



PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

# THE GIFT OF TIME

EFFECTIVE  
VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGEMENT  
FOR  
LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES

PARK AND RECREATIONAL TECHNICAL SERVICES  
PLANNING DIVISION  
CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS



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## Introduction

A volunteer program provides the means for members of the public to actively participate in activities and events in which they have an interest. It adds diversity to the jobs of the employees involved and to the lives of the volunteers, and it gains advocates for the agency. Volunteers offer their time and bring a can-do spirit to the community while they gain pride, knowledge and the satisfaction of a job well done. The partnership of volunteers and public agencies is a win-win situation for both parties.

*The Gift of Time: Effective Volunteer Program Management for Local Park and Recreation Agencies* is a guidebook developed by California State Parks in response to the many inquiries received from park and recreation professionals working in California's cities, counties and special districts. These service providers are looking for ways to continue and expand customer services in their parks during times of budgetary constraint. The recommendations offered in this guidebook are drawn from nationally recognized professionals, local volunteer managers and experienced State Parks staff to help local agencies establish a volunteer program that will succeed.

Establishing a volunteer program for your agency can help expand services, maintain or improve existing facilities, build new facilities, enhance public safety, increase efficiency, improve customer service and interpret the cultural, natural and recreational resources in parks. A volunteer program should not be expected to provide *the* answer to all of an agency's needs, nor should volunteers supplant paid staff. Creating a volunteer program involves taking a close look at agency policy, program structure and personnel management.

This guidebook is designed to help you and your agency consider the pros and cons of establishing a centralized volunteer program, or to help you fine-tune your existing volunteer program. Chapters that consider whether volunteers are right for your agency, on volunteer policy, on developing the program structure and on organization will help those considering a volunteer program. Chapters on recruitment, interviewing, retention, recognition, training and program evaluation will be useful in assessing the value of a new or an existing volunteer program.



# Chapter 1

## Who are today's volunteers?

*The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 defines a volunteer as “an individual performing services for a nonprofit organization or a governmental entity who does not receive compensation other than reasonable reimbursement or allowance for expenses actually incurred or any other thing of value in lieu of compensation, in excess of \$500 per year, and such term includes a volunteer serving as a director, officer, trustee, or direct service volunteer.”*

### Who are the individuals donating their time?

*What motivates volunteers to volunteer?*

Volunteers are motivated by a job well done. They want to add value and further the mission of the agency. They are looking for a job that is worthwhile and challenging, one where their skills are appreciated, where they can learn new skills and where their efforts have a real purpose. Volunteers gain a feeling of accomplishment when they feel they are helping their local community. The act of volunteering reinforces positive social skills including neighborliness, friendliness, kindness, consideration, sociability, hospitality, care and cooperation. The personal benefits that volunteers gain include building self-confidence, meeting new people, making friends, a feeling of satisfaction or self-worth for making a difference, health benefits of stress relief, and social interaction among other adults. A volunteer group can become an extended family.

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When asked the role of volunteers in resource conservation, Mary Keefer Bloom, the 2004 Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer of the National Association of Interpretation, responded:

*“I think it’s an opportunity definitely, for the resource, whatever it is, to expand its direction even with reduced funds, through the service of volunteers.*

*Volunteers by their very nature are excited by what they volunteer for. Many of these folks are just looking for ways to have a positive impact on the out-of-doors through local and national organizations like the Forest Service and Park Service. ... Guests at visitor centers often ask “How can I get involved?” The enthusiasm the volunteer often brings to the resource seems to rub off on the paid seasonals as well as full-time employees. It’s like a shot of energy to everyone. So I really think it’s about finding something you’re really passionate about, and when that door opens, you’re through it!”*

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Individual commitment will range between casual and formal. Volunteers with a casual commitment are generally informal, relaxed and laid-back. They are interested

in performing periodic short-term activities and can be relied upon to lend a hand as needed. At the other end of the spectrum, formal volunteering calls for a substantial commitment of time and fosters feelings of loyalty, devotion, steadfastness, allegiance and faithfulness to the goals of an agency. Committed volunteers will be willing to take on more responsibility and might be interested in serving as an officer in an organization or become a sports coach or scout leader.

Volunteer situations should be inviting and fun and foster a sense of connection. Individuals have many opportunities to give of their free time, and if your job does not sound exciting, you will not recruit or retain many volunteers.

Park and recreation agency employees frequently become so involved with projects that they want to give their own time as volunteers. Such enthusiasm is commendable, but the Fair Labor Standards Act prohibits employees from volunteering at tasks for which they would normally be paid.

### *A Few Statistics About Today's Volunteers*

Volunteers can be self motivated and unconnected to a specific organization. For example, a woman who, on her own, organizes softball games for the children in her neighborhood park is not recognized officially by the Labor Department as a volunteer even though she may be performing a service that fits within the mission of the local park department. Individual involvement is the source of community action, and park and recreation professionals are well advised to identify, seek out and include self-motivated people to assist in implementing their mission.

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According to the U.S. Department of Labor\*, volunteers in the United States included:

- Employment status
  - 31.2% of all employed persons
  - 26.7% of all unemployed persons
  - 24.6% of those not in the labor force
  - 38.4% of part-time workers
  - 29.6% of full time workers
- Ethnicity
  - 30.6% White
  - 20.0% African American
  - 18.7% Asian
  - 15.7% Latino
- Marital status
  - 34% married
  - 22.8% never married
  - 22.5% 'other' marital status
- Dependents
  - 37.5% have children under 18 years of age
    - 47.2% of mothers
    - 36.1% of fathers
  - 25.0% have no children under 18 years of age
- Reasons for no longer volunteering
  - 44.7% lack of time
  - 14.7% health or medical problems
  - 9.5% family responsibilities or childcare problems

\*All figures are for 2003

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Parents are more than twice as likely to volunteer for a educational/youth service-related organization, such as a school or little league, as persons with no children of that age. Conversely, volunteers with no children under 18 are about twice as likely as parents to volunteer for social or community service organizations.



