

cultural volunteer ©

issue 3 – February 2003

WELCOME!

cultural volunteer (cv) is a free e-news and information service for arts management professionals. **cv** is published six times a year and comes to you from Lynn Blackadder, of Arts People and Projects arts management consultancy www.lynnblackadder.com, specialising in helping organisations successfully involve volunteers. You can choose to read **cv** in email or as a Word attachment. I hope you enjoy **cv**, but if you don't wish to receive future issues, please return this email typing 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

This month **cv** brings you an update on the National Centre for Volunteering's plans for **professional development opportunities for managers of volunteers**, a report on **volunteering culture in the US from Susan J Ellis**, further information on **voluntary help available from the accountancy profession**, and an **analysis of volunteering motivations and needs, and how to meet them from Judith Mills**.

WHY YOU SHOULD READ **cv** ...

cv is for arts management professionals who currently involve volunteers in their organisations, and for those who don't, but would like to find out more about volunteers.

cv aims to raise awareness of the resource cultural volunteers represent, and how to utilise it effectively.

cv actively campaigns for the recognition and progression of volunteers working in arts organisations.

cv can help you to better understand the nature of volunteering and how it relates to your organisation.

cv will regularly bring to your attention useful information, resources and commentary on volunteering in the cultural sector. Experts on volunteer management will feature, and we will explore topics raised by you in future issues.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR MANAGERS OF VOLUNTEERS

The National Volunteer Managers' Forum (NVMF) is an organisation affiliated to the National Centre for Volunteering that:

- Promotes the highest standards in volunteer management, working to establish and maintain best practice.
- Provides peer and professional support together with regular networking opportunities.

- Provides the latest information and research on volunteering issues. Annual membership fees are £40, £60 or £100, and members receive a regular newsletter, excellent free web site resources, discounted rates on seminars, conference days and networking events, and other information on professional development.

NVMF has been looking at options for 'professionalisation' for its membership. This research-based project explored the option of creating a professional body, quality training, and links to formal qualifications that would raise standards in volunteer management, and help to increase the profile of managers.

The NVMF will shortly be announcing its proposals to take professionalisation forward. In the meantime, for information on joining NVMF, please contact Tammy Parlour on 020 7520 8900, or check out the web site at <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/nvmf/index.htm>.

FEATURE: Susan J Ellis, President of Energize Inc, an international training, consulting and publishing firm specialising in volunteerism, on AMERICAN TRENDS IN VOLUNTEERING

It's been my experience that colleagues in the UK tend to view things in the US as either good or bad, while knowing that the truth probably lies in the middle. American volunteering has contradictory images, too. On one hand, there was worldwide publicity about how volunteers responded to the crisis of the September 11 attacks. But Americans are also perceived as 'me'-centered and money-focused. There is truth on both sides.

Who does what

Volunteering is very much alive in the US, and done by people of both sexes, every age, all races and ethnic backgrounds, and with every occupational credential. Americans are just as likely to call this activity 'community service', 'pro bono work', 'activism', or 'service-learning', but the common factor is people doing something for the common good without receiving a monetary benefit. Surveys show that over 55% of the American population volunteers in some way.

Some see volunteering as a form of charity between those who 'have' and those who 'have not'. But the best volunteer service brings people together through mutual concerns and captures a true sense of 'community' – we're all in this together. The American approach to volunteering is as an *exchange*. It's best when both the giver and the recipient derive benefits from the service.

The impact of social trends

Volunteering never occurs in a vacuum. Everything that affects people, affects volunteers. Social trends and cultural changes have an impact on the way community service is evolving. For example, because so many middle-aged people are finding themselves single again after a divorce, there's been an increase in volunteering to meet people with similar interests. The slogan? 'It's safer than a singles' bar'! Similarly, pressured lifestyles have led to the demand for short-term and even one-day volunteering projects. There are organisations in the US which focus totally on arranging a monthly calendar of projects that can be done one day or evening at a time.

Another current trend is family volunteering, done by all the members of a family together or by one parent (or other adult relative) and one child as a special 'twosome' project. This, too, is a response to the stress of busy lives and the quest for 'quality time' with children. Cultural arts groups are uniquely able to tap into this concept, since working in a museum or for a performing

arts group is a lovely blend of recreation and helpfulness. Parents get to know their children in new ways, and vice versa. The process of demonstrating skills and learning new ones gives both age levels the chance to respect one another, work together towards the same goals – and have something to talk about all week!

