
Recruiting VOLUNTEERS



Using the Media to Recruit Volunteers

THE VOLUNTEER CONNECTION



Something special happened in North Texas in 1984: The Volunteer Connection.

The goals were simple—to enhance the image of volunteering while increasing the number of volunteers in the community.

Making it work required a team effort. The Volunteer Centers of the Dallas/Ft. Worth areas, five Junior Leagues and a major television station (in this case, the NBC affiliate, KXAS-TV) combined resources for a year-long public relations campaign.

How It Worked

- KXAS-TV donated airtime and production costs for the public service and news campaign. The television station pledged a minimum of one public service announcement (PSA) hourly, including daytime and primetime.
- The PSAs featured celebrities and others who explained why people volunteer and where volunteers are needed, such as youth and senior citizens centers.
- Phone numbers of the Volunteer Centers were displayed on the television screen, encouraging viewers to call for information.
- The station's news department created a mini-documentary to introduce the project and ran feature stories on individual volunteers and volunteer opportunities.
- The project was bolstered by local companies who relayed the message on bank

statement stuffers, utility bills, grocery bags and bus signs.

The Role of the Volunteer Center

- In its simplest form, the Volunteer Connection was an advertising campaign for the Volunteer Centers.
- The local Volunteer Centers continued as brokers between potential volunteers and agencies utilizing volunteers.
- Responsibilities of the Centers included counseling callers regarding their skills and interest, making placement suggestions and tracking the referrals.
- The Volunteer Connection has been an excellent vehicle for the Volunteer Center to encourage agencies to find new ways to utilize volunteers.

Organizational Structure:

A committee of community leaders was assembled to direct and manage the project. Junior Leagues and community volunteers

- staged the kickoff press conference
- approached companies for marketing support
- raised funds for the project
- interviewed community volunteers for potential television features
- contacted celebrities for PSAs
- staged a Volunteer Fair
- worked at the Volunteer Center.

Cost

Ten foundations provided money for brochures, stationery, postage, Volunteer Center forms, additional staff and equipment for Volunteer Centers, signs and posters.

Evaluation

Positive response to the Connection was immediate.

- For the year, referrals by Volunteer Cen-

ters increased 102 percent; 35,113 people were referred and 65 to 75% were placed.

- Between 450-500 agencies participated, with an average of 200 receiving referrals each month.
- Also, agencies reported direct calls by many new volunteers who did not go through the Volunteer Centers, but who were motivated by television PSAs and stories.
- A formal evaluation was completed by the Center for Organizational Research and Evaluation Studies at Texas Christian University, Ft. Worth.

—From the project summary in the excellent manual produced by the Volunteer Centers of Dallas, Plano and Tarrant County, Texas, and the Junior Leagues of Arlington, Dallas, Fort Worth, Plano and Richardson, Texas. See Tool Box near back of this issue for ordering information.

Notes

- Project planning for the pilot took six months—from January to June 1984 when the first PSA featuring youth volunteers appeared on KXAS-TV.
- The Volunteer Centers selected a monthly theme for the PSAs and suggested projects to be featured, which they felt gave them control over proper timing throughout the year (e.g., the PSA featuring "back-to-school" and "after-5 pm" volunteer placements were aired in August).
- Project organizers offered two half-day training sessions to explain the program to volunteer administrators of the agencies in need of volunteers and to stress the need for up-to-date volunteer job descriptions, particularly for after-5 pm placements, which were in great demand.
- Executive directors of the agencies received letters about The Volunteer Connection and its operation.

● Now in its second year, The Volunteer Connection includes a Saturday evening TV segment portraying volunteers in their placements—the idea of KXAS' weekend anchor, who hosts the show. The Volunteer Centers give her a list of volunteers to choose from. The taped profiles last about two to three minutes, with a fade-in of a sketch of the volunteer drawn by the station's artist. After the segment is aired, the station presents the drawing to the volunteer.