Particularly meaningful to California is the Public Policy Institute of California's opinion article published in 2004, *Can I Get a Volunteer? State Needs to Tap Into People Power – But There are Obstacles* by Mark Baldassare and Karthick Ramakrishnan, <http://www.ppic.org>. This report discusses the socio-economic groups who are not volunteering. "These differences are an even more formidable challenge" for agencies that want to tap into the enormous potential of the state's "people power" to address the community problems that government can not handle. Less than one in five immigrants, Latino, Asian Americans, lower-income and non-college-educated adults gave time to volunteering. Among the major reasons these groups gave for not volunteering are not being asked and not knowing about opportunities. "It is a hard fact that those residents living in communities that could most use local volunteers to make up for service cuts and staff reductions in government programs are the least likely to see help coming from inside their neighborhoods."

#### *What can volunteers do and what should they not do?*

Volunteers want to be productive and give back to their community. They can be assigned to specific tasks that assist staff and augment an agency's services, and their work should be supervised and reviewed by a volunteer coordinator. Volunteers work most effectively and efficiently if they own the tasks and the process. They should be given a specific job to accomplish and be trusted to carry it out. Specific duties can include administrative tasks, interpretive outreach, public safety, facilities construction and maintenance, special event planning and fund-raising. Some new volunteers will be interested in one-time opportunities. Once they become familiar with the agency, they will give more volunteer time.

The work of volunteers should not result in the displacement of any paid employee. Volunteers should not be asked to take on a greater time commitment or more responsibility than they choose to handle.

#### *Matching a volunteers' interest with an agency's need*

As with employees, volunteers need to be recruited, trained and given a job where their accomplishments are recognized. Assess the motivation and ability of each applicant during the placement process, determine if a volunteer has particular areas of interest or skills, and the level of involvement the prospective volunteer would like. In donating their time, some individuals are looking for ways to expand their outlook or skills. Volunteers who work in professional fields often expect special attention and flexibility. They may require individually written job descriptions where the tasks focus on obtainable goals that can be accomplished

within a given time frame. Guidelines for recruiting, interviewing and placing volunteers are presented in Chapter 5 (p. 37).

### *Employee volunteer programs*

Corporate volunteering is a three-way partnership between the employer, its employees and your agency. Many corporations are interested in assisting agencies where their employees volunteer, and they are happy for the opportunity to associate themselves with volunteer programs in the communities where they do business. Corporate relations in the community are improved and professional development for its employees is enhanced.

Some companies offer volunteer matching services, where agencies can describe the position and skills they are looking for and match these skills to employees who are interested in volunteering. A number of companies sponsor volunteer days where their employees provide specific technical assistance or help with a service.

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The ChevronTexaco Company has a long standing relationship with the Yosemite Fund, a nonprofit organization benefiting Yosemite National Park. Since 1990, 3,000 ChevronTexaco employees have donated nearly 37,000 hours of volunteer time. Each year ChevronTexaco employees volunteer to participate in work weekends in the park. Projects have included removing asphalt on abandoned roadways, meadow restoration, trail work, removing non-native and planting native vegetation. The popularity of the program has necessitated a first-come first-served system so new people can participate in the four to five weekends each year. Volunteers stay at a group campground in the park and enjoy free entrance to the park while they are working. One ChevronTexaco employee commented that giving back to the park, helping restore the park and making it better for the visitors are just some of the psychological rewards of volunteering in such a beautiful place.

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In recruiting individuals who work for a company, or by partnering with a corporate volunteer program, your agency can access more and better-organized volunteers. Corporate partnering also brings matching corporate contributions and direct corporate financial support for your park and recreational programs.

Additional information on the benefits of corporate volunteering can be found in *The State of Knowledge Surrounding Employee Volunteering in the United States*, published by the Points of Light Foundation, <http://www.pointsoflight.org>.

### *Temporary Volunteers – Students and Court-Referred Individuals*

Volunteers may be motivated by school requirements. Some high schools require students to work a certain number of hours in community service each school year. These volunteers may work the minimum possible to earn their grade and do not return. There is no buy-in to your agency's goals or vision – but don't take it personally! If the tasks assigned the volunteers are sufficiently interesting to the individual, they may return and continue after their required hours are met.

Some areas allow individuals to serve their court-referred time as public work volunteers. Your agency needs to decide whether to allow this practice. If court-referred workers are allowed, restrictions must be met. For example, workers convicted of certain crimes should not be accepted. Court-referred workers must be supervised at all times.

