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Good News: Today and Tomorrow for Energize, Inc.

By [Susan J. Ellis](#)

September
2018

Hello to all Volunteer Management Hot Topic readers from – yes! – Susan herself. It's the first new piece I've written since November 2017, which certainly feels like progress to me. Thank you to so many of you who have sent me well wishes as I battle cancer. Plus, enormous gratitude to the Energize staff and consultants who have been so successfully continuing to serve our customers and colleagues during all these months.

For the past 10 months, I've been in hospitals, hospices, and home care. Now, I have my independence –at home on my own! (I am working on getting my driver's license renewed and have restarted chemo treatments.) In the first four months or so I was in and out of consciousness and expected not to recover. Wrong! To the surprise of doctors and friends, I began to retrieve my speech and energy. While I have not been into the Energize office yet, the glory of computers and cell phones allows me to keep in touch when possible. However, I am not officially “working,” since my physical self needs to rest several times a day.

Energize Today

Everyone who has contacted Energize during these months has received the same attention and service as always by a range of our staff members. The Hot Topics, as one example, have continued monthly, written by staff and colleagues, and our extensive website keeps being updated and is very active. The [online bookstore](#), [e-Volunteerism journal](#), and [Everyone Ready® online volunteer management training program](#) are all being kept current and available to you.

All our services will continue and evolve as necessary to meet your needs. (And, we'd love to hear from you about what other things we might do to help you engage volunteers most effectively.)

Energize Moving Forward

I do not anticipate returning to work full time, but I do want to keep active with Energize in many ways, especially as an advisor to the staff and as a writer and editor. But that's OK! Why? Because of the extraordinary people who are part of our team.



Continuing Expertise

We've been adding consultants since I was first diagnosed six years ago and now it's all taking shape. You can read about all our current team members at these pages:

- [Energize staff and associates](#)
- [The Journal's editorial team](#)

Note our relationships with the *authors* of the books we sell, the *writers* of articles for *e-Volunteerism*, and the *presenters* in our online training sessions.

Most important, Energize is committed to continuing and expanding the training and consultation we offer to colleagues, live at your events and also via online tools. [Sheri Wilensky Burke](#), [Betsy McFarland](#), and [Rob Jackson](#) have all been delivering such presentations to Energize clients beyond their work on *Everyone Ready* and *e-Volunteerism*. If you'd like to work with any of our consultants and trainers, just use our [Contact Us form](#) and we'll be in touch to assess your needs and help you take the next steps toward improving your volunteer engagement.

Please also recognize that we are the only volunteerism consulting firm that has actively recognized and promoted volunteering internationally and engaged knowledgeable people from around the world. Our colleagues are based throughout the United States, Canada, England, and Australia. Wherever you are, we can help you – or we can find people to help you.

Help via Technology

Most important is that Energize will continue to provide training and consultation to individual organizations and events. Keep in mind that Skype is a powerful tool! While many of our folks will be happy to travel to your location, we can also work with you remotely – in a wonderful, personal way. We'll keep explaining this option to you, as it is especially great for keynote speeches and for ongoing consultation meetings. Skype is truly a two-way communication tool. And it saves lots of travel money, too.

Our Role as the Field's Archivists

While most people know the Energize website [A-Z Volunteer Management Library](#), you may not be aware of our *on-site* library of printed materials: published books, journals in the field (since they began publishing in the 1960s), conference handouts, and a wide range of organizational archive materials. FYI, I have been collecting materials since I began in the field in 1971. [Ivan Scheier](#) – who had been given a major part of [Harriet Naylor's](#) collection before she died – passed everything he had to me about ten years ago. So, we have well over 2,000 items and want to keep this unique resource going for the field.

Over the next year or so, we will try to find financial sponsors to create a *nonprofit* volunteerism study center. Of course, we'll keep you all posted on what's happening with this idea. Ideally, we would love to become an archive for historic organizational documents for all of you, too.

Keeping You Involved in Energize

I hope I've been able to convey the hard work that everyone has done, especially suddenly filling in for me with no warning. Most important, however, is the excitement we are generating about new ideas for the future. On our side, we promise to keep you updated on our plans, asking for your input as often as possible (but don't wait to be asked, go ahead and submit your input below or on our [Contact Us](#) form!).