During the pilot year, a variety of activities were tried to enhance and ensure the success of the project. In reality, planners say, The Volunteer Connection could be a success with much less effort.

■ In addition to The Volunteer Connection Manual, the Dallas Volunteer Center offers a videotape highlighting all aspects of the media campaign. See details in Tool Box near back of this issue.

A ONE-HOUR 'RAISE YOUR HAND' TELETHON IN MEMPHIS

"Ours was unique because we did it on public TV," said Memphis Volunteer Center Director Marion Gruber of the Center's successful first telethon to recruit volunteers this past fall. "This resulted in minimal production costs, while greatly benefiting the station, Volunteer Center and corporate sponsors through tremendous community exposure."

The one-hour program, which aired last fall, opened with taped messages from the city and county mayors, followed by "teasers" from on-camera host/interviewers from other networks who asked, What does it mean to be a volunteer?

The tightly programmed hour included interviews with volunteers from one of three categories—working volunteers,

youth volunteers, and senior/traditional volunteers. After each interview, a list of the volunteer-seeking agencies (names only) in that category would flash across the screen as the host appealed for pledges of volunteer time. In the background, viewers could see the phone bank of volunteers recording pledges.

But that's only a small portion of the telethon. Viewers saw five taped features of local volunteer programs to get a first-hand look at the variety of volunteer opportunities available.

"We worked hard to select unique projects," Gruber said. "In one slot, for example, we showed volunteers in the United Cerebral Palsy Special Cargo Program, which offers horseback riding to children with the disease.

"In other profiles, viewers saw the Plough Towers Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich Makers, a group of retirement home residents who make hundreds of sandwiches every day for the hungry, and profiles of employee volunteer projects that are linked under our Center's Corporate Neighbor Program."

The hour included short spots to give information on volunteering and the Memphis Volunteer Center, a taped interview with VOLUNTEER President Kenn Allen, announcements by corporate representatives of their company's pledge, shots of Internal Revenue Service (a "Corporate Neighbor") staff tallying the pledges, and periodic updates—to background applause and cheering—of the total number of pledges received.

"It was extremely fast-paced and lively," Gruber said.

Despite direct competition from a World Series game, the telethon raised 222,550 hours of pledges. Gruber gives credit to the local Corporate Volunteer Council, whose financial and volunteer commitments made the telethon such a great success. Here's how it happened:

"The public TV station came to us," Gruber explained, "because it had selected volunteering as the focus of its community service 'investment.' We came up with the telethon as a means of raising community consciousness about volunteering.

"Then I took the idea to the Volunteer Center board, who loved it and made a commitment to be individually involved. Next, we went to the Corporate Volunteer Council, which at the time represented 13 companies in Memphis. They offered to provide financial sponsorship and all members committed their companies to involvement.