The impact of computer technology

Through the Internet, more and more people are discovering how they can use their computer, modem, and e-mail to provide online service. Such 'virtual volunteering' can focus on anything from doing research to online chats with homebound children. Most recently online service has been connecting people from developed countries with others in the developing world, forming extraordinary international exchanges. Also, virtual volunteering has special meaning for anyone who is homebound, geographically isolated, or has a physical disability. You can download the free *Virtual Volunteering Guidebook* at <http://www.energizeinc.com/art/elecbooks.html>.

The Internet has also transformed the way that volunteer program managers do their work. Web sites, e-newsletters such as this one, and various online discussion groups bring practical information to everyone's desktop. Recruiting volunteers through special online registries is growing in popularity, too.

Making dreams come true

One of the exceptional things about volunteering is that it allows people to live out their fantasies. Many of us secretly wish we could spend our days on Broadway, or taming lions, or saving lives. But our career paths, and maybe our true talents, lead us in more mundane directions. So, instead of selecting a volunteer assignment that makes use of professional skills, Americans turn to community service that taps their 'inner selves'. A desk-bound writer might volunteer for the National Ski Patrol and spend hours out of doors. After days spent on long-range planning, an executive might relish the tangible accomplishment of constructing a wheelchair ramp for a senior centre. The love of show business attracts many to innumerable community theatre groups, local telethons, and community performing troupes. Even without acting or singing talent, volunteers can stage manage, sew costumes, or make the bookings. The point is to be part of the company and smell the greasepaint.

A last word

Cultural arts settings and all organisations involving volunteers are learning to attract people by offering meaningful assignments that also blend with 21st century needs and lifestyles. The good news is that there are no rules! Volunteering is both participatory democracy and self-help. If people truly want to do something because they believe in the work, they'll give their time and talent gladly. Organisations who believe this do, indeed, have great volunteers.

Susan J Ellis founded the Philadelphia-based company Energize in 1977 and has assisted clients in every type of setting, including cultural arts. Several of her books are available through the National Centre for Volunteering in London. To learn more about Susan and the work of Energize, visit their extensive free Web site at <http://energizeinc.com>. Susan is also the co-publisher of the international online journal e-Volunteerism. For a free preview, go to <http://www.e-volunteerism.com>.

VOLUNTARY HELP FROM THE ACCOUNTANCY PROFESSION

Last issue, I reported that **The Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales** had set up an online system matching charities and voluntary groups with accountants who want to offer their services free. The 'Everybody Counts' system can be accessed at

http://www.icaew.co.uk/index.cfm?AUB=TB2I_36575 where you can either search for someone who meets your needs, or post an advert for an accountant. The search mechanism is limited, offering only geographical area, and the following category options:

- Working with head teachers
- Education volunteering
- Helping Young Business People
- Community Groups
- Local Activities.

However, there seem to be a lot of qualified people out there willing to give their time freely, so if you need a volunteer with accountancy skills, have a look. Registering your details is easy.

KPMG seems to be the most impressive of the big firm offers. Their Community Broking Service develops voluntary, public and private sector partnerships which seek to provide learning opportunities to benefit both people in the community and in KPMG. Their focus is on education 'in the broadest sense, to enhance social inclusion for individuals and communities, especially those that are disadvantaged or underprivileged'. There are several schemes in place including *Development Assignments* which give staff an opportunity to broaden their horizons and share their skills (business planning, financial modelling and organisational reviews), with a range of voluntary organisations, and *Team Challenges* – which range from clearing wasteland to organising a tea party – provide staff with other opportunities to help the community. For more information contact cbs@kpmg.co.uk.

The next issue of **cv** will be looking at other resources for finding volunteers.

FEATURE: Judith Mills, Change Management Consultant, on WHY DO WE VOLUNTEER?

I deliberately ask this question with an emphasis on the 'we'. This article is written to be either a wake up call for your volunteering career, or to help you review and refresh a volunteering scheme.

Volunteering is obvious when the scheme is formal. But volunteering is wider than this: School Governor, clearing heath land, chairing a professional body, and lobbying for a cause are some examples. At a basic level volunteering is work, but it's work we are not paid for. So the next question is 'why do we work?', and is this different to volunteering? Maslow, writing in the 1930s introduced his Hierarchy of Needs into work psychology. In today's language we work to satisfy:

Physical needs: safety, security, structure, get money to buy what we need to live.