We'd love to hear about how Energize has assisted you in the past and what support and resources you need going forward.

- *What did you value most about our services in the past? How could we improve those services?*
- *What are other things we might do to help you engage volunteers most effectively?*

Related Topics: [Training](#) | [Trends and Issues](#)

Comments from Readers

Submitted on September 4th, 2018

Corina Sadler, CVA, Volunteer Resources Supervisor, City of Plano, Texas - Volunteers in Plano, Plano/Texas, USA

Wonderful to read this update. So glad you are checking in Susan. Among the many ways Energize benefits me as a volunteer manager I find most valuable my [e-Volunteerism subscription](#). When I begin preparations to have a training class for paid staff, I always check the archives for relevant articles to help me prove my point in engaging volunteers. Every search I find something truly inspiring and helpful to me in explaining why we do what we do.

Submitted on September 7th, 2018

sally mackie, Volunteer Manager, Vitas Healthcare, Mt. laurel, NJ, USA

I do [receive the monthly newsletter](#) and find them helpful and informative. This month, I found the article on the importance of volunteers having their own space and a place to store their personal items. We are truly blessed in our program to have 14 administrative volunteers. Each has their own area to work in but two who have more specific duties have their own area and each has a drawer in their cubicle to store their personal items. This has evolved naturally over time and I must admit I have wondered at times if they were making themselves too comfortable. Now I know, thanks to your article, that this is exactly what we should be encouraging them to do. Thank You

Submitted on September 6th, 2018

Chris Linnel, 20 years with Energize, Inc. , Naperville IL, USA

Here are excerpts from a longer letter written to Susan:

Susan!!! How wonderful to hear your voice! I remember fondly sitting at my desk awaiting an evening volunteer event at the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County and listening to podcast after [podcast](#)... I learned from my mentor....YOU!

You asked what services you and **Energize, Inc.** provided that have been of value. I thought you should know from a personal perspective of 20 years at the District...

- [The Volunteer Management Audit](#) was introduced by our Education Department in response to the volunteer discord at Danada Equestrian Center. The work done with this text began a thorough investigation of concerns and practices regarding the management of Danada's horses...and of course a valuable conversation with our staff and volunteers.
- Because of the initial success of our research, I was asked to organize a training session with you for our staff at the Forest Preserve District. You came and spoke frankly to executive staff, managers, supervising staff and volunteer liaisons ... Many re-thought old strategies and brought new life to their programs. At the very least, they began to listen – to their volunteers, to their colleagues, and yes, even to us! ([Training and Consulting](#))
- Because of those trainings, I was able to follow-through with the purchase of [Everyone Ready](#) as a platform for my volunteer liaison meetings. The discussion among those individuals was inspired. Their commonalities, their differences, and the pure conversation among themselves made for a coordinated effort to better engage our

volunteers. They felt they were not alone. They had support, not only from me, but from experts in the field. That made all the difference!

- Writing the [e-Volunteerism](#) article "[A Goat Story: How an Eagle Scout and 38 Goats Volunteered to Make a Campground Safe from Poison Ivy](#)" with Gavin Burseth is one of the highlights of my career. It was an opportunity to reflect on best practices, while reviewing new innovative thought. Amazing to see what a long way I'd come, gaining a willingness to experiment even at the end of my career. I learned a lot and surprised myself, even then! For that, I'm infinitely grateful.
- I knew if I had a burning question and needed an expert opinion, you'd be there. We even had an occasional phone conversation to clarify my understanding of your thoughts about an issue. It held a lot of weight with my director and our executive staff. Your ideas were taken seriously and helped to shape our next steps.

So Susan, thank you...for all of it! Your voice – whether in podcast, books, or in person, brought me great strength and understanding in this field I love so well.

Submitted on September 6th, 2018

Graham Harrop, cartoonist, Gryndstone and Fusspot Press, North Vancouver, Canada

So delighted to read the health update - the power of positive thinking! Susan, you and your team are such an asset to the volunteer director community but more than that, your kindness and care for every aspect of Energize! are an inspiration! All best wishes from Vancouver

Submitted on September 6th, 2018

Steve McCurley, Olympia, WA, USA

Susan: Hip, hip, hooray! And glad you're back and are you again. Makes me feel like I probably have several more years of functioning in me.

