job description, I can see several things that you have accomplished so far—as well as a few other things that need work."

Let the volunteer explain his or her point of view and be open to learning that the problem is not what you expected. For example, you may be concerned that a volunteer is always late but then learn from the volunteer that his or her department never has work ready on time. Once you both agree on what the problem is, let the volunteer participate in suggesting solutions. Is this the right assignment after all?

People often ask whether it is possible to "fire" a volunteer. The answer, of course, is yes. But a well-managed volunteer program should rarely have to reach that point. Ideally, volunteers can be reassigned to more appropriate positions or can be helped to self-screen themselves out of the program.

## What Are the Risks?

What are the risks of confronting a volunteer about a problem? The worst fear is that the volunteer will quit in a huff. If the work is really being done poorly, losing this person may not be a negative. True, the person may tell others that he or she was offended by your criticism, but this would also involve having to explain what she or he did wrong. Realistically, the person may leave but is unlikely to cause trouble.

The real risk is in doing nothing. Not only will the volunteer unknowingly repeat the poor work, but every other volunteer will get the message "Your efforts to do things right are unappreciated. We'll take anything anybody gives us." If you want to show volunteers that good work is rewarded, you must act to solve problems. Employees also resent a situation in which volunteers are permitted to do unacceptable work.

## The Benefits

If you confront problems as they arise in an objective manner and by using the job description as a tool, you will find that the vast majority of volunteers will respond positively. They will feel that you care about their contributions and will approach your feedback as part of their training. They will also feel proud to be part of an organization that sets high standards.

Give honest feedback to a volunteer who needs to make some improvements.

# Working With Volunteers in Groups

Volunteering with a group is preferred by many people and there are many variations on this theme. You can form your own group of volunteers by scheduling various individuals to work on the same task at the same time. More often, community groups will come seeking projects for their members. If you can respond creatively, you will be rewarded by lots of volunteers at once.

Sometimes groups will "adopt" a project and maintain their commitment over the course of time. They may accept responsibility for staffing the thrift shop on Thursday afternoons or for planning a residents' birthday party every month. A newer approach is one-time volunteer activities, often coordinated by an organization such as the local United Way ("Day of Caring"), Volunteer Center ("Make a Difference Day"), a college student volunteer center ("National Day of Service"), or a City Cares/Hands On project. The model for all these programs is that volunteers are centrally recruited in groups from corporations, schools and civic organizations to be "deployed" throughout the community for a one-day, intensive burst of help to many different agencies.

If such a resource was available to you, could your organization make use of it? What kind of real help could 20 strangers do for six hours? This chance to tap group effort might come from any number of sources. What if the group was a class of sixth-graders? How about a retired secretaries club? What projects could be moved forward by a quick "in and out" spurt of service? Some possibilities to consider are:

- manual labor. It requires minimal training, can be easily shared and can be made fun and social. So, all those cleanup, painting and fix-up projects are ideal.

- blanketing a neighborhood with a door-to-door effort of some sort (such as distributing educational literature) maximizes the support and safety of doing such outreach with a lot of people.
- giving a party or some special program for your clients or public.
- reorganizing your files, storage room, library—whatever could use many hands so that the disruption and disarray ends as soon as possible.

One-day group projects need not be as formal nor as structured as ongoing assignments, but they do need to be organized! The worst thing you can do is to waste the time of any volunteer, even for one day. For this reason, if you really can't support the group activity well, it's better to say no to the offer of help. Keep in mind that a satisfying one-time project can introduce prospective longer-term volunteers to your organization. So, this is really a recruitment technique, as well.

## Group Work Descriptions

Job descriptions are as important for group volunteering as for individual volunteer roles. First, you need an overall "project description" defining the main elements of the work to be done. Include such things as:

- goals for the project.
- the lines of authority and communication between your organization and the group.
- the number of participants and/or hours of coverage needed.
- a list of the specific tasks to be performed.
- an orientation and training plan.

In addition, you may need to create a set of individual job descriptions to accompany the project description. You will almost certainly need some instruction sheets. These are distinct from general volunteer job descriptions; instruction sheets go into detail. For example, the job description of a sports tournament coordinator might include: "Will make sure that all equipment is returned and properly stored." But an instruction sheet useful to any member of the tournament leadership team would itemize current procedures such as: "Place football equipment in the cabinet on the left and soccer equipment on the shelves in the basement."

One-time special events require excellent instruction sheets—even check lists.

- Develop an instruction sheet for each volunteer assignment area. (Use color coding as an aid.)
- Start by explaining how the assignment fits with other work being done that day by other volunteers and employees.
- Then list the instructions and rules.
- End the sheet with a clearly-marked box telling what to do and whom to ask (and where to find that person) if something unexpected arises!

# Ways to Say *Thank You* to a Valuable Volunteer

"Thank you" is the "paycheck" of a volunteer. Expressions of appreciation and gratitude are important in keeping volunteers motivated and enthusiastic. The more sincere the thanks, the better.

## Formal Recognition

Many organizations sponsor an annual volunteer event to thank everyone who donated time and services during the year. Such events range from summer picnics to formal banquets, but the budget is not as important as the tone. Generally the guest list includes all volunteers, though special awards may be given to people who contributed in unique ways or who have reached a milestone of service, such as 10 years.