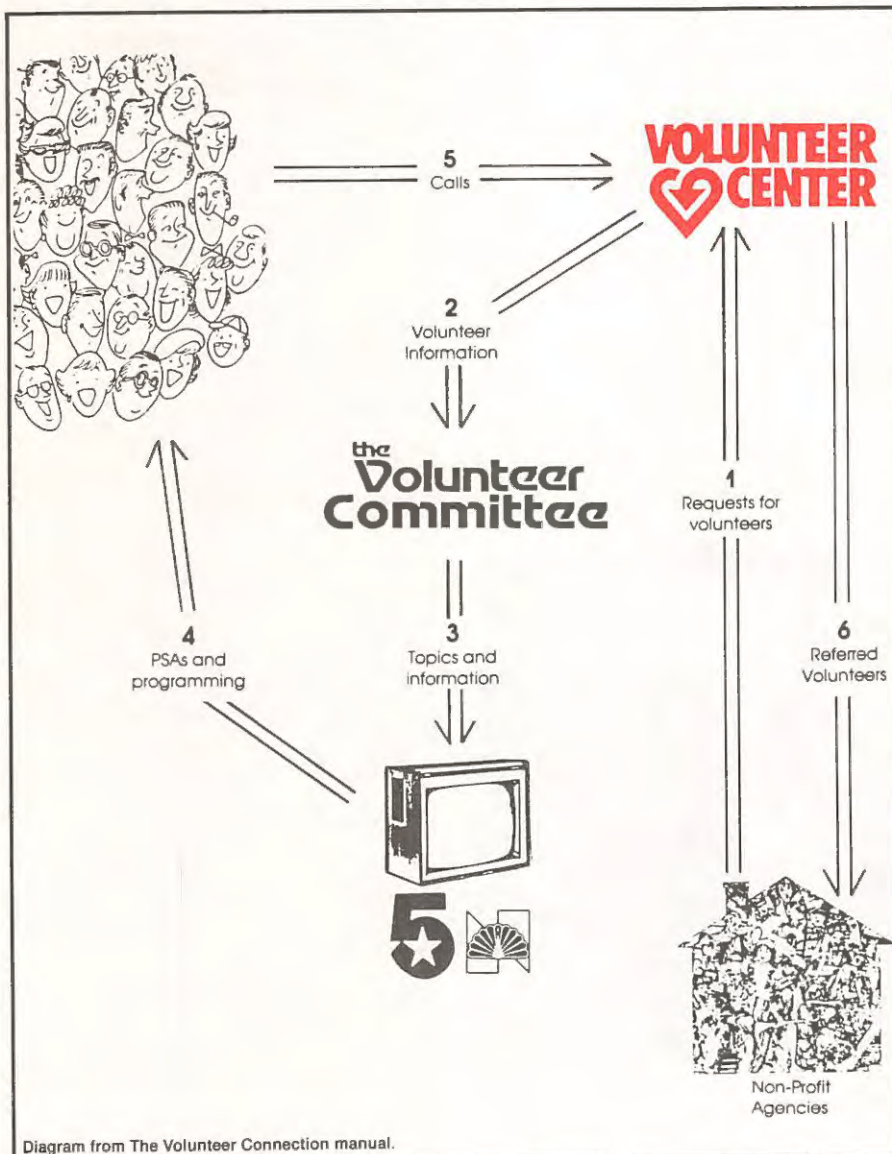


Diagram from The Volunteer Connection manual.

"Both the CVC and Volunteer Center saw the telethon as a great opportunity to provide an incentive for other corporations to join their programs."

Getting Started

The station gave the planners only one-and-a-half months to prepare their program, but Gruber says it forced them to work hard and fast.

"Actually, it helped generate a high level of excitement," she said.

A steering committee of representatives of WKNO, the CVC and Volunteer Center board and staff established plans for publicity, financing and program development, which then were developed by subcommittees. One of the first decisions was to entitle the program, "Raise Your Hand . . . Volunteer Telethon."

Publicity

Prepublicity included newspaper articles, public service announcements—prepared and donated by a local ad agency—on the major network stations and interviews on radio talk shows. WKNO assigned a public relations staff member to work with the publicity subcommittee, which helped a great deal and gave the telethon more clout, Gruber noted.

One newspaper article announcing the telethon contained a clip-out coupon for those who wanted to volunteer. The committee also bought one newspaper ad and arranged for coverage in the TV guide section on the day before the telethon.

The organizers also prepared and distributed flyers displaying the telethon's raised hand logo to schools.

Follow-Up

After the telethon, the committee publicized its success and results, particularly pleased to announce an almost 100 percent volunteer placement rate.

Because the TV callers were purposely not given information on where to go to volunteer, the Volunteer Center of Memphis sent follow-up cards thanking them for pledging and inviting them to attend one of four orientations, each at different times and days to accommodate anyone's schedule. Seventy-five percent of the volunteer callers attended these meetings. The Center's volunteer manager followed up with volunteers who did not attend.

