

new designs

for youth development.



A National Publication of Associates for Youth Development, Inc.
VOLUME 1/NUMBER 7/NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1980

I'm A Volunteer- I'm Ten Feet Tall!

by Eva Schindler-
Rainman



**'NOW' Opportunities For Youth
In The Volunteer World**



Eva Schindler-Rainman

Eva Schindler-Rainman D.S.W.

I'M A VOLUNTEER—I'M TEN FEET TALL!

'Now' Opportunities for Youth in the Volunteer World

The volunteer world has changed tremendously in the last few years; it is still changing and will continue to change. Why is this so? It is because the volunteer scene reflects the state of the world—where we are, and where we are going. Without doubt, change has never been more rapid, more complex or more challenging. As Alvin Toffler points out in his recent book,¹ we are in explosive, post-industrial times, which he calls "The Third Wave."

New dynamics and trends are affecting or will affect and permeate volunteers and voluntarism in a wide variety of ways.

Before we look at some of the trends, it may be important to define a few terms:

Volunteer—any person of any age, who gives time, energy, skill, knowledge and resources voluntarily and without monetary profit. The volunteer engages in a variety of

functions, including direct service, administration, advocacy, fund raising, decision making and social action.

The *motivations to volunteer* include: altruism, wanting to be a change maker, needs for power and influence, desire to have fun, guilt, boredom, wishes for new social growth, transitioning or desire for learning experiences. Volunteers range from the very young to the very old; they are female and male and they come from all economic, social, life style, racial, religious, ethnic and nationality backgrounds and groups. Volunteers come from all stages of physical and mental health. Volunteers are people who want to make a difference.

This article deals with young people who can and do make a difference—youth volunteers.

"There is concern about the uncorking of talents and abilities of human beings and the better utilization of the wide range of interests, skills and resources that persons have."

Volunteerism—refers to the persons volunteering in general or in a particular service.

Voluntarism—is the movement and philosophy behind the freely giving of services. It is one of the bases of a democratic citizen participatory society.

TRENDS AND DYNAMICS

What are and will be some of the trends and dynamics affecting the youth volunteer world? There are many, but we shall look at a selected few:

1. *Concerns about better and more humane utilization of human and ecological resources.* Among the human resource concerns are the utilization of time and questions about the importance of punctuality and "on time-ness." There is concern about the uncorking of talents and abilities of human beings and the better utilization of the wide range of interests, skills and resources that persons have. There continues to be concern about human pollution² and the need for human beings to have a worthwhile experience on this earth.

Among the ecological and physical resource concerns are the questions of less money, fewer job opportunities, and of better use of existing buildings (such as school buildings and other community facilities) on a 24-hour basis. There are also increasing problems about natural resources, and the need to decrease the pollution and misuse of natural resources.

Volunteer efforts in all of these areas can make the difference between good and poor utilization of human and physical resources.

2. *Changing family patterns and development of alternative life style possibilities.* Youth will be among the first to note that the family has become a changing entity. In many cases, if there are two parents they are both working; in the single parent fam-

ily, the parent is usually working so that the young are facing many responsibilities earlier. There are also a variety of life style possibilities outside of marriage, being practiced as well as discussed. These developments influence the lives and roles of younger people and may result in offering opportunities for volunteers as counselors, mentors, models and discussion leaders; they involve neighborhood, church, recreation, family and youth service systems.

3. *The changing roles of youth.* It is certainly evident that the young are getting older sooner, physically and, in many cases, being thrust into the ways of the world at an earlier age. Therefore, the young are more involved in daily decision-making about their own lives, as well as the lives of some others. They become more independent, less directed, and they seem to have open to them many more options. Often this occurs without their having criteria to guide their choices, because the roles of the parent, the church, and the importance of ethical and religious systems and frameworks seem to be in transition.

4. *Traditional values and rules are in a state of flux.* We are moving from valuing long term commitments to temporariness and short term involvements, from an emphasis on conformity to a focus on diversity and pluralism, from upward mobility, making money and materialism as a definition of success, to a variety of new definitions for personal success and fulfillment, from rootedness to mobility, from punctuality to situationally being on time and from reverence for authority to confrontations and questioning of authority. These are but a few examples of trends that are impacting the volunteer world.

5. *"Architectural" changes of organizational missions and structures.* Organizations, particularly youth serving organizations, are questioning their own viability and the kinds of things they need to do in order to keep up with, and be ahead of, societal changes in general, and particularly of those affecting youth. Organizations as a whole are moving from pyramid structures to the "flattened-out organization."³ It is interesting to note that more and more youth are members of boards of directors in the corporate as well as the human service world. Youths are serving as facilitators and as consultants in areas in which they are knowledgeable and experienced.

6. *Changes in educations and educational systems.* Some school districts now offer school all year round, with staggered vacations, so that young people are available as volunteers at different times of the year. Many schools offer opportunities to learn about volunteering and to do volunteer

"Youth has unique resources to offer: ideas, points of view, energy, charisma, experience and enthusiasm, which are valuable in planning, facilitating, and decision making."

jobs and get school credit for such work.