Formal recognition events are a time for fun. They bring volunteers together in one place, perhaps for the only time that year. Although the focus of the program is to thank people for their help in the past year, the real agenda is to reinvigorate volunteers for the coming year.

National Volunteer Week is proclaimed by the President each April, usually the third week of the month. Many communities sponsor area-wide events, issue mayoral proclamations, or focus publicity on the achievements of local volunteers during National Volunteer Week. You might also want to celebrate the United Nations' International Volunteer Day on December 5 each year.

## Informal Recognition

Perhaps more important than the gala event is the way an organization makes people feel appreciated on a daily basis. This is reflected in the tone of how the paid staff and the volunteers interact: with friendliness, courtesy, and mutual respect.

Volunteers feel thanked when:

- someone actually says "thank you;"
- their name appears as a contributor on a final report or is mentioned at a staff meeting;
- they are told how something they did last month, for instance, helped with something someone else did last week;
- they receive intra-agency or intra-office communications, such as memos;
- they are invited to join someone for lunch or a coffee break;

- they get a Valentine's Day or other holiday card;
- or they are sent a personalized note from the director, singling out a special contribution.

Don't forget that paid employees appreciate a thank you too.

## Who Says It

Appreciation can come from many sources. The best thanks are expressed by the actual recipient of the volunteer's service: the client or staff member helped. Being recognized by the top person in the organization may also feel like an honor — as does receiving a note from the mayor.

## Other Supporters

Volunteers often do not work alone. Some rely heavily on the support of their families or even of their secretaries to complete their job. If it seems appropriate, consider sending a thank you note to the volunteer's spouse, children, and/or secretary. Invite them to the company picnic.

Even if family and friends have not participated directly, inviting them to the recognition event gives the volunteer a chance to shine. And it might even lead to your recruiting some new volunteers!

# The Dollar Value of Volunteer Time

We live in a culture that assigns "value" to things predominantly in monetary terms. A rain forest appears on the accounting ledgers only when it has been chopped down into "lumber." Caring for children or older parents becomes part of the economy only when a stranger is paid a salary to do what a family member might have done before without cash payment. In short, until there is a way to assign a dollar value to an activity or product, it is invisible to the society's decision makers.

The volunteer community has long debated the practice of assigning a dollar value to volunteer time. Apart from the difficulties of collecting data or of finding appropriate dollar amounts, the arguments against measuring volunteer contributions against a monetary standard boil down to: It doesn't feel right.

There is a sense that the value of volunteering is intrinsic and that any attempts to measure it—particularly with as crass a tool as money—will, in fact, devalue the activity. Many resent the hold that the dollar has on our thinking and would prefer to live in a world in which human activities would be assessed and esteemed on the basis of their contributions to others. But we don't live in such a world yet. Only things we value in dollars and cents get the attention of decision-makers.

Generally, volunteers have simply not been mentioned on nonprofit agency financial reports. To report that it cost $7,200 to winterize 10 elderly people's homes, without mentioning the $4,000 in volunteer services or the $2,000 in donated supplies, risks forming false conclusions about the actual value of the service. From a management perspective, never having to "account" for the use of volunteers can result in wasting volunteer effort or in discounting the cost to the volunteer and the value to the organization.

Too many nonprofits have not kept accurate records of volunteer time and have made only a minimal attempt to assign a dollar value to such time. During the 1990s, the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB), the accounting profession's rule-making group, issued several new rules that pertain to nonprofits. One of the most important new rules, FASB Statement No. 116, requires nonprofits to report

certain contributions received from donors, including volunteer services. These rules mean that, for the first time, your agency may need to include the value of certain volunteer services in its external financial statements.

In order to generate the most useful data, take the time to estimate the dollar value of volunteers as fairly as possible. Do not fall into the common trap of using the minimum wage or the national median wage as a basis for your computation. The vast majority of volunteer assignments are worth a great deal more than minimum wage and probably more than the median, too. Another trap is to confuse the dollar value of the service provided by volunteers with the earning power of the people who are doing the volunteering. If someone is a doctor and volunteers to do glaucoma tests for your organization, then you are justified to estimate the dollar value of that donated service at the hourly rate normally charged by that volunteer. But if that same doctor volunteers to paint your recreation hall, to drive clients to a picnic or to play chess with residents, the dollar value of that volunteer work has nothing to do with his or her regular earning power. You must assess the value of each volunteer assignment based on what it would cost you to purchase that type of work in the marketplace.

The best system for determining the true dollar value of volunteer services was developed by G. Neil Karn while he served as director of the Virginia Department of Volunteerism.* His key points are:

1. It is possible to find an equivalent salaried job category for every volunteer assignment, even if it means a little creativity and searching. Each volunteer assignment should be given its own dollar equivalency, without trying to find an average rate for all volunteers.

2. The cost of paying an employee includes fringe benefits that raise the total value of the "annual employee compensation package" considerably.

3. We routinely pay salaried staff for hours they do not work, while we credit volunteers only for hours they actually put in.

4. Volunteers should be "credited" with the dollar equivalent of the hourly amount an employee would earn for actual hours worked.