Mental needs: intellectual stimulation, learn new things.

Emotional needs: belong to something, make and build relationships with people.

Spiritual needs: wanting to improve society, achieve a sense of personal purpose, give back.

Volunteering meets all these personal needs other than 'get money'.

Meeting individual needs

A creative volunteer programme recognises an individual's various needs and meets them. Yet I wonder how many schemes actually help people understand and develop themselves to meet these needs and, at the same time, how many volunteers truthfully acknowledge why they are volunteering. The retired businesswoman overtly may be saying 'I can bring commercial skills', but underneath wants structure and relationships to meet her emotional needs. The house-

husband wants to get out to meet people, but also knows he needs to keep his skills up to date to return to paid work in the future. At first glance he is meeting emotional needs but physical and mental requirements come into it as well.

Organisations and volunteers also need to acknowledge when it's time to move on; volunteers may have fulfilled their original need to join a programme, and now need another role. You may be thinking that you're tired of being a Trustee of a charity, and that what you really need is fresh air at the weekend by volunteering at a bird sanctuary. You may have moved from wanting to improve society in some way, to needing rest and relaxation, ie meeting physical needs.

There are some people who are clearer about why they volunteer, and understand the volunteering culture, norms and behaviours – for example the student who wants a career in a museum knows that they need practical experience to be considered for a job. Others are very happy to do the simplest of tasks that they find interesting. And then there are those whose volunteering gives them the sense of purpose they don't have in their paid work.

Volunteering gives opportunities for people to meet their needs as well as contribute to the success of the organisation. A programme can give experiences that are life enriching and enhancing, and in return have people around doing work that needs to be done. Volunteers can even have personal development plans!

Understanding needs – what can you do?

If this article has made you think about **your career as a volunteer**:

- Make a list of when you have volunteered and acknowledge:
 - ✓ Why you did / do it.
 - ✓ What you have learnt.
 - ✓ What needs it meets and in what category.
- Step back from your life as it is now:
 - ✓ What is good?
 - ✓ What is frustrating and / or missing, ie what do you need?
 - ✓ Where does volunteering fit in?
 - ✓ Blue sky dream and admit what would really interest you.
- If you are volunteering now:
 - ✓ Does the organisation need someone with your skills and experience?
 - ✓ Are your needs being met?
- Consider the future:
 - ✓ Is what you are doing right or do you need to change?
 - ✓ In the organisation are there other responsibilities you could be doing that would refresh you?
 - ✓ What volunteering could you be doing to meet your current needs?
 - ✓ How are you going to manage the change?
 - ✓ Do you need a volunteering sabbatical?

If the article has prompted thoughts about reviewing your **volunteer programme**:

- Check out with a few people if the programme:
 - ✓ Would benefit from refreshing.
 - ✓ Needs to change to meet volunteers' and / or the organisation's needs.
- Research volunteer programme initiatives and funds available to change your programme.
- Review the demographics of your volunteers.
- Produce your initial thoughts.

- Bring together a representative group from volunteers, staff and trustees to:
 - ✓ Discuss initial thoughts.
 - ✓ Create an action plan considering some of the following:
 - Discussing general needs, expectations and change in groups.
 - Meeting with your volunteers and working out with them supportively what needs the programme has met and could meet.
 - Reviewing role profiles in line with what is required now and in the future to create different opportunities.
 - Think about development opportunities with your own, or another, organisation.
- Implement changes.
- Check that you are also providing opportunities for paid staff to meet their needs.

Judith Mills works with individuals and organisations wishing to change. She has held a number of voluntary posts, and uses HR principles to train and advise volunteer managers. Contact Judith on 020 8426 5358 or at jm@judithmills.demon.co.uk.

FEEDBACK

cv is keen to respond to your interests and needs. If you would like to forward your news and views, comment on content, or suggest a topic for discussion, please email lynn@lynnblackadder.com.

NEXT ISSUE

In April, **cv** will be providing an **overview of organisations that can help you find volunteers**, and **Rob Jackson, Volunteering Development Manager at RNIB** will be telling us **how to get ahead in volunteer recruitment**.

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Circulation 340