### **Volunteer activities**

#### *Volunteer boards, commissions, cooperating associations and "friends of" organizations*

Successful improvements in the park and recreation field are often facilitated by knowledgeable citizen volunteers who serve as elected or appointed commissioners or board members of park advisory groups or "friends of" organizations. The performance of volunteer boards and commissions was recently discussed by J. Thomas Lovell, Jr., a parks and recreation administrator in Lee's Summit, Mississippi, in his article "At Issue: High Performance Boards, What it Takes to Create Citizen Boards that Perform" in the July 2004 edition of the California Park and Recreation Society's magazine *Parks and Recreation*. Lovell suggests that board and commission members be "gently" encouraged to develop strategies to further improve their effectiveness in engaging the community and implementing the strategic direction for their organization. Lovell recommends that members identify and address their "development areas" as follows:

- legal oversight
- fiduciary duties, financial reports and the present financial condition of the agency
- annual goals and objectives that clearly provide direction for all aspects of the department's operation and tie into an approved budget
- the department's succession plan
- five-year capital and operational development
- volunteer service
- attendance responsibilities
- leadership in community activities
- focus on policy rather than daily operations and tactical issues

- relations to staff and the media
- decision-making process

Cooperating associations, more commonly known as “friends of” groups, are federally recognized nonprofit charitable organizations dedicated to enhancing the mission of park and recreation agencies. Such associations are involved in raising funds, developing facilities, sponsoring programs and funding publications. Cooperating associations can pay salaries of employees, purchase equipment and sell memberships. Park and recreation agencies and cooperating associations should develop a written contract with mutually agreed upon terms both to facilitate cooperation and prevent conflicts. Park and recreation agencies should be particularly careful when entering an agreement in which the cooperating association pays the salary of an agency employee, and should consider having legal counsel review any such agreement.

As a nonprofit entity, “friends of” organizations can often receive grants when the agency itself is ineligible. The nonprofit can also receive donations, coordinate volunteer support and provide in-kind labor. For more information on volunteers and donations, see “Paying for Parks: An Overview of Fiscal Resources for Local Park and Recreation Agencies,” published by California State Parks and available by visiting <http://www.parks.ca.gov>.

### *Volunteer fundraising activities*

Fundraising by volunteers can range from “do-it-yourself” projects to major gift solicitation. Selling products is a time-tested if not overused method of raising money for parks. Bake sales, dog’s day out events and used book sales are popular. There are myriad commercial ventures that will provide products for sale. T-shirts, note cards and cook books are typical examples of products that can be tailored to park themes. A car wash, for example, is a popular summer fundraiser that teen volunteers will enjoy.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in fundraising is matching the needs of your organization to the prospective donor. Volunteers can be part of the fundraising strategy. When volunteers make a long-term commitment to working with your organization, and are educated about the fundraising projects you are undertaking, they can play an invaluable role introducing donors to your agency and soliciting major gifts.

### *Volunteers as educators/docents*

Interpretation volunteers perform instructional functions in parks. Jobs include museum docent, tour guide, horticulture aide, visitor center staff and environmental educator. Instructional jobs usually require knowledge-based

training in history, botany or biology. Some organizations require that volunteers attend lectures, or take classes and be tested on their knowledge before they begin their service. Shadowing staff or experienced volunteers helps new volunteers gain confidence. Additional training such as monthly enrichment classes can be a valuable tool for new and existing volunteers. Specialized training can be provided by agency staff, specialists in the natural and cultural resources of an area, or other qualified individuals. This type of training can be time consuming. An example of a detailed docent training program is provided by the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Guides take a 15-week training course that meets one evening a week and covers all aspects of Monterey Bay's natural history. Perhaps your agency does not need such an extensive training program, but this is an example of the high level of commitment of volunteers who want to be part of an agency's programs.

### *Research and publications*

Volunteers offer the capable hands needed to perform programming and research duties, cataloging and inputting computer data. Thorough training in the methodology and programs used by the agency is necessary, as is close supervision, particularly if the information the volunteers are working with is sensitive. Volunteers might also be willing to take on a particular project that involves surveying park users, researching a topic or issue at the library or through the Internet, or interviewing local residents about their memories of the community's early years. An agency newsletter or regular park activity column in the local newspaper might also be the place for a volunteer with writing talents.

### *Special projects*

Special project volunteering gives individuals an opportunity to share your agency's mission. It gives a one-time opportunity to donate time to a special program or event. Special project volunteers can help park staff conduct a fishing derby for disabled children, build a trail, or help with transportation at a senior picnic event without much training. And, the volunteer is not required to make a long term commitment. Publicizing your volunteer project "wish list" in your parks bulletin or local paper is a good way to generate interest.

California Trail Days, coordinated by California State Parks and sponsored by local and regional park agencies, is an example of a valuable opportunity for volunteers to come together to perform park cleanup and maintenance. For example, about 50 volunteers known as the "Green Team" planted alders near Central Avenue in the city of Mountain View to enhance access to the Stevens Creek Trail as part of a larger trail improvement effort. Special events like Trail Days usually attract inexperienced "weekend warriors," so advanced planning and supervision is critical to ensure a job well done. Planning a one-time or annual special event requires many hours of staff time, but the effort gives park

agencies the opportunity to educate a broad constituency of volunteers about the natural resources found in their community and to publicize the services they offer.

The Teens in Lakewood Care Program of the City of Lakewood matches up teens from a leadership program with the Lakewood Jaycees to help local residents who are physically unable to do home maintenance. The teens tackle chores such as washing windows, gardening, removing debris and more. This meaningful opportunity helps teens learn the value of helping others, and the assistance is appreciated by the residents.

### *Park operation volunteers*

Park operation volunteers assist staff in athletic and community service activities and monitor the public use of recreational facilities. Volunteers can assist athletic instructors and monitor the use of ball courts. They can also serve on volunteer patrols, collect fees at entrance kiosks and campgrounds, and staff the retail operations at an interpretive center.

Greenways, regional trails and large park units can benefit from volunteer trail safety patrol programs. At East Bay Regional Park District, safety patrol members are formed into groups depending on their means of travel and their animal companions (such as horses and dogs), but all have the same responsibility to assist police and fire professionals in protecting the safety of park visitors and regional trail users. While on duty, volunteer patrol members wear distinctive clothing and carry a card that identifies the volunteer as a member of the safety patrol. These volunteers observe and report unsafe conditions or incidents of damage to park resources, and they are charged with fostering positive relationships among various park and trail user groups.