Whatever method you use to calculate the dollar value of the work volunteers have contributed to your agency, never use the phrase "volunteers save us money." This statement implies that you had resources you did not need to spend because volunteers are free. A better and more accurate way to make the same point would be that volunteers allow you to spend every cent available and then do more. Or volunteers extend the budget beyond anything you could otherwise afford.

* For a more complete discussion of the Karn method and the subject of dollar value, see *From the Top Down: The Executive Role in Volunteer Program Success* by Susan J. Ellis (Energize, 1996).

# STUDENTS *as Volunteers*

AS MORE AND MORE colleges and school systems encourage students to do community service, more and more agencies will find themselves collaborating with teachers to make volunteering as educational as possible.

Students are the same as any other volunteers except that they might call their work "community service," an "internship," or "service-learning." For these volunteers, the desire to learn something from their experience is a primary focus, which is why each volunteer assignment needs to be examined for its appropriateness for students.

When students receive academic credit for volunteer work, there will often be a "reflection" component to the curriculum, in which the student must verbalize observations and conclusions. There will also usually be a faculty member assigned as a liaison between the school and the agency.

## Designing Assignments for Students

Each student has a different work schedule. College students may be able to work intensively for several days a week, but only for one semester. High school students may only be available from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. and can usually commit from September to June. Current volunteer job descriptions have to adapt to these schedules or create new tasks for student volunteers.

Students may want to observe as much as possible, avoiding assignments that isolate the volunteer or require repetitive work. On the other hand, students often need to learn that much work is routine. Also, companies have the right to expect contributed service in exchange for the learning experience.

## The Role of the School Representative

It is helpful to spend time with a liaison faculty member to clarify roles and to reach agreement on such points as:

- what kinds of records the school representative and the agency or organization need to keep,
- what will be expected from the agency in terms of documenting the student volunteers' learning,
- how standards and rules will be enforced,
- how the responsibility for training and supervision will be equitably divided between the school representative and the agency,
- if necessary, who will obtain parental permission and communicate with the students' families,
- who will be responsible for insurance,
- when it will be appropriate to evaluate the students' performance and how this will be done,
- and how the school representative and the agency representative will keep in touch with each other.

It is not the agency's role to be a faculty member. One of the things student volunteers learn from their community service is that adults can fill roles other than those of a parent or teacher. The agency representative is responsible first and foremost to the organization and its consumers. If teachers have unrealistic expectations of what they want students to do, the agency representative should feel free to discuss limits with them.

## Are Students Really "Volunteers"?

Students comprise a special category of volunteers. From the perspective of an agency, they are not on the payroll. Even though they may receive academic credit for their service, this is hardly legal tender.

Managerially, students have all of the needs of other volunteers. They are part-time workers and require job descriptions tailored to their schedules and skills. They need an orientation to the organization and also need start-up training. In many cases, volunteers who join an agency as part of a curriculum requirement remain long after the semester ends. Where is the "line" between student and volunteer?

All volunteers are motivated by learning something new. Agencies that take the time to design volunteer job descriptions with an educational component will find that those same assignments appeal more to adult volunteers as well.

Supervisors who put volunteer contributions into the context of the entire agency's goals will also become more efficient and thoughtful about the work being accomplished. Welcoming students as volunteers strengthens the entire volunteer effort, which, in turn, will likely benefit the agency's bottom line.

# The Special Needs of Young Volunteers

STRONG VOLUNTEER PROgrams gain energy from a volunteer corps with a wide age range, including teenagers and children. It may not always be easy to accommodate young volunteers at first, but the payoff in enthusiasm and a fresh perspective is usually worth it.

## Parental Permission

Adults can act independently, but minors cannot. In most cases, the organization will want to be certain that the young volunteer has parental permission before joining. This protects everyone by making sure that the parent or guardian is informed about the activities in which the youngster will engage. The process of obtaining parental permission is also an opportunity to clarify the young volunteer's availability and transportation needs.

## Schedule

Young people are bound by their school calendar and also by the demands of their families. There are a growing number of school service-learning programs in which students may work in a community agency during the school day, and most youngsters are available to volunteer in the late afternoons, on weekends, or during school vacations. However, changing schedules of exams, sports seasons, and family trips affect the ability of young volunteers to maintain a consistent volunteering schedule.

## Transportation

For young volunteers without a car, getting to the worksite may pose a major obstacle. Whether or not a community has a good public transportation system may determine how many youngsters can contribute their services. The organization may need to arrange a car pool or even recruit one or more parents to volunteer transportation.

If youngsters will be using public transportation, will they need reimbursement for this expense? If adult volunteers in a program receive free parking or some other out-of-pocket expense assistance, it is only fair to offer this benefit to young volunteers too.


Working at a community day care is one way young people can volunteer.

## Once Inside the Building

Adults often welcome the ubiquitous coffee machine as a perk of the work environment. What is available for younger volunteers to drink? Juice or fruit for them may also please those adults who don't want coffee.

How hospitable is the worksite to young workers? Are the tables and chairs high enough or low enough for children? Is there enough space for spreading out their work? What are the rules about radios (with or without headphones)? Comfortable volunteers are productive ones, at any age. Depending on the situation and the actual work assignments to be completed, having a less formal workspace might be a plus, perhaps with a carpeted area and floor cushions.