7. *Youth unemployment.* Youth unemployment is at an all time high, especially for non-white teenagers. The volunteer world could help young people who lack experience gain skills that will qualify them for the available and emerging jobs.

SOME ASSUMPTIONS

- Youth has important roles and important responsibilities in shaping this society now and for the future.
 - Youth has unique resources to offer: ideas, points of view, energy, charisma, experience and enthusiasm, which are valuable in planning, facilitating, and decision making. Look at it as "youth wisdom."
 - Youth has discretionary time that is available to be harnessed in the volunteer world.
 - Volunteer jobs contribute to the growth and learning of young people in their career and educational pursuits.
 - Volunteering can be helpful in the transition from youth to adult life, from dependence to independence, from family life to parenting, from apathy to responsible citizenship.
 - The combination of young, middle-aged and older persons is a unique one for appreciating each other, solving problems and realistic decision making.
 - Young persons need role models, mentors and adult friends, and might find them through volunteer activities.
- Volunteer opportunities for youth should be available through human service organizations in the community – local, state, or national, – as well as through the corporate sector and governmental systems.

- There are knowledgeable and committed persons, adult professionals and volunteers, including young people, in every community who can be the resources for developing, promoting, and providing increased youth volunteer opportunities.
- There is a body of knowledge about youth, youth development, and examples of youth volunteer "doings" available to retrieve and use (see Bibliography).
- Through volunteer experience at home, youth can learn about our focus on international understanding and world peace.

SNAP SHOT EXAMPLES OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM

There are many examples of youth doing great things, as citizens of their neighborhood communities and country, to improve the quality of life for themselves and for others. It is very clear that youths may act as initiators of projects or as connectors of potential consumers to providers, as advocates, as models and as expert consultants in the areas of their expertise. Some examples include:

1. Reading projects: reading to the elderly, to blind persons, and to non-English speaking persons.
2. Tutoring in basic education subjects at a probation camp, in schools, in churches.
3. Translating: from Spanish to English, English to Spanish or for newcomers who need help in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Yiddish, Russian, Hungarian, German, French and other languages.
4. Working with handicapped persons of all ages, including the mentally retarded, the physically handicapped and the mentally ill (Junior Olympics activities are a good example).
5. Serving as recreation aides, with particular emphasis on helping recreation personnel involve and bring out shy potential participants, who often hang around recreation and youth activities centers but cannot get themselves into the action.
6. Helping with substance abuse programs, sexual counseling, or counseling peers on how to get along better with their families.
7. Working in hospitals: running errands, reading, conversing, relating to young patients at the intake desk, working with chronically ill children, assisting occupational therapists.
8. Making decisions: as board members of local, state, or national organizations; on budget committees helping determine budget for youth services; as discussion leaders of small groups who need to make decisions within organizations, communities, and other systems.

9. Serving in the ecological sphere: i.e. helping American Indian groups develop water resources for their particular area; helping clean up oil spills; helping the birds and water fowl caught in oily waters; helping in National Parks with forest and desert conservation by keeping motorcycles and bicycles on the roads and off the natural ground and its wildlife.
10. Assisting staff who work with animals: in animal shelters, as well as in zoos, and in summer camping activities.
11. Working and playing with the elderly: in day care centers, through hospice programs, and in homes and senior citizen centers (because of the special relationship between the very young and the very old, both often feel somewhat alienated from society, and understand each other particularly well).
12. Sharing and supporting little people: in day care centers, kindergartens, and school volunteer programs. Often the latter activity is called "cross-age tutoring."
13. Participating in programs where youth and older volunteers are paired: to give a particular service, such as visiting pediatric wards or convalescent homes, retirement centers, or institutions for orphans or

"Volunteering can add to the feelings of self worth and can inspire personal growth and improvement."

chronically ill children. In one city such a program is called the "Geri-Teen Program."

Use these snapshots of some ongoing activities as ideas to give wider volunteer opportunities to youth and to providers and consumers of the services.

SOME CHALLENGES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS TO INCLUDE YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

The foregoing is a challenge to all organizational systems. Foremost among these systems would be organizations already tapping the resources of volunteers and giving volunteer persons opportunities for service. Added

to this could be systems that now do not have volunteers, but could have them in the future. For example, departments of city government, the business and the corporate sectors, and human services on the state and federal level that now may not see how volunteers could help extend and humanize their services. The challenges include:

- To set goals to design jobs with and for youth;
- To include youth more often as administrative/decision-making volunteers;
- To consult young persons, especially when decisions are being made that will affect them;
- To offer youth volunteers career ladders, so that they may begin where they are and can move from there;
- To keep detailed volunteer personnel records, so that youth volunteers can use their experiences to qualify for college entrance and/or employment;
- To place youth on committees and task forces whose job it is to look at new ways to offer opportunities for all volunteers;
- To develop productive, fun, training opportunities for those doing volunteer jobs, including orientation, on-the-job and in-service training;



8. To develop collaborative networks of organizations from government, private, corporate and the business sector to design youth volunteer opportunities;
9. To create youth volunteer counseling services;
10. To recruit and utilize experienced young people as trainers of new and younger volunteers;
11. To promote intergenerational volunteer opportunities;
12. To conduct training programs for adults, both volunteers and professionals, to develop skills in working with youth;
13. To implement frequent formal and informal unique forms of recognition, especially designed to meet the needs of youth;
14. To educate the youth of today by involving them in the spirit of voluntarism – helping others – in ways not provided through other means.