### *Maintenance volunteers*

Maintenance volunteers are often involved in facility repairs. They can assist a skilled employee in carpentry, plumbing, painting and landscaping tasks, or they can donate their skilled labor to accomplish a needed task. Eagle Scout service projects are also a great way to get small infrastructure improvement projects done if the project is not beyond the capabilities of the scouts. Adequate adult supervision is always required for projects undertaken by minors.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Are Volunteers Right For Your Agency?**

#### **Why do park and recreation agencies need volunteers?**

Park and recreation professionals who rely on general fund support for agency operations and program funding face the dilemma of fluctuating resources. Joseph M. Di Misa, succinctly described the situation in the July 2004 issue of *Parks and Recreation* magazine when he wrote, "Park and recreation managers are confronted with the certain reality of being required to do more with less."

The call to volunteer service is growing. Given the increasing gap between spending and tax revenues, state and local officials are asking citizens to pitch in and help out in their communities. Individuals who are looking for opportunities to donate their time and talents are being encouraged to join the California Service Corps and serve others by dishing out food in kitchen lines, donating blood, planting school gardens, building neighborhood playgrounds, or reading to children. Service Corps spokesperson Terri Carbaugh, interviewed in the August 26, 2004, edition of the *Sacramento Bee*, stated, "California is suffering a very severe budget crisis" and "in areas where the budget can't fulfill the need, we want people to step in and fill the void." The Service Corps, created by an Executive Order signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in August 2004, serves as a resource for Californians trying to connect with charitable groups in their areas and encourages more public/private partnerships where volunteers are integrated into government programs.

Californians are responding to the call. The number of volunteers is increasing. The rate at which individuals are volunteering is increasing nationally as well as statewide. More and more park and recreation providers are establishing volunteer programs to fill the gap.

#### **How will a volunteer program fit within your agency's mission?**

The answer to the question, "Are volunteers right for my agency?" must hinge on a thorough and realistic assessment of future costs and benefits that will result from a long-term commitment to managing a volunteer program. The following discussion is offered as a guide for agencies that are thinking about creating a volunteer program to sustain and enhance park and recreation services.

*Review the mission of your organization.*

To determine if a volunteer program is right for your agency, first review your agency's goals and identify the community services you provide. Most park and recreation departments and special districts offer a variety of park experiences to members of their community. They provide facilities for active sports, passive recreation, natural areas, urban parks, rural parks, suburban parks, cultural sites, linear parks, and various combinations of the above. While many urban and suburban parks have manicured landscapes, others include open space areas that provide recreational and educational opportunities in a natural environment.

*Do you have adequate staff to accomplish your mission?*

Many volunteer programs are established out of need. When park employees require short-term assistance with a senior day in the park, or with planting a community garden at the local community center, they are glad to accept offers of help from members of local civic organizations for a specific project. A continuous volunteer program requires ongoing commitment by park management and all staff, as daily supervision and guidance are needed to train and retain volunteers. Volunteer coordinators need support from management in the form of time to plan projects and training, resources to acquire supplies and tools, and staff support to correspond with volunteers in order to develop a mutually successful and rewarding program for all concerned. Preparation is key!

*What services does your organization provide, and can volunteers be part of these services?*

In most cities, neighborhood parks and community centers provide active recreational opportunities and social interaction for families, adults, youth and seniors. The nexus between park and community often depends on the suitability and quality of services.

Individuals who visit their neighborhood park once or twice a week are likely to form a feeling of ownership that fosters a pride of community. When asked to participate in park activities, these individuals are often eager to volunteer for clean-up days or to help construct a tot lot. On the other hand, fenced baseball diamonds or soccer fields reserved for the exclusive use of youth or adult athletic leagues often exclude nearby neighbors who are looking for a safe place to walk, jog, and picnic, or play ball with their children. Individuals who live near a park but do not feel welcome will be less inclined to volunteer for the local park department. In addition, they will not want to donate money for park improvements and may decide not to vote for community bond measures that would benefit future park development.

Many cities and special districts offer athletic, social, and educational programs in locally owned and operated community centers. Often the



community center forms the heart of a park and recreation district and frequently the facility includes tennis courts, playgrounds, and swimming pools to meet the needs of its constituents. Most administrative activities take place there. Volunteer assistance at a community center can enhance the athletic and social service programs offered by the agency. For example, volunteers can help a recreation supervisor with youth basketball registration or prepare box lunches for a senior day in the park. Volunteers who assist staff with administrative or program activities can increase the number of people served and can amplify and reinforce the instruction or the service.

Volunteers can augment after school and summer youth programs that serve working parents and single mothers. Day camp directors will profit from volunteer help with play time, crafts, snack preparation, and other activities that improve their programs. Teen volunteers can manage the snack bar and chaperone dances for individuals with disabilities with minimal supervision. Low-cost lunch programs, bridge tournaments, dancing, bingo, and knitting classes give retired seniors the opportunity to meet and socialize with new friends. Volunteers will benefit these programs significantly.

Experienced volunteers often can coordinate and run a program by themselves. The Parks and Community Services department of the City of Watsonville reports the involvement of such an individual.

We have a volunteer who is a retired child psychologist. He's a great guy and volunteers at our youth center. When he first started, he stated that he was really interested in starting a chess club. Staff was not sure how much a chess club would appeal to the Youth Center regulars, many of whom are middle school and high school students who often claim the "too good for something" attitude. But staff thought they would give it a try anyway and purchased materials to start the club. Since its start in September 2004, the club has consistently had 6-10 youth participate in its weekly meetings. All of these youth did not know how to play the game when the club started. Many of them continue to play chess throughout the week as well. This volunteer has made a great impact on our youth center and on the youth involved. We are currently working with our volunteer to start clubs at two of our other recreation centers.