## Supervision

Young volunteers do not necessarily have to be under constant observation. They do need clear instructions, sufficient work to fill their time shift, and access to an adult who can answer questions. A buddy system is often a good idea so that no one has to work alone (buddies can be two youngsters or an adult volunteer and a younger one).

The younger the volunteer, the more tailored the work assignment may need to be. For example, the child's reading level will affect the sophistication of the work expected. Attention span is also a factor. Variety in the assigned tasks avoids boredom at any age.

Regardless of their age, all volunteers need attention and appreciation. Teenagers and children who volunteer want to participate fully and feel that they are helping a cause. They may not always be able to express their special needs, but some advance planning can make all the difference in an organization's success at tapping a young volunteer's special abilities.

# The Special Needs of
# Older Volunteers

THE SENIOR POPULATION offers a vast pool of prospective volunteers. Recent statistics show that the age spread of those we consider "senior citizens" (65 and older) covers more than forty years. We may soon begin speaking of the "young senior," the "middle senior," and the "older senior."

For volunteer programs, seniors may represent a new target audience from which to recruit. Or, an organization may have such devoted participants that longtime volunteers are aging within their assignments. What started as a young or middle-aged volunteer corps may have evolved into a group of older people with new needs.

In order to help senior volunteers remain productive as long as possible, organizations can be flexible in supporting their needs and expectations.

### Reviewing Assignments

Under any circumstances, volunteer job descriptions should be reviewed regularly to be sure they truly define the work that volunteers do. When older volunteers are involved, this review is especially important because the demands of each assignment may be unrealistic. Some areas to consider:

- Sight and hearing. How much reading, telephone work, or interaction with the public is required? If someone had difficulty with seeing or hearing, would this job be harder to do?
- Physical demands. Is there much movement required in the job? What about lifting or bending? How much time is spent sitting versus standing?
- New technology. Has this job evolved because of changing technology? It is easy to overlook the challenges of a gradually modernized telephone system, computers, electronic cash registers, fax machines, and other office devices used in a volunteer assignment.

While we do not want to stereotype older people, we do need to be realistic about what we can ask an older volunteer to do. Allow each individual to answer for her or himself when offered a volunteer assignment. The key is to be clear about how much vision, lifting, or computer use will be expected if the person agrees to do that job.

### Transportation and Reimbursement

Many seniors limit their driving and may even divest themselves of their personal automobiles. So the more convenient an agency is to public transportation, the more likely older volunteers will consider helping out.

Safety is a concern, too. How well lighted is the agency's entrance and other parts of the building that get volunteer traffic? Can an escort service be offered to the parking lot or bus stop?

Apart from the availability of transportation is the question of cost. For seniors on a fixed income, reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses may make the difference in their ability to volunteer. Free or discounted meals may also be welcome.

### Aging in the Position

It is very difficult to confront the truth that some long-time volunteers are growing older and less able to fulfill their volunteer job functions. Yet for the service standards of an organization and perhaps also for the safety of the volunteer, this situation must be addressed when it occurs. Some approaches—depending, of course, on their appropriateness to the work to be done—are:

- Ask the volunteer what would make the assignment more comfortable or perhaps feel fresher. Many seniors are aware of their encroaching limitations and might welcome the opportunity to discuss a change in tasks without having to approach a supervisor and say, "I can't do this anymore."
- Institute a consistent buddy system in which two volunteers, whether of the same or differing generations, share a job and time slot.
- Develop a regular rotation of all volunteers so that no one expects to "own" a particular assignment, location, or shift.
- Reassign veterans to newly-created positions requiring knowledge of the organization (showing respect for their experience) but less hands-on work (recognizing their limits).
- Have seniors work as trainers of newcomers, rather than on the front lines.

A sense of humor, some patience, and recognition of their years of service are invaluable tools in dealing with senior volunteers. So is treating each volunteer as an individual and as an adult.

# The Special Needs of
# Corporate Volunteers

Corporations and small businesses can be approached as a source of volunteers. In some cases, the employer may make a commitment to send employees as volunteers in a spirit of good corporate citizenship. The company might offer "release time" — paying the salaries of employees while they spend time with a nonprofit agency. Other companies will not get involved directly but will allow an agency to inform the employees of volunteer work they can do on their own time.

Corporate volunteers can, of course, handle almost every type of volunteer assignment. But an agency will often want to recruit these business people personally because they may possess a skill adaptable to an organization's specific work. This work may range from expertise in management to computer programming, public relations, or accounting.

## Clear Job Descriptions

The more specific the need for assistance, the more likely a volunteer can be found to tackle the problem. The written volunteer job description is a critical tool because it clarifies an organization's needs and allows for an honest discussion of whether or not its expectations are realistic. A job description also sets realistic limits.

If the volunteer is an expert in his or her field, he or she can be asked to write the job description personally, perhaps in the form of a consultant's agreement. This document can then be the plan for what the volunteer has agreed to do. The organization can negotiate with the volunteer and modify the proposal until it truly meets the needs of both parties.

## Orientation

Business volunteers tend to operate in what is often stereotyped as a business-like manner. Unfortunately, when they step into a nonprofit or government organization, they may also bring along their own stereotypes of what they may label unbusinesslike. One of the agency personnel's first goals is to discover the true talents of the new volunteers and to integrate them with the organization's strengths. Mutual respect is the first step in teambuilding.