These challenges are based on the assumption that organizations need to see that they are “underprivileged” if there are no youths in their systems, and that youth will be short-changed from full participation in community life if there are few or no youth volunteer opportunities.

“There are many examples of youth doing great things, as citizens of their neighborhood communities and country, to improve the quality of life for themselves and others.”

VALUES OF VOLUNTEERING FOR THE YOUNG

Experiences accrue and values are built for the young person who has the opportunity to volunteer. These include:

- Exploration of career possibilities,
- Explorations of different people-serving systems, such as health, business, welfare, education, criminal justice, religion, and others,

- Useful ways to spend discretionary time, including fun and adventure and
- Meeting new people from all walks of life, which helps youth to learn to become motivated, and to enlarge their sphere of life experiences.

Most of all, volunteering can add to the feelings of self worth and can inspire personal growth and improvement. Thus youth see themselves differently and are respected and appreciated in new ways by others. When this happens, it is no wonder that youth pronounce: “I’m a volunteer – I’m 10 feet tall!”

Schindler-Rainman is a well known author, trainer, consultant and conference leader. She lives in Los Angeles, California.

FOOTNOTES

1. *The Third Wave*, William Morrow & Co. New York, N.Y., 1980.
2. Ronald Lippitt and Eva Schindler-Rainman, *The Human Energy Crisis* Research and Development Division, National Council of YMCAs, New York, N.Y., 1974.
3. Cleveland, H., “The Decision Makers,” *The Center Magazine*, Sept./Oct. 73, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, Calif., 1973.
4. Ginzberg, Eli, “Youth Unemployment,” *Scientific American*, 242:5, May 1980.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brown, B. Frank, Director, “*The Transition of Youth to Adulthood: A Bridge Too Long. A Report to Educators, Sociologists, Legislators, and Youth Policymaking Bodies.*” The National Commission on Youth, Westview, March 1980/c272p, Boulder, Colorado, listed in *Future Survey*, Volume 2, Number 6, June 1980, World Future Society, Washington, D.C., 20014.
- Carlson, Allan C., “*The Nuclear Family Is Splitting.*” *Across The Board*, 17:6, June 1980, American Enterprise Institute, listed in *Future Survey*, Volume 2, Number 7, July 1980, World Future Society, Washington, D.C., 20014.
- Cleveland, H. “The Decision Makers,” *The Center Magazine*, Sept./Oct./73, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, Calif.
- Gindick, Tia, “Teenagers Volunteer for the ‘Fun,’” *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 1980 (View).
- Ginzberg, Eli, “*Youth Unemployment.*” *Scientific American*, 242:5, May 1980, 43-49, listed in *Future Survey*, Volume 2, Number 7, July 1980, World Future Society, Washington, D.C., 20014.
- Hill, Donna, “Students Help Kunas Obtain Fresh Water,” *Voluntary Action Leadership*, Spring 1980, published by Volunteer, The National Center for Citizen Involvement, Washington, D.C.
- Kennedy, Patrick, Editor. *Resources for Youth*, Volume IX, No. iii, Spring 1980, New York, N.Y.
- Langton, Stuart, “*Training and Education: A New Deal for for Citizenship.*” *National Civic Review*, 69:4, April 1980, 197-203, listed in *Future Survey*, Volume 2, Number 7, July 1980, World Future Society, Washington, D.C., 20014.
- Linn, Nancy, “Spring Into Action! Healthy Babies: Chance or Choice.” *Teen Times*, March/April 1980, Future Homemakers of America, Washington, D.C.
- Lippitt, Ronald and Schindler-Rainman, Eva, *the Human Energy Crisis*, Research and Development Division National Council of YMCAs, 1974, New York, N.Y.
- Schindler-Rainman, Eva, *Volunteers*, and *The Changing Volunteer World*, 1977, Hilltop Associates, Los Angeles, Calif.
- Schindler-Rainman, Eva, “Training Decision Makers,” *Group and Organization Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1979, University Associates, San Diego, Calif.
- Schindler-Rainman, Eva and Lippitt, Ronald, *The Volunteer Community, Creative Use of Human Resources*, 2nd edition, University Associates, San Diego, Calif. 1975.
- Schindler-Rainman, Eva, and Lippitt, Ronald, *The Humanized Future: Some New Images*, University Associates, San Diego, Calif., 1976
- Schindler-Rainman, Eva, and Lippitt, Ronald, *Building the Collaborative Community, Mobilizing Citizens for Action*, University of California Extension, Riverside, Calif., 1980.
- Stearns, Peter N., “Youth in Contemporary Society: A Turning Point?,” *New Designs for Youth Development*, Vol. 1, Number 2, Jan.-Feb. 1980, Tucson, Arizona
- Toffler, Alvin, *The Third Wave*, Morrow, Williams & Co., New York, N.Y., 1980.