Lessons

With plans to do it again next year, the telethon committee will do some things a little differently. For example, it will take six instead of less than two months to prepare, and it will make sure its on-air competition isn't as formidable as the American and National League champions!

Also, the planners will increase the number of taped segments featuring volunteer programs, which "were the best part of the show," Gruber says.

Benefits

In addition to the 280 nonprofits in Memphis who increased their volunteer rolls, "the telethon gave the Volunteer Center the greatest opportunity to recognize the corporate volunteer programs and to show the community what volunteers from the workplace are doing," Gruber said. "Nothing has done more for our Corporate Neighbor Program and the CVC."



Announcing the hours pledged midway through the "Raise Your Hand Volunteer Telethon," from left, Junius Davidson of Schering-Plough, Inc. and chair of the Corporate Volunteer Council of Memphis; Olin Morris, Channel 3 host; and Becky Davis of Union Planters National Bank and CVC chair.

HOW TO GET A TV STATION

Which Station to Approach?

1. Has the station shown previous support of community projects?
2. Does someone who could make the contact know the top decision-maker at the station?
3. Does the station run local PSAs?
4. Can the station make PSAs?
5. Is there a specific reason the station might need to improve its community image?
6. Is the station about to celebrate an anniversary and need a project?
7. Which TV station has the largest audience?

The Concept

Stations know that community goodwill is essential and therefore community service-type programming is important. Even though there is no longer the requirement that stations must provide community services to justify their license, the need for goodwill should continue.

The station can benefit by adopting The Volunteer Connection because it is identifying itself with a campaign that addresses a community need and supports all nonprofits in the community.

The station commits to giving a high percent of its PSAs for a specific period of time. In return, the campaign becomes the station's project with its name attached to it whenever possible. The Volunteer Center is responsible for referring volunteers, so the station is perceived as providing a tangible service.

Why the Station Should Agree

1. The evaluation of the pilot documents that the public's perception of the station as community minded is increased measurably.
2. Since the pilot project was an enormous success, the station would be adopting a tested project. A video describing the project is available for loan or purchase.
3. The project benefits every single nonprofit in the area cutting across the need of an entire community. It is rare to find a project that can do that.
4. The TV station would be doing what it does best—advertising, outreach, education, setting the public agenda and selling.

Who to See

- Send a letter to the station manager with an overview of the project and outline what it can do for the community and the station.
- Make an appointment with the gen-

eral manager, public affairs director and promotion director. Key volunteers, as well as directors of involved Volunteer Centers, should attend, but not more than four people.

What to Ask For

1. To guarantee an amount of gross rating points (the measure of the value of advertising time): Higher ratings will be needed at first and then a minimum amount for maintenance can be established.

Suggested level is 300 points for the first month and 100 points during the maintenance. The announcements should be distributed throughout the day including prime time. A good average is three to five PSAs a day.

2. To produce PSAs. A minimum of three topics with 10-, 20- and 30-second versions of each are needed per month. This level is needed so that the spots don't become stale from over use.

3. To assign an experienced member of the station management to work with the project (generally from the Community Affairs Department).

4. To air a special to introduce the project, possibly a mini-series on the news each night of the first week to explain the project.

5. To provide in-kind services such as project-related art work, staff time, public relations, promotion.

6. To assist project Steering Committee in raising funds by attending meetings and, if necessary, giving on-air recognition to the contributors (in accordance with FCC Regulations and management discretion).

7. To participate in the project for a set length of time. A year is recommended.

8. To air a special wrap-up of the project.

What the Station Will Receive

1. The exclusive right in the area to have the Volunteer Center involved in the project.

2. A committee of qualified community leaders capable of executing the project and willing to work on it.

3. Equal partnership on the steering committee that runs the project.

4. An assurance that the Volunteer Center is capable of handling the increased level of referrals that is anticipated.

5. Their name on all project materials.

—Also from *The Volunteer Connection manual*. See details in Tool Box.