No matter how skilled a volunteer is, some orientation will be needed to become familiar with how an organization operates. Do not assume that a business volunteer, perhaps a high-ranking manager, can instantly adapt his or her managerial style to the demands of a new setting. Be sure the business volunteer understands:

- the funding sources and the cash flow situation of the agency.
- the client base and their problems/resources.
- the history of the concern, problem, or need that led to their recruitment.
- the current resources available to the agency for handling the present concern, problem, or need.
- a profile of agency staff and other volunteers and something about their workload.

Chances are that the corporate volunteer will be amazed at how much the agency has been doing already with very few dollars.

## Timetables and Reporting Plans

Time is generally important to business volunteers. Set up goals and objectives with estimated deadlines. Be sure to include some interim milestones to assess progress.

Talk about in what form communications (written memos, periodic phone calls, or oral presentations to the board of directors) will be made regarding the volunteer project. How often will meetings be called? Discussing this at the start will minimize surprises later and will build in accountability.

## Benefits to the Volunteer

Corporate volunteers derive the same benefits from successful service as any other volunteer does. But there are some special payoffs that may mean more to business people than to others:

- the opportunity to apply skills to new situations and thereby learn about new prospective market areas
- the chance to prove leadership talents and impress one's employer at promotion time
- a new professional experience that can be added to a resume for later career mobility
- good public relations and visibility for the company, translating into customer goodwill and perhaps sales

# Welcoming Diversity

Volunteer programs pride themselves on diversity. It is considered a mark of achievement to have a volunteer corps ranging in age from 6 to 96, of both sexes, of many races and religions, with high school diplomas and post-doctoral degrees—as varied a staff as possible. Include people with disabilities or from a wide geographic area, and it becomes clear that a diverse volunteer corps offers some managerial challenges.

In truth, some volunteer efforts are now seeking diversity but have not been as open in the past. They are now trying to rectify years of being oriented to one gender, one age group, or one social class. It is as difficult to integrate a volunteer program after the fact as it is to integrate any other aspect of our society, but it can be done.

## Do Active Outreach

The public perception of a volunteer program as being closed to outsiders requires a vigorous campaign to counteract. An agency should examine what it is asking volunteers to do and honestly assess if the tasks themselves have limited appeal (seeming perhaps too "female" or not "young" enough). It should also develop new job descriptions that appeal to as wide a diversity of people as possible and publicize these in places in which they have not yet been exposed.

Rather than ask 'who do we know who might want to do this?,' a better question might be, 'who don't we know who might want to do this?' People tend to know only a few people who look and think like themselves. If an agency reaches out to unknown sources (chosen in a logical way), it may find some different people.

## Avoid Tokenism

The first person to expand a group's diversity may feel a bit uncomfortable. An agency should level with him or her about its sincere wish to increase the number of males, or teenagers, or Latinos, and acknowledge that this new volunteer is a pioneer. It can also enlist his or her help in recruiting others.

If possible, an agency should recruit two to three new volunteers together and call it an "outreach" project. The newcomers may become a support system for one another.

## Integration

Because so many people volunteer for social as well as philanthropic reasons, newcomers should be allowed to mix with longtimers in such as way as to get them better acquainted. An agency should provide some informal interaction time, even if it is only over a cup of coffee before work. Care should be taken to introduce people with more than their names. Information can be shared about each to get conversation started. If possible, the agency should send two volunteers out together to deliver or pick up something, requiring time to talk more personally.

A buddy system is an excellent approach to team building, providing there are clear tasks for the buddies to do together. Veteran volunteers can be enlisted as orientation leaders and trainers. But also group exercises can be designed that show the skills the newly-recruited volunteers bring to the organization.

In the last analysis, not all volunteers become friends. But people can be expected to work together to accomplish mutual goals. Diversity can make people uncomfortable if they feel unfamiliar with each other. But if an agency emphasizes what they already share in common—having said yes to becoming a volunteer—a successful volunteer program will undoubtedly result with cooperation and time.

# Employee/Volunteer *Tension*

The problem most often identified by organizations with volunteers is tension between employees and volunteers. Whether the setting is a health center, a museum, or a school, developing teamwork between the paid and unpaid workers is a true challenge. Is there something inevitable about friction when volunteers are on the scene? In some ways, yes.

Too many organizations recruit volunteers with the expectation that "more hands" will be a good thing. The problem is that those extra hands are attached to complete human beings, needing more time and attention than was planned. And most of the time the paid staff has had no training in how to work effectively with volunteers. They are expected to do so instinctively.

Volunteer management is the "invisible personnel issue" that surfaces when tension boils over. Yet many of the issues causing conflict between volunteers and employees can be avoided with forethought.

## The Employee Perspective

Employees who dislike working with volunteers are not bad people. In the absence of clear signals from above, employees are suspicious of the motives for encouraging volunteer involvement: Is this a first step in budget cutting? What if the volunteers do great work? Will staff jobs be on the line? Who will be accountable if a volunteer does something wrong? These are all valid questions that can be answered to alleviate fears.

