

International Working Group Develops Universal Declaration on Leading and Managing Volunteers

While voluntary action is what builds community and civil society, competent leadership is what keeps volunteers effectively involved. Individuals choose to become involved as volunteers often out of spontaneous interest or inspiration, but they continue to be engaged and motivated because of the leadership and organization structures that support them.

As the international professional association for those who mobilize and manage volunteers, the Association for Volunteer Administration convened an International Working Group on the Profession in conjunction with its 2001 International Conference on Volunteer Administration held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Oct. 3-6. The working group was conceived as a forum for global discussion about volunteer resources management and its future direction. The name was selected based on the language often used by the United Nations when it convenes international representatives to focus on a particular issue.

AVA's goals for this effort were the following:

- To maximize the International Year of Volunteers 2001 as a springboard for enhancing the visibility of the profession of volunteer administration
- To develop and strengthen relationships among individuals and organizations representing the profession from countries around the globe
- To create a document that complements the Declaration on Volunteering developed by the International Association for Volunteer Effort that can be used by volunteer management leaders everywhere to generate increased support for their roles and their work. IAVE is an international organization, which promotes, celebrates, and strengthens volunteerism worldwide.

Representatives from 12 countries, AVA and IAVE worked together for two days to produce the declaration. Lyle Makosky from InterQuest Consulting in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, facilitated the process. Makosky presented the declaration to all conference attendees on Oct. 5, and the document was subsequently adopted by the AVA Board of Directors

Specific strategies for how and where to utilize the document are still evolving, but the possibilities are endless. The declaration can be downloaded from the AVA web site (www.avaintl.org). It is being translated into French and Spanish. AVA encourages use of this document to raise awareness about the roles played by the managers of volunteer resources. Here are just a few ideas to consider:

- Distribute the declaration to colleagues in local networks of volunteer resources managers and discuss the implications.
- Post it in your office or on your organization's bulletin board.

International Working Group on the Profession Participants

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- Set up a link from your organization's web site to the declaration, which is posted on AVA's web site.
- Share it in your volunteer newsletter (of special interest to your leadership volunteers).
- Forward a copy to your supervisor, CEO, board members, and fellow staff.
- Use excerpts when preparing reports and presentations.

The declaration is now being disseminated throughout various networks and organizations, including the International Symposium on Volunteering held in November in Geneva, Switzerland.

While financial resources limited the number of participants in the original working group, AVA plans to expand the group to include representatives from additional countries which share the core beliefs and tenets expressed in the declaration. Working group members will continue to serve as liaisons and advisors to facilitate the exchange of information related to the profession, to advise AVA's international activities, and to increase AVA's visibility worldwide.

AVA is grateful to The St. Paul Companies Foundation, Inc. based in St. Paul, Minnesota, USA, whose generous support made it possible for the International Working Group on the Profession to become a reality.

Universal Declaration on the Profession of Leading and Managing Volunteers

As the international professional association for volunteer leadership, the Association for Volunteer Administration envisions a world in which the lives of individuals and communities are improved by the positive impact of volunteer action.

This vision can best be achieved when there are people who make it their primary responsibility to provide leadership in the management of volunteer resources, whether in the community or within organizations.

These "leaders of volunteer resources"* optimize the impact of individual and collective volunteer action to enhance the common good and enable humanitarian benefit. These leaders are most effective when they have the respect and support of their communities and/or their organizations, appropriate resources and the opportunity to continually develop their knowledge and skills.

With the growth of volunteering worldwide there is a recognition that the time and contribution of volunteers must be respected, and that their work must benefit both volunteers and the causes and organizations they serve.

Thus, we affirm and support the Universal Declaration on Volunteering adopted by IAVE — the International Association for Volunteer Effort — which states "Volunteering is a fundamental building block of civil society. It brings to life the noblest aspirations of humankind — the pursuit of peace, freedom, opportunity, safety and justice for all people... At the dawn of the new millennium, volunteering is an essential element of all societies." (The complete text is available at www.iave.org.)

As volunteering has expanded globally, the need has emerged for strong leadership and management of volunteers. Increasingly, this is recognized as a professional role.

Value and Contribution of Directors of Volunteers

Directors of Volunteers promote change, solve problems, and meet human needs by mobiliz-

ing and managing volunteers for the greatest possible impact.

Directors of Volunteers aspire to:

- act in accordance with high professional standards.
- build commitment to a shared vision and mission.
- develop and match volunteer talents, motivations, time availability and differing contributions with satisfying opportunities.
- guide volunteers to success in actions that are meaningful to both the individual and the cause they serve.
- help develop and enhance an organizing framework for volunteering.

ROLE

Directors of Volunteers mobilize and support volunteers to engage in effective action that addresses specified needs.

As Directors of Volunteers we strive to:

- be innovative agents for change and progress.
- be passionate advocates for volunteering.
- welcome diverse contributions and ideas.
- develop trusting and positive work environments in which volunteers and other resources are effectively engaged and empowered.
- ensure the safety and security of volunteers.
- develop networks and facilitate partnerships to achieve desired results.
- be guided by, and committed to the goals and ideals of the cause/mission towards which we are working and to continually expand our knowledge and skills.
- communicate sensitively and accurately the context, rationale, and purpose of the work we are doing.
- learn from volunteers and others in order to improve the quality of our work.

CORE BELIEFS

As Directors of Volunteers, we hold these beliefs and seek to demonstrate them in our actions:

- We believe in the potential of people to make a difference.
- We believe in volunteering and its value to individuals and society.
- We believe that change and progress are possible.
- We believe that diversity in views and in voluntary contribution enriches our effort.
- We believe that tolerance and trust are fundamental to volunteering.
- We believe in the value of individual and collective action.
- We believe in the substantial added value represented by the effective planning, resourcing and management of volunteers.

We also believe that we share the responsibility:

- to manage the contributions of volunteers with care and respect
- to act with a sense of fairness and equity
- to ensure our services are responsible and accountable
- to demonstrate the practices of honesty and integrity.

The complexity of the problems the world faces reaffirms the power of volunteering as a way to mobilize people to address those challenges.

In order for volunteering to have the greatest impact and to be as inclusive as possible, it must be well planned, adequately resourced and effectively managed. This is the responsibility of Directors of Volunteers.

They are most effective when their work is recognized and supported. Therefore, we call on leaders in:

- Non-governmental and civil society organizations, to make volunteering integral to achieving their missions and to elevate the role of volunteer directors within the organization
- Government at all levels, to invest in the sustainable development of high quality volunteer leadership and to model excellence in the management of volunteers
- Business and the private sector, to understand the importance of volunteer management and to assist volunteer-involving organizations in developing this capacity
- Funders and donors, to support the commitment of resources to build the capacity of volunteer management
- Education, to provide opportunities for leaders of volunteers to continually expand their knowledge and skills

We call upon Directors of Volunteers worldwide to accept this declaration, to integrate and embody it in our shared work, and to promote and encourage its adoption.

While we recognize that all countries in the world do not approach volunteer development in the same way, this declaration is intended to encourage all those concerned with the advancement of this profession, to aspire to these statements.

**This phrase applies equally to terms like administrators, managers, coordinators and directors of volunteers. For this declaration, the term "Director of Volunteers" was selected to represent these many terms.*

Developed by the International Working Group on the Profession Convened by the Association for Volunteer Administration, Toronto, Ontario, Canada 2001

With representation from: Argentina, Bangladesh, Canada, England, Hungary, Israel, Mauritius, Mexico, Nepal, New Zealand, Scotland, United States