If preventing youth crime is a high priority for the community, volunteers can help with programs that work toward developing youth into productive citizens. Teen volunteers can serve as positive role models for adolescents and teach them constructive ways to fill their free time. In this way volunteers can increase the self-esteem of youth in the community.

The People Helping People Program in the City of Duarte is a volunteer community service program designed for teens. The program consists of two major components: teens providing volunteer services to senior citizens in the community, and group social activities. Volunteer services vary depending upon the needs of the senior citizen, but include such things as light housework, light yardwork and friendly visiting. Teen volunteers benefit by gaining valuable experience, skills, knowledge, and new friendships.

County park and recreation departments and special districts generally serve a broader community of park users. Many have beaches with bay or ocean frontage, or feature lakes and riverfronts that offer boating and swimming. Visitors to these parks value active and passive recreational opportunities in more natural areas. Creeks and wetlands also attract park visitors who are interested in bird-watching and in learning about the environment. Resource protection is an important element in operating and maintaining natural parks. Agencies can use volunteers effectively to clean up trash or remove invasive vegetation from their waterways. The California Coastal Commission reports that more than 50,000 volunteers from all over California collected more than 800,000 pounds of marine debris and over 100,000 pounds of recyclables statewide on Coastal Cleanup Day in 2004.

Park and recreation agencies with nature centers, cultural sites, house museums, historic structures, and museums often utilize volunteers as docents. Docents receive specialized training and education to enable them to effectively interpret the natural and cultural resources of these facilities to the public. Gallery tours, guided walks, demonstrations, crafts, and living history events are some of the programs docents typically provide.

*Do you have the organizational support to undertake a volunteer program?*

Many cities, counties, and special districts rely on volunteer boards of directors or commissions to align management to the interests and influences of the people they serve. Some local park departments began as volunteer organizations and continue to be led by volunteers who are leaders in the community. Commissioners or board members usually are appointed, but some are elected. They offer a broad-based connection to local constituencies, serve as an administrative resource for management and staff, and analyze the financial condition and operational needs of their agencies. They set policy and approve the general plans that guide the agency toward future performance. Before implementing a volunteer program in your agency, your board or commission should first weigh the value of estimated future benefits against projected long-term costs, and vote to establish a management structure to support a successful program. Support of a successful volunteer program starts at the top.

The role of management in creating a successful volunteer effort cannot be over emphasized. The decision to create a new program should be based on a need to expand and enhance service rather than replace the jobs of existing paid staff. Management must take the lead in planning the new program and in explaining the projected benefits to staff. If volunteers are seen as competitors for paid jobs, poor morale can result among employees and volunteers. Sufficient staff is needed to effectively develop and manage a volunteer program.

Consensus building is the key to forming an efficient and effective team. Partnerships forged between employees and volunteers are essential for the creation of a successful program. Staff will supply the talent, furnish the training, and serve as the model for the volunteers. Some employees will become mentors for teen volunteers, and others will provide job training for young adults. The value gained can be direct or indirect, but employees need to recognize the benefits volunteers provide to the organization's mission, and they must buy into the program to assure success. Staff time is needed to ensure the volunteer program doesn't stray from its mission and that volunteers conduct themselves appropriately.

*What type of volunteers do you need?*

Short-term or periodic volunteers:

Casual volunteers usually work on special events, such as senior outings, trail maintenance projects, or beach clean-up events, scheduled for a day, a week-end, or for a specific number of consecutive days. Minimal job skills, training, and supervision are needed to accomplish the required tasks.

Long-term or committed volunteers:

Committed volunteers who work scheduled hours on long-term projects will need duty statements, job training, on-going supervision, and evaluations. Examples of long-term projects are trail construction, staffing visitor centers, and development and presentation of interpretive programs.

*Is your volunteer program going to be managed agency-wide or will each division conduct its own program?*

Many park and recreation agencies already accommodate short-term or casual volunteers somewhere in the organization. These programs are usually decentralized and are operated on a departmental or individual level with little management oversight. Employees who need extra help with a particular project frequently coordinate activities with nonprofit groups or with volunteers who are willing to donate their time for a day or two to accomplish a specific goal. The agency usually provides the venue; the volunteers organize the event or project and provide labor and materials. The intermittent nature of the effort limits the

benefits, record keeping is minimal and program assessment is based on anecdotal information.

On the other hand, a centralized volunteer program is long term and managed on an agency-wide basis. It is more inclusive and can significantly benefit the agency, but requires management and a continuing commitment of volunteer time. Agency-wide oversight can expand opportunities, improve record keeping and standardize reporting. However, a centralized program often cannot provide volunteers with individual support and personalized validation.

Public grant programs and private foundations are urging agencies to involve volunteers in their recreational and educational programs. Nonprofit sponsors are looking for projects that give the “biggest bang for the buck.” Successful proposals frequently include the value of in-kind services in the project budget. To compete successfully for scarce grant dollars and nonprofit sponsors, administrators are recognizing the value of volunteer hours. Creating volunteer policies for your agency is the first step in achieving agency-wide oversight of your volunteer program.

## Chapter 3

### Creating volunteer policies for your agency

#### Legal authority and requirements

The legal authority for developing an agency-wide volunteer program comes from federal and state law, while volunteer program policy is created by the agency's governing board. A brief review of pertinent laws and regulations follows.

