

CAREERS

Managing volunteer workers seen as upwardly mobile track

By CAROL KLEIMAN

Chicago Tribune

CHICAGO — According to a recent Gallup Poll, volunteering in the United States is a \$100 billion business — and growing every day. The Gallup figure is the dollar value of time contributed.

"Therefore, it's only logical that agencies will need competent management to make the most effective use of this vast reservoir of skill and talent," said Winifred L. Brown, executive director of the mayor's voluntary action center for New York. She heads a central clearinghouse for volunteers that serves more than 5,000 city and voluntary agencies, corporations and educational institutions throughout New York City.

Brown recently coordinated the distribution of 1 million items of clothing from 600 manufacturers to more than 350 organizations that serve the homeless. "More than 125,000 volunteers worked on the project," Brown said.

"Volunteer administrators," said Brown, an accredited social worker, "are just as important these days to agencies and institutions as are professional fundraisers. One gives you financial resources and the other gives you people-power."

Her work includes recruitment, budgeting, supervision and personnel administration. "We act as personnel directors for agencies, create job descriptions for them and try to help them develop as professional workers," said Brown.

Brown said salaries range from \$25,000 to \$60,000, depending on the organization's size. "The job used to be a dead end, but now it's considered to have its own steppingstones to executive director of the agency," she said.

Brown is vice president of the Association for Volunteer Administration, a Washington-based professional group. It will hold its annual conference in Washington Oct. 12-15.

"The association has a certification program which recognizes leaders of volunteer programs who demonstrate professional performance standards," said Brown. "Certification is based on competency, on your degrees, how long you've worked, your leadership role. You also have to show you know the management process."

Volunteers must be "used efficiently or they don't stay long," the director said.

John D. Mason is director of volunteer services of William Temple House in Portland, Ore.,

a non-profit social service agency started by parishioners in the Episcopal Church. The agency counsels people with alcohol, drug, sexual, family and rehabilitation problems. It has a paid staff of 18 and 300 volunteers.

Mason, who is paid \$28,000 a year, said those interested in the field should be "well-versed in management skills, planning, organizing, staffing, evaluating, supervising and controlling."

Volunteers in state agencies save Illinois' taxpayers \$85 million a year, said Jeanne Bradner, director of the state's office of voluntary action.

"If you're going to get the most out of unpaid staff and give the most to them, you must have a truly professional person in charge," said Bradner, who has been with the state for six years and is paid \$40,000.

Volunteers do "significant tasks and are highly valuable," said Dolly Johnson, director of volunteer services for Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. Johnson is in charge of 550 volunteers. The 760-bed hospital has 4,000 employees.

"There are going to be more job opportunities for directors because agencies are looking at the value of having a professional direct and coordinate volunteers," said Johnson.