Submitted on September 6th, 2018

Don Rhodes, Employers' Advocate, 226438, Clyde, Central Otago, New Zealand

Excellent news Susan.....may the recuperation proceed at pace.

Be aware that one of the best places on earth to help with rehabilitation from whatever it is that ails you, is New Zealand. When you do decide to test me on this assertion, let's know.....always a bed and you will be welcome to stay in Central Otago.....and obviously keep up the great work of Energize.

Cheers. DonR.

Submitted on September 8th, 2018

Barbara Sheffer, CVA, Director Volunteer Support, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Arlington VA , US

Hey! Great news to hear, Susan! Our profession benefits because of you! We will continue to pray for you. I really enjoy the [monthly hot topics](#) and [articles in e-Volunteerism](#). You and your team provide me the trends and awareness I need to focus on in the sea of information overload. With the limited time I have to read and keep up with professional research, I stay up with these 2 resources. I'm confident you have screened out the junk and provided me the best information for the time I allocate. Many thanks!

Submitted on September 11th, 2018

Jayne Hench, Maryland, USA

After like a lifetime as Volunteer Services Coordinator for Montgomery Parks (30 years), I am retiring from the MD National Capitol Park & Planning Commission at the end of this month. I just wanted to let you know I think we are a better organization for having known you and the team at Energize. I often refer to myself (and my colleague Lynn who will be acting until a permanent replacement is hired) as the old battle axes of volunteerism...but you certainly taught me when I was starting. So what does that make you? One of my hero's. I'll always remember meeting you on the boat in New Orleans and be grateful for the lifetime of dedication you have given our industry. All the best and carry on!

Submitted on September 18th, 2018

Gerald (Jerry) ..., presenter, blogger, consultant, independent contractor, New York, NY, USA

Dear Susan,

I finally got around to this month's Hot Topic. I decided to listen to it (my preferred method the last few years). First off, I was delighted to hear your voice! Gotta love technology. That voice has led, inspired, and most importantly challenged me the past 20 some years.

Since I have no interest in re-inventing the wheel and appreciate institutional/professional knowledge, I'm very excited about the idea of a nonprofit volunteerism study center. I've always learned and sometimes been challenged by the monthly Hot Topic. They are brief, informative, and allow folk to respond. The length of the topic is great as we struggle with time management. The responses are often enlightening and or reaffirming. I find [e-Volunteerism](#) to be informative and lets me know who, what, and how folk are doing, learning, leading, etc. And the books I've ordered have been a great resource. Yes, I like looks - I scribble in them, fold back corners, attach post-it notes, etc.

I don't have a crystal ball regarding the future and what Energize Inc. might do to help engage volunteers most effectively. What I will state is that Energize Inc. has a history of looking out for, analyzing, and providing guidance regarding trends as they come and go.

Submitted on October 27th, 2018

Pam Simmons, Consultant/Owner, Coreniche Consulting Inc., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Susan,

I am so happy to hear you are recovering! I heard via the grapevine that you were not well. Your amazing will to make the world a better place through volunteerism matches your will to regain your health.

Would love to see you again!

Warmest regards,

Pam

Submitted on October 31st, 2018

Merle Walker, Volunteer Program Manager, Lake Metroparks, Concord Twp OH, USA

We know not what tomorrow holds but today I can reflect,

I have had the pleasure of talking with you at a few conferences throughout the years. I have been validated by your words, I have been guided with many of the books, I have been able to share and exchange works with others interested in the path of Volunteer Administration in a time of uncertainty as we morph in to who we are. From the Top Down you filled the gap helping me to be a voice to others and really feel good about that which I believe. This is a wonder field! So many possibilities. In my early years I thought I was alone no one understood my role, my value, your works connected me. For the last 28 years you and your organization have continued to energize me. Thank you for sharing your self and challenging us with your hot topics.

Submitted on November 6th, 2018

Rustie Brooke, Brooklyn, United States

Dearest Susan,

You've been in my thoughts consistently and it's wonderful to hear this good health news directly from you. Onward and onward again !~!~!

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