#### *Tort liability*

Tort or negligence law imposes a minimum level of due care on all persons in their interactions with others, including people who choose to volunteer. Negligence is defined as doing something that a person of ordinary prudence would not have done under similar circumstances, or failing to do what a person of ordinary prudence would have done under similar circumstances. As a representative of an agency, the actions of a volunteer may make the agency liable under the legal theory of *respondeat superior*. '*Respondeat superior*' is the doctrine that when a 'master' or agency acts through a 'servant' or employee, the master is responsible for the employee's actions. The perception of increased liability for volunteers led to the passage of the Volunteer Protection Act by Congress in 1997.

#### *Volunteer Protection Act of 1997*

To provide certain protections to volunteers, Congress enacted the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997. The act protects volunteers through the clarification and limitation of the personal liability risks assumed by the volunteers in connection with their service. However, the Volunteer Protection Act specifically states that it provides no protection against liability for the nonprofit organization or governmental entity itself for which the volunteer performs services.

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The act provides:

“No volunteer of a nonprofit organization or governmental entity shall be liable for harm caused by an act or omission of the volunteer on behalf of the organization or entity if:

- The volunteer was acting within the scope of the volunteer's responsibilities in the nonprofit organization or governmental entity at the time of the act or omission;

- If appropriate or required, the volunteer was properly licensed, certified, or authorized by the appropriate authorities for activities or practice in the state in which the harm occurred, where the activities were or practice was undertaken within the scope of the volunteer's responsibilities in the nonprofit organization or governmental entity;
  - The harm was not caused by willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed by the volunteer; and
  - The harm was not caused by the volunteer operating a motor vehicle, vessel, aircraft, or other vehicle for which the state requires the operator or the owner of the vehicle, craft or vessel to--
    - (A) possess an operator's license; or
    - (B) maintain insurance."
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In summary, immunity under the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 is not absolute. As noted above, the Act does not protect the nonprofit organization or governmental entity itself, so the organization or entity may still be liable for the volunteer's conduct. Also, the Act does not provide protection to the volunteer under some circumstances (e.g., criminal misconduct). In addition, the Act states that state law may provide liability under particular circumstances. But the overall exposure for liability associated with volunteer activity is low. Taking some practical precautions goes a long way in reducing risk. The benefits of volunteering for the park and recreation profession and for those served generally outweigh the threat of being sued. Each park and recreation agency must evaluate for itself the risks and benefits, considering the proposed volunteer activities, degree of supervision of volunteers, and other relevant factors. To limit the legal exposure of your organization and its volunteers:

- Develop volunteer position descriptions
- Use and carefully screen volunteer applications
- Train and closely supervise your volunteers
- Advise your volunteers of any applicable policies to which they must adhere, including policies against unlawful discrimination
- Promptly investigate and respond to any complaints or concerns regarding a volunteer's actions
- Secure insurance protection for your volunteers, as well as your staff, officers, and directors

## *The California Public Resources Code*

Section 5164 of the Public Resources Code specifies:

(a) (1) A county or city or city and county or special district shall not hire a person for employment, or hire a volunteer to perform services, at a county or city or city and county or special district operated park, playground, recreational center, or beach used for recreational purposes, in a position having supervisory or disciplinary authority over any minor, if that person has been convicted of any offense specified in paragraph (2).

(2) (A) Violations or attempted violations of Section 220, 261.5, 262, 273a, 273d, or 273.5 of the Penal Code, or any sex offense listed in Section 290 of the Penal Code, except for the offense specified in subdivision (d) of Section 243.4 of the Penal Code.

### *Risk management*

Some tasks performed by volunteers may involve the risk of on-the-job injuries. Risk management strategies should be incorporated into volunteer programs, including:

- Proper supervision – effective supervision can lessen the risk of injury
- Work as a team – some tasks are better suited to teams of 2 or more volunteers
- Ongoing training – safe work practices and advanced training lessen risk to all staff and volunteers
- Sign-in procedures – documentation of when a volunteer is on or off duty
- Safety equipment – appropriate safety equipment and training in the proper use of equipment
- Accident reports – all accidents and injuries must be reported and documented immediately
- Ongoing analysis – both to prevent injury and to document the need for appropriate safety procedures

### *Worker's Compensation Insurance*

Worker's Compensation Insurance is a state-mandated benefit provided by employers to their employees. Compensation is provided for physical injuries and other medically-related disabilities occurring within the course and scope of the volunteer position. Although volunteers are not employees, provisions of the Labor Code allow park and recreation districts and other public entities to elect coverage by adopting a resolution to have volunteers covered under worker's compensation. Increased premiums may be charged if volunteers are included

in your agency's workers compensation insurance. Contact your insurance carrier for clarification. If the agency elects coverage, a volunteer should be registered in the agency's volunteer program. In order for a volunteer's injury to be covered by the insurance, they must be performing duties that are part of their assigned tasks at the time of the injury. Park and recreation agencies should also carefully review their policies and the applicable Labor Code provisions to determine whether volunteers who are working short term, such as a one-or two-day trail work project, are covered under worker's compensation. Park and recreation agencies should consider requiring short-term volunteers to also register and to acknowledge in writing the absence of coverage, as applicable.

### *Use of prevailing wage*

The law commonly known as the prevailing wage standard was adopted in the 1930s to prevent nonunion contractors from winning bids on public works projects. The term "public works" includes, but is not limited to, construction, alteration, installation, demolition or repair work done under contract and paid in whole or in part out of public funds. The modern interpretation of this law is that workers on any such project financed by tax dollars must be paid the prevailing wage for the community in which the project is located. The prevailing wage law became of interest to volunteer programs in California in 2001 when "public works" was interpreted to include any expenditure of tax funds for a project, including a nonprofit organization spending public grant funds. The resulting policy was interpreted to mean volunteers could not work on public work projects without being paid the prevailing wage.

