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Ahead Project

A Proposal for IYV2001: The Look Back to Look Ahead Project

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Regular readers of this Hot Topic area already know that in the [March Hot Topic](#), I expressed concern about wasting the enormous excitement and potential of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV). It is now October 2000--less than three months before 2001 begins. Some countries have been planning serious and fun ways to celebrate IYV for several years, others may not do anything at all. The United States Committee unveiled a Web site in late August at <http://www.iyv2001us.org>, but as of the writing of this essay, there is very little on the site to elicit response or action. Further, the few suggestions shown are all individual activities, with no way to connect to anything larger or global. The International Conference on Volunteer Administration advance brochure does not mention IYV at all, though if some news surfaces while we're in Phoenix mid-month, I'll gladly post it to this Hot Topic.

OK. Enough of my whining! It's time to take action.

It is no coincidence that we are launching our new online journal, [e-Volunteerism](#), now. What better time than the start of IYV to offer an interactive forum for international exchange in our field? But *e-Volunteerism* comes from us to you. What could Energize, Inc. help YOU to do?

Energize Proposes a Project

We wanted to propose a project for IYV that will generate excitement and result in meaningful activity. A project would have to meet the following criteria:

1. Be comparatively simple and straightforward to accomplish.
2. Be low cost, but with a tangible product at the end.
3. Can be done by small and large organizations of all kinds.
4. Mean something to the organizations that engage in it but can be linked to the results of similar projects in one community and in ever-widening circles.

5. Educate others about the value and contributions of volunteers.
6. Involve volunteers themselves in the activity, so it's done with and not "for" volunteers (or, even worse, "to" them!).
7. Could be done in any country and in any language.
8. Make sense for Energize to launch.

"Look Back to Look Ahead" Project

And we found it! We are delighted to introduce the IYV "Look Back to Look Ahead" project! In its simplest terms, we think that a marvelous way to celebrate IYV is to research and then present the history of your organization--which will invariably mean uncovering the role volunteers played as founders, fundraisers, and service providers. Once you've acknowledged the past impact of volunteers, we then propose that you seize this chance to envision the future of volunteering in your setting. You'll find a much more detailed explanation in the new [Look Back to Look Ahead](#) Project area on our site

We give this idea to you with no strings attached. Find as many variations as you can and make it work for you. You are welcome to download, print out, and disseminate all the information we give you on the site. (The United Nations has already given permission for everyone to use the official IYV logo.)

Some Hopes

Each of you will develop the project that works for you, but I do have some hopes (maybe they're dreams). I hope that you will:

- Seize the opportunity of IYV and do something, no matter what, to stimulate greater respect for volunteers and for what it takes to support volunteer efforts.
- Give sufficient time and energy to the goal of discovering your history. Whether you are a long-established institution or a new kid on the block, it is my sense that no one has taken the time to record--let alone acknowledge--your volunteer roots.
- Involve the widest range of people in sharing official records, memories, and items from their closets, as well as in sleuthing the library, town hall records, and the newspaper morgue: volunteers (board members, direct service providers, advisory group members, special event participants--the full range), paid staff, clients/consumers, politicians and legislators, funders, vendors, people in the neighborhood. In all categories, contact past as well as present constituents. Making this wide a circle of contacts will produce the most interesting discoveries and generate "buzz" about your organization.
- Produce something tangible (whether a photocopied document, a photo album, new pages on your Web site, or a video) that will be valued by everyone. And something that you can keep updated from now on. I hope you will launch this product with pizzazz!

- Not stop at your organization's door. Find ways to merge your work with the historical picture of other organizations in your town or wider afield. See the Web site area for more ideas.

Finally, I hope that, together, we will generate much hard data and then publicity for the invaluable impact volunteering has had on our world. Now THAT would leave a legacy from IYV2001!

Of course the [Look Back to Look Ahead](#) Web area will give you a place to share ideas and questions throughout 2001. But in response to this Hot Topic, please let us know your reaction to the project and whether or how you anticipate trying it.

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