TULSA'S TWO-HOUR 'SPIRIT OF OKLAHOMA' VOLUNTEER TELETHON

Five months before the Memphis telethon, the Tulsa Volunteer Center went on the air for two primetime hours (7 to 9 p.m.), netting 116,501 hours of pledges by more than 700 volunteers.

"The telethon created an attitude of how volunteering is a part of all of our lives," said Mary Finley, Center director. "It definitely raised community awareness."

As in Memphis, who consulted with the Tulsa Volunteer Center, this was the city's first volunteer telethon. The Center was also approached by a local TV station (CBS affiliate KOTV), and it, too, worked closely with the local Corporate Volunteer Council in developing the program.

The two-hour format included videotapes of local volunteer programs and live interviews with volunteers, which were divided into seven categories of volunteering. There were also live appearances by local celebrities and agency directors and taped messages from the governor and business leaders. Each CVC member also appeared to announce his or her company's pledge of volunteer hours.

The telethon was organized by the following committee chairs:

1. Publicity/Promotion Chair, whose committee placed newspaper stories, obtained coverage in newsletters and by radio stations, and succeeded in promoting the telethon on the TV guide cover.

2. Telethon Recruitment Chair, who recruited the volunteer phone operators from the group of 1985 Volunteer of the Year nominees. The committee felt this would add caliber to the phone bank volunteers and provide an opportunity for an on-air interview if time permitted.

3. Telethon Supervisors Chair. This group was recruited from the Tulsa Association for Volunteer Administrators, who were available during the program to answer all questions and make appropriate referrals.

4. Refreshments Chair.

5. VIPs Chair, who was responsible for getting key people in the community (e.g., mayor) to come on the show.

A key player, Finley stresses, is the data manager, who ran the computer program that churned out the totals of hours pledged while the program aired. Also, the three computer operators keyed in the organizations in which the callers expressed interest so that a cover letter and computer print-out of names could be sent to that agency the next day.

Viewers were urged to call in during the telethon (and they continued to do so for one-and-a-half hours after the program went off the air, Finley said), but the program also let them know they could call the Center in the following days to volunteer.

This year the Tulsa volunteer telethon is scheduled for March, once again in cooperation with KOTV.

■ The Tulsa Volunteer Center will loan a 15-minute demonstration tape, moderated by KOTV's general manager, of its successful telethon. See listing in Tool Box near back of this issue for price and ordering information.

As I See It

William Aramony, President, United Way of America



United Way's mission is to increase the organized capacity of people to care for one another. Volunteer Centers help us achieve this mission by involving the hundreds of people in every community who wish to help, but aren't sure how. We have to work at making it easier for people to volunteer and Volunteer Centers to work with nonprofit organizations to ensure that volunteers' talents and energies are used in the most meaningful way possible. This crucial support strengthens not only voluntarism but our communities as well.

Brian O'Connell, President, INDEPENDENT SECTOR

Americans have a long tradition of helping people, communities and causes. More Americans of more diverse ages and backgrounds volunteer today than ever before. But in modern society, people who want to help don't always know where their help is needed. Volunteer Centers play a vital role in connecting people with opportunities for voluntary action, and everyone benefits.



19 SLOGANS TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

The following slogans appear on brochures, flyers, ads and other materials developed by Volunteer Centers to recruit volunteers:

- A Better World Begins with You, Right Here. Someone in Bay County Needs You.—*Volunteer Action Center of Bay County, California*
- Helping the People of Marin Help the People of Marin—*Volunteer Center of Marin County, California*
- If You Help People, We're Here to Help You!—*Volunteer Center of Sonoma County, California*
- Our Bank Pays No Interest—Only Dividends (skillsbank brochure)—*Voluntary Action Center for the Capitol Region, Hartford, Connecticut*
- Volunteer—The Gift That Comes Straight from the Heart.—*Volunteer Clearinghouse of the District of Columbia*
- It all begins with a phone call—putting people who care in touch with people who need—*Voluntary Action Center of Dalton, Ga.*
- Show Your Care...Share Your Care...through CVS—*Community Volunteer Service of the St. Croix Valley Area, Stillwater, Minnesota*
- Volunteering Builds a Better You—*United Way of Greater St. Louis Voluntary Action Center*
- We Know Someone Who Needs You—*Monadnock Volunteer Center, Keene, New Hampshire*
- Somebody Out There Needs You and We Know Who—*Voluntary Action Center of Morris County, New Jersey*
- Busy People are Working Miracles (skillsbank brochure)—*Volunteer Center of Albany, New York*
- Make a Difference—Volunteer!—*Volunteer Service Bureau of Westchester County, New York*
- Volunteer—It's the Natural Thing to Do—*Voluntary Action Center of Summit County, Akron, Ohio*
- You May Work for Free, But You Won't Work for Nothing!—*Community Information Volunteer Action Center, Cleveland, Ohio*
- Say 'Yes,' Volunteer!—*Volunteer Center of Nashville, Tennessee*
- Something Ventured, Something Gained. Volunteer.—*Volunteer Action Center of Greater New Haven, Connecticut*
- Some of the World's Most Valuable People Have Never Been Paid a Cent. Volunteer. Somebody Needs You.—*United Way of Spokane County's Voluntary Action Center*
- When We Share, We Show We Care.—*Voluntary Action Center of the Minneapolis Area, Minnesota*
- Have A Heart—Give A Hand.—*Volunteer Center of the United Way of the Capital Area, Jackson, Mississippi*

As I See It

Marlene Wilson, Volunteer Trainer, Consultant, Author



I have a very personal commitment to Volunteer Centers, as I began my career in this field serving as the first director of the Volunteer Center in Boulder, Colorado. I honestly believe that there is no other single organization that has quite the same opportunity to impact the quality (as well as quantity) of volunteerism in any community. This is because an effective Volunteer Center is in a unique position to bring about creative networking between public and nonprofit agencies, churches and the corporate world. It becomes the logical connection between need and resources for all of them and therefore has its finger on the very pulse of the community. This is possible because the role of a Center is to "be everybody's and nobody's!" What an incredibly valuable and needed role in today's complex world! Best of luck to all of you in 1986!

ADDING A NEW TWIST TO YOUR MEDIA RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

In September 1982, the Voluntary Action Center of the Council of Community Services in Roanoke, Va., established a Volunteer Needs Study Committee to survey the community's volunteer needs. Its recommendation: To upgrade the image of volunteering through a media packet that would emphasize "skills and talents" rather than "hands and hearts." Other criteria:

- The ads should be "clean," "tidy" and "generic," so that any volunteer organization could use them.
- They should show a diversity of role models and a variety of tasks.
- Volunteering should be presented with a new twist.

Out of these recommendations, the "Volunteer, It's Worth Every Minute" multi-media campaign was born. One-and-a-half years later, during National Volunteer Week 1983, the VAC launched the campaign. The slogan and logo appeared on billboards, radio spots, TV public service announcements, in newspaper ads and articles.

The results were tracked through telephone calls to the VAC from potential volunteers during a one-and-a-half-month period. Calls were tallied into categories of volunteer time and interest and client interest. The callers were asked how they heard about the VAC and through which media.

Results

- Newspaper ads and articles received the highest viewing percentages.
- Television, especially a noon-time spot, came in second.
- The rest of the responses were evenly dispersed among radio, billboards and friends.
- Most volunteers who responded were interested in the highest needs categories determined by a 1983 agency survey.
- Most of the callers had no client preference and were willing to be flexible with their time.
- The number of VAC callers increased five-fold as a direct result of the new multi-media campaign.
- The "Volunteer—It's Worth Every Minute" multi-media kit is available for \$10. See listing in Tool Box near back of this issue. The logo is featured as the Poster on the inside back cover.