Other issues that may be fact or fear are:

- There is limited workspace already and now it has to be shared with volunteers.
- Volunteers are an interruption in an already over-busy day.
- Volunteers see what goes on and may criticize or offer unrealistic suggestions.
- It is hard to design work for a teenager one day, a senior the next day, and a graduate student the next.
- Volunteers seem to get all the thank-yous.

The list can go on and on, but the pattern is clear.

An agency should elicit open discussion of why volunteers have been recruited and what it will take to put them to work productively. It should also listen to legitimate concerns (such as limited space or necessary requirements for certain jobs) and work with employees to solve them.

Most important, employees need some training in how to work with volunteers. Many truly do not know if or how they can set standards, require accountability, or criticize volunteers. They also need to understand the importance of friendliness, courtesy, and appreciation.

## The Volunteer Perspective

It takes two to tango. Sometimes it is the attitude of the volunteers that leads to trouble. Some potential issues are:

- Volunteers may feel more experienced than the paid staff.
- Volunteers see paid staff taking breaks or socializing and may misperceive their dedication.
- Volunteers may arrive on time and find no work prepared.
- Volunteers may believe their job is to "protect" clients from the system and to watchdog against possible abuses.
- They may feel that they are given the low-level work employees don't like to do.
- They may feel unappreciated.
- And because there is a time lapse between their shifts, volunteers sense they are out of the communication loop and don't know what is going on.

These types of issues send the message to volunteers that they are outsiders, tolerated rather than welcomed. In some cases such feelings are incorrect conclusions, but in other cases volunteers have not been integrated into the team.

The orientation and training of volunteers should include a description of the roles of the employees with whom they will be working. Volunteers should also understand the chain of command and know where and how to register a complaint, express praise, or make suggestions supportively.

## The Management Perspective

If volunteer involvement is a desired goal, management must do its part to assure that teamwork can occur naturally. This means setting goals and objectives for volunteers and staff, articulating policies that set standards for volunteers, rewarding staff who supervise volunteers well, correcting those who do not, and other well-established steps that demonstrate agency expectations. Volunteers cannot integrate themselves into the organization alone—but when given the opportunity and the support, everyone can join together to make it work.

# Supporting Volunteers Who Work Off Site

A large number of volunteers accept assignments that require them to work independently, out of their homes or offices, or in the field. They connect to the organization and make periodic reports, but they are effectively without supervision most of the time. This includes a wide variety of tasks, such as:

- sports coaches
- troop and youth group leaders
- visitors to homebound people
- one-on-one tutors
- home chore workers
- fund-raising committee members
- those handling virtual assignments online

From an organizational point of view, these volunteers require follow up, support, assessment, and recognition. How can this be done when the volunteer is rarely seen?

## A Contact System

As part of the volunteers' training, expectations for ongoing contact should be clarified. Will the volunteer call in periodically or will the designated agency person get in touch first? Will there be any written logs or other reports to be turned in?

It is possible to recruit volunteers to be "team leaders," responsible for working with three to ten direct service volunteers. These team leaders act as intermediate managers, freeing agency staff from having to keep in contact with all the many volunteers in the field and increasing the support available to those on the front-line.

## The First Month

A crucial time in which to support new volunteers is during their first month of service. This is when the most questions arise and when the reality of the work assignment sinks in. This is also when the first blush of enthusiasm begins to fade, ideally to be replaced by satisfaction with the job being done. But the potential also exists for disappointment. The job in practice may be less appealing than in theory.

If a volunteer feels that no one is aware of his or her efforts, motivation can wane. So this is the time for frequent telephone contact. A manager or supervisor of volunteers should note on a calendar when the volunteer will be seeing a client or doing some task and call just before to wish him or her luck. Likewise, the person in charge should call the next day to ask how it went and to show that he or she appreciates the time and effort of the volunteer.

## Ongoing Communication

The key is staying in touch and making the volunteer feel that the organization is accessible to questions and requests. Some options:

- periodic meetings for all volunteers in a team or for those handling a particular assignment or geographic area. These meetings can double as in-service training sessions and serve to build a sense of camaraderie among the volunteers. Attendance can be optional or required, as long as the manager keeps in mind that the volunteers were recruited to do their field work, not to attend meetings.
- written reports, designed to minimize the time necessary to complete them while giving an overview of the work being done. Volunteers who resist submitting reports need to be held to some standard of accountability. If too many resist, the report itself needs to be re-examined.
- team leaders scheduling telephone appointments with volunteers at regular intervals to discuss progress and concerns. These can be recorded by the team leader in lieu of other written reports from the field volunteer.
- newsletters, online listservs, or regular memos, sharing anecdotes, success stories, news of the agency, upcoming events, etc.
- an open invitation for the volunteers to drop in and visit the agency whenever they are in the area
- an annual assessment form mailed or e-mailed for self-evaluation and feedback to the organization. This mailing needs to be followed up to get maximum participation.
- periodically interviewing the recipients of the service to learn their assessment of the help they are receiving
- saying thank you often, especially at the end of every conversation and communique. Whenever a volunteer has done something special, a quick personal note should be sent with a message like, "You may be in the field, but we still know you are there and appreciate your efforts!"