Legislation was signed in September 2004 exempting from the state's prevailing wage requirement work performed by a volunteer, a volunteer coordinator, a member of the California Conservation Corps, or a member of a certified Community Conservation Corps. However, the exemption is subject to some restrictions. For example, Special Districts are not included in the legislation. Public entities and nonprofit organizations should ensure that they are in compliance with any applicable laws regarding prevailing wages when using volunteers on projects that qualify as public works.

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### Volunteers' Long Wait is Over

In a January 9, 2005, article in the Redding *Record Searchlight* entitled, "For Park Supporters, the Long Wait is Over," reporter Scot Mobley described how volunteer Orpha Matthews and her Vista Ridge Estates neighbors "never abandoned their dream that a wretched wedge of their northeast Redding subdivision might one day sprout a vibrant park."

Mobley described how the group will realize their dream to build a playground now that a change in California law lets volunteer park builders work beside paid laborers on public works projects:



*Vista Ridge had to wait a year while state lawmakers figured out a way to legalize volunteer work on public projects without jeopardizing the jobs of skilled laborers. But the campaign attracted support for the park from far beyond the neighborhood. Matthews doesn't regret the delay.*

*"It is amazing what happened because the contractors union objected to our volunteering to build our park," Matthews said. "What a lot of publicity they garnered for us."*

*In addition to a playground, the park will sport a lawn, a shade pavilion, half a basketball court, a bocce ball court, horseshoe pits and public art. Local contractors and service organizations will donate their brawn and brains to building the bulk of these features.*

*The long-awaited park project kicks off Monday evening with an organizational meeting at the nearby Little Country Church. Neighbors and volunteers will meet with KaBOOM!, a national organization, in early February to design the park's playground with the help of neighborhood children.*

*Redding officials initially rebuffed Vista Ridge's request to build a playground and plant sod on land long earmarked for a park. The city preferred to pour scarce dollars into larger neighborhood parks.*

*Official reluctance changed to enthusiastic support when KaBOOM!, a Washington D.C.-based nonprofit playground builder, proposed a project in Redding. The city nominated Vista Ridge, located half a mile from The Home Depot store, where more than 100 employees would pitch in. The Home Depot is a primary KaBOOM! sponsor.*

*The city earmarked \$60,000 for Vista Ridge Park in February. Neighbors and other volunteers would build the rest of the park, whose estimated price tag a year ago sat at \$200,000.*

*But state law did not allow mixing volunteer and paid labor on public works projects – a fact emphasized to the city by the California Construction Industry Force Account Council.*

*Redding officials who wanted to change the law joined with other cities and watershed restoration groups that had used volunteer labor. They drafted Assemblywoman Loni Hancock, D-Berkeley, who brokered an agreement between labor and*

*environmental groups. Her bill changing the labor code won bipartisan legislative approval in August – a victory for the Vista Ridge folks, but too late in the year to begin work on the park.*

*Instead, neighbors and city parks officials got busy mobilizing the massive volunteer effort expected for this spring's ground breaking and playground building. They christened a donors fund through the Shasta Regional Community Foundation and launched a Web site to coordinate the volunteer effort and trumpet it through cyberspace.*

*Volunteers at Monday's meeting will divide into teams concentrating on volunteer recruitment, construction, publicity and public relations. Other teams will focus on providing food, childcare and job safety for the volunteers who trek to Vista Ridge to pitch in.*

*Organizers will even deputize a volunteer group to figure out ways to keep children involved in the design process.*

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### *Use of agency equipment, vehicles and property*

If a volunteer will be using equipment, vehicles or property belonging to the agency, the agency's insurance and bargaining unit (union) must allow such usage. Safety training must be provided, and use should be supervised. If a volunteer will be using his/her own equipment, machinery or vehicle while on agency business, the volunteer coordinator should:

- Verify that the vehicle is insured and that the volunteer is insured for that vehicle
- Verify that the equipment or machinery is safe and in good working condition
- Verify that the volunteer knows how to safely operate the equipment or machinery s/he will be using in their duties

### *Megan's Law - Information on Registered Sex Offenders*

California's Megan's Law provides Internet access to detailed information on registered sex offenders. The website <http://meganslaw.ca.gov/disclaimer.htm> provides information on the whereabouts of sex offenders so that your agency and members of your community can verify application data and safeguard park patrons from the activities of known child molesters.

Megan's Law is named after seven-year-old Megan Kanka, a New Jersey girl who was raped and killed by a known child molester who had moved across the street from the family without their knowledge. In the wake of the tragedy, the Kankas sought to have local communities warned about sex offenders in the area. All states now have a form of Megan's Law.

### *Fingerprinting and background checks*

Any volunteer that will be in contact with minors shall be fingerprinted and undergo a background check (Public Resources Code 5164). The extra precautions are for the protection of the agency, the volunteers and the public.

### **Review and approval of volunteer policies by executive and/or board of directors**

The completed volunteer policies must be reviewed and approved by both the agency's policy makers and legal counsel before allowing the executive and/or management staff to develop a structure for the volunteer program. The policies provide direction for the program and assures all concerned that the volunteers are fully protected under law. Approval of volunteer policies at this level also legitimizes the volunteer program and signals the volunteers that the agency both welcomes them and appreciates their service.