# Viewing Members of the Board as Volunteers

NO ONE WOULD argue with the fact that boards of directors of nonprofit agencies are comprised of volunteers. But in practice, the voluntary nature of board membership is frequently overlooked. All the principles of good volunteer management that apply to direct-service volunteer efforts can be applied to boards as well.

## Recruitment

New board members can be recruited following the same model used for finding other volunteers. The process begins with a clear written job description. The job description helps to target potential sources from which board members with needed skills or representing a specific audience might be drawn. It also clarifies what is expected from each board member.

There is a misconception that an organization's bylaws already provide job descriptions for board volunteers. Bylaws define functions and a division of responsibility. They do not specify the practical, operational requirements of a board position. Also, bylaws deal with functions that are continuous and relatively timeless. Job descriptions, which should be updated regularly, apportion tasks that may change over time.

Another common error is to develop job descriptions only for board officers. This sends the false message that only the officers have definite work to do, while the rest of the board just "thinks." The requirements of the agency from all members of the board can form the basic job description, to which can then be added the specific tasks of each position.

Board member job descriptions should be written honestly. Time commitments, including work expected between board meetings, should be stated. If an agency administrator hopes for or expects a financial contribution from every board member, the job description should say so. It is reasonable to ask board members to demonstrate their support of an organization with monetary donations. By openly expressing this expectation from the beginning, an agency administrator will be more comfortable later in soliciting the donation.

## Working Relationships

Orientation and training are as important for board members as for other volunteers. Regardless of the expertise for which the board member was recruited, no one is able to walk into a new situation and be productive without learning the details of how that organization works. New board volunteers want information and want to succeed in helping an organization or agency. Orientation and training are ways the agency can show appreciation and support.

The top paid administrator is usually the staff member who works most closely with the board of directors. This relationship can be described as a balance: the board makes policy and holds the administrator accountable for executing it and for meeting goals, while the administrator runs the day-to-day operations and keeps the board members informed of issues needing their attention.

The board is in charge. Volunteer board members have the final legal responsibility for the way an organization operates. Authority and power rest with them, including the right to hire and fire the chief executive. The board members, as trustees, also have oversight over the finances of the organization, assuring donors and the public that their money is being spent appropriately.

In order to make the best decisions, board members must rely on the information presented by the top executive, and they expect that person to draw the most pressing issues to their attention. The executive uses tools of persuasion to gain board support for agency actions.

## Recognition

Periodically, an agency should provide some evidence of appreciation for the hard work of board members. It is easy to become so immersed in the day-to-day problem-solving of an agency that mile-stones and accomplishments are overlooked. All volunteers want to feel that their efforts mean something. Board members need to applaud each other and to receive the public thanks of their agency.

# Ten Tips
## for Powerful Volunteer Leadership

**Tip #1** **It's better to live with a vacancy for a while than to put the wrong volunteer into a key position.**

Know the qualifications you need, and screen candidates to match them to the best volunteer assignment. If you place a volunteer with some misgivings from the start, think of how it will affect the entire organization—and other volunteers. Once you've made your selections, establish a "trainee" period for everyone so you can make sure you have chosen correctly.

**Tip #2** **Interrelationships are the single biggest factor in the success (or failure) of volunteer projects.**

There is often tension between employees and volunteers—and between veteran volunteers and newcomers. Analyze the factors that might cause resistance and clarify who is accountable to whom. Use tools like meeting minutes to keep everyone informed about expectations.

**Tip #3** **Never assume people know how to work with volunteers (even if they are volunteers themselves).**

Being a volunteer does not automatically make someone into a great leader of other volunteers. Practically no professional education includes training in how to work with volunteers. You have to train people how to work together.

**Tip #4** **Burnout of valued volunteers is the inevitable result of going back again and again to the same people.**

Develop and enforce a rotation policy. Move volunteers up the ranks—have a leadership development plan. Find ways for people to help out in shorter time frames, take leaves of absences and/or get an "assistant."

**Tip #5** **Be sure you are truly welcoming to newcomers.**

Do a mental walk-through of what happens to a new volunteer (the process and the tone), and see if it feels friendly and helpful. Consciously assign someone to orient newcomers and put them to work as soon as possible.

**Tip #6** **Recognition is much more than a thank-you.**

Appreciation and recognition are different. While it's important to say thank-you sincerely, the most effective form of recognition is to utilize a volunteer's ideas and credit the source! Learn to celebrate benchmarks, not just end products, especially if your work has long-range goals. Be aware of "low points" in enthusiasm and design "pick-me-ups."

**Tip #7** **Concentrate on good followership as well as on good leadership.**

Shared leadership is more motivating than top-down hierarchy. Write job descriptions for members as well as for officers. Publicize the expectations of membership. Train everyone to take action and not to wait for someone else to make requests.

**Tip #8** **Realize that no one volunteers to do a bad job.**

It is respectful and motivating to evaluate volunteer performance and to help volunteers do their best work. Agree upon expectations and methods of reporting at the very start. The reasons people remain in a volunteer assignment are different from why they started.

**Tip #9** **Make the most of your written communication.**

Most volunteers remain in contact with you through your mailings and publications. Give people a fighting chance to read—and act—on your mailings: highlight, use boxes, humor, color. Use the new available means of electronic communication to send shorter messages more often, faster and at less cost.

**Tip #10** **Most people do not say no to the invitation to volunteer—they never feel asked.**

Do genuine outreach, and invite people to get involved. Don't confuse publicity with recruitment, but remember that someone needs to know about your organization in order to want to become involved with it. Be proactive: Set goals for the best possible volunteer participation and then take the steps necessary to achieve them.

# Meeting Action Plan

**Date:** _____

| Subject | Discussion | Decision | Next Steps | Who/When |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Dear New Volunteer:

Thank you for your support of this organization.

We welcome your offer to serve as a volunteer with us and look forward to having you join our team of enthusiastic and devoted volunteers and staff members. Your skills and services will help us in our efforts to serve this community.

Without people like you it would be difficult for us to accomplish our goals. We know you will be proud of your contribution.

Feel free to call our office if you have any questions before starting work.

Our organization would not be able to do as good a job as it does without the services of volunteers like yourself. We hope you will feel rewarded by giving your time and talents.

Again, thank you.

Sincerely,

Contact: _____ Phone: _____

_____ Phone: _____

Dear Volunteer:

According to our records we haven't seen you lately and we miss you.

We rely on volunteers like you to support our efforts. But we also understand that your time is limited. We'd be happy to discuss ways we could restructure your volunteer schedule to accommodate other obligations you may have.

We hope you feel proud of your work with us. Please contact us soon so we can set up a volunteer schedule that meets your needs. The skills and services you bring to this organization are invaluable and make a difference to this community.

Thanks again for your help!

Sincerely,


# You Can Make the Difference

**Your Time and Talents Are Needed!**

# We're Making a Difference.

**Call Us to Ask about Volunteering** _____

# Recognition of Volunteer Service

This certificate is awarded to

_____

in recognition of _____ hours of service as


_____

Presented on the _____ day of _____.

_____

# Volunteer of the Month

This certifies that

_____

has demonstrated outstanding performance as a volunteer
and is hereby awarded this certificate of achievement
for the following accomplishment:

_____


Presented on: _____

_____

# Special Achievement Award

This certificate of achievement is awarded to:

_____

For: _____

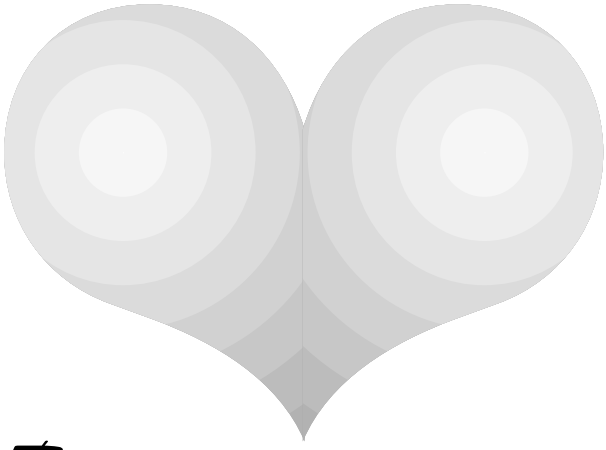
Thank you for your generous and outstanding performance.


_____

_____

_____

fold



There's no better time
than
Valentine's Day
to say...

cut

cut

***Print your own Volunteer Greeting Cards***

1. Copy this page on your copier. (Try colored paper for extra punch!)
2. Cut off bottom and left side as indicated.
3. Fold in half, top to bottom, with "front" of the card on the outside.
4. Fold in half, side to side, with "front" of the card on the outside.

fold

Show touch our hearts
by sharing yourself
as a volunteer with us.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

The President of the United States
and we thank you for giving
your time and talents
as a volunteer to strengthen
our community
and our organization.

fold




# are a National Treasure!

cut

cut

***Print your own Volunteer Greeting Cards***

1. Copy this page on your copier. (Try colored paper for extra punch!)
2. Cut off bottom and left side as indicated.
3. Fold in half, top to bottom, with "front" of the card on the outside.
4. Fold in half, side to side, with "front" of the card on the outside.

fold

...for the work
you so generously contribute
to us all year long
as a volunteer.

fold




cut

cut

***Print your own Volunteer Greeting Cards***

1. Copy this page on your copier. (Try colored paper for extra punch!)
2. Cut off bottom and left side as indicated.
3. Fold in half, top to bottom, with "front" of the card on the outside.
4. Fold in half, side to side, with "front" of the card on the outside.

fold

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

*As we give thanks*
*for life's good things*
*on this holiday,*
*we also thank you*
*for volunteering your time*
*and talents with us!*

fold



cut

cut

***Print your own Volunteer Greeting Cards***

1. Copy this page on your copier. (Try colored paper for extra punch!)
2. Cut off bottom and left side as indicated.
3. Fold in half, top to bottom, with "front" of the card on the outside.
4. Fold in half, side to side, with "front" of the card on the outside.

fold

fold

MORE VOLUNTEER WORK!

(But at least you know we really need you!)

Thanks for everything you do.

# What's the reward for good volunteer work?

cut

cut

***Print your own Volunteer Greeting Cards***

1. Copy this page on your copier. (Try colored paper for extra punch!)
2. Cut off bottom and left side as indicated.
3. Fold in half, top to bottom, with "front" of the card on the outside.
4. Fold in half, side to side, with "front" of the card on the outside.

fold