## Chapter 4

### Developing your volunteer program structure

#### Two examples of centralized volunteer programs

##### *National Park Service Volunteer Program*

Volunteers-in-Parks, the National Park Service volunteer program, offers a model for a centralized structure. Authorized by federal legislation enacted in 1970, the National Park Service has authority “to accept and utilize volunteer assistance in a way that is mutually beneficial to the Service and to the volunteer.”

Volunteers are selected to participate in the program because they can fill an identified need. They are usually individuals or members of groups, with identifiable skills and/or interests, who perform a specific function or type of work. The National Park Service’s *Program Guidelines for Volunteers-in-Parks* is available on the internet at <http://www.nps.gov/volunteer/prgdscrp.htm>.

##### *California State Parks Volunteer Program*

California’s governor and the legislature recognized the value of volunteerism in 1978 when the California State Government Volunteers Act was enacted. Under Government Code Sections 3110-3119, authorization was given to California State Parks and other state agencies to “provide sufficient staff for the effective management and development of volunteer programs.”

In the early years of the State Parks’ program, volunteers were concentrated in individual park units under the direct supervision of park employees. These volunteers served as campground hosts and educated visitors about the cultural and natural resources found in the parks. In recent years, the California State Parks’ Volunteers in Parks program has expanded to include volunteers who assist staff with administrative duties at the district offices and at headquarters in Sacramento. At the California State Parks’ Northern Service Center for example, a retired librarian donates her time to organize and classify the publications in the Resources Department library. This individual brings professional expertise to the department that improves the collections, augments library operations, and assists staff with their research. This special assignment accommodates the unique skills and needs of a prospective volunteer.

Specialized volunteer opportunities, such as the State Parks’ docent program, require a rigorous course of study and training to educate the volunteer about the varied natural, cultural and recreational resources found in a specific unit.

Ongoing education provides a strong foundation of expertise for interpreting the resources.

California State Parks' Interpretation and Education Section manages the "Volunteers In Parks" program and oversees the many cooperating associations that work with the park system. Volunteer program guidelines are available on the internet under "Volunteer Opportunities" at <http://parks.ca.gov>. Additional information about cooperating associations may also be found on the website.

### **Establishing program management responsibilities**

The multi-level structure necessary to manage federal and state volunteer programs is easily modified to help the local park and recreation agency establish program management responsibilities. As described in Chapter 3 of this guidebook, the authority for developing an agency-wide program comes from federal and state law and from the local park commission or policy body. In addition, upper management must take the lead in establishing the framework for the program and delegate management responsibility to a volunteer coordinator who will develop guidelines tailored to the specific needs of the agency.

The type of program an agency establishes and the degree of management responsibility required will be determined by the park agency's needs. Karla Henderson and Kenneth Silverberg's article, "Good Work, If You Can Get It," in the November 2002 issue of *Parks and Recreation*, acknowledge that "volunteering may take on many facets" and be described as casual or committed depending on the amount of time involved.

### *Budgeting for supplies, equipment and training*

Volunteers are not free help. Your volunteer program will require an annual appropriation to pay program costs. Each park and recreation agency will need to determine any limitations that may apply to expenditures of public funds. Establish a separate line item in the budget to fund program management salaries and program expenses. Include money for equipment, supplies, tools and materials, ongoing training, membership dues for professional organizations and to pay for volunteer special events. Recognition events and merit awards are important ways to acknowledge and thank volunteers for their service. Also include money to reimburse volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses for local transportation, meals and special clothing. When specialized training is required to improve interpretation, include money to offer stipends to outside natural resource or cultural heritage specialists to augment the training of your volunteer docents.

### *Hiring a volunteer coordinator*

In launching a volunteer program, consider the benefits of hiring an experienced volunteer coordinator to organize a centralized program. To assure a direct or indirect reporting line from the volunteer coordinator to the executive director or general manager, a reorganization of the agency's management structure may be required. A great deal has been written about the effort of directing volunteers. The following job description gives a composite view of the volunteer coordinator position:

A volunteer coordinator recruits, screens, trains, supervises and acknowledges all of the volunteers who donate their time to an agency. Tasks include:

- working with staff to create volunteer job descriptions
- preparing and updating a volunteer manual
- recruiting volunteers
- screening and selecting volunteers
- matching volunteer skills to the needs of the agency
- orienting volunteers
- organizing training
- coordinating all volunteer work
- motivating and acknowledging volunteers
- scheduling and preparing for events, projects and work days
- securing supplies and tools
- training staff to work with volunteers
- preparing articles for the volunteer newsletter
- assessing the effectiveness of the program

Building and managing a strong and effective program is the primary responsibility of the position. An interviewee should demonstrate his or her abilities to supervise, inspire and maintain morale among volunteers and staff, and should have a combination of interpersonal communication skills and sound management know-how to motivate and retain an unpaid workforce. A good candidate must have experience, be interested in building a group of diverse individuals, and be knowledgeable about the tools and techniques required to design, implement and evaluate a volunteer program.

The applicant also must display excellent oral and written communication skills and be able to represent the agency in a professional way when promoting volunteer events and raising money to fund program activities. The ability to establish and maintain positive relationships with co-workers, business people and the general public is essential for community outreach functions. Building a volunteer-friendly situation within the organization is critical to the success of the volunteer program.

### *Providing program leadership*

The art of managing volunteers requires a combination of interpersonal skills that will motivate and inspire an unpaid workforce. Program leaders need to accept the daily challenge of managing, be responsive to change, and monitor performance on an ongoing basis. Training in volunteer management and pertinent rules and regulations can often be obtained at workshops and conferences hosted by organizations such as the California Park and Recreation Society and the National Recreation and Park Association. A healthy, productive program will positively impact the performance of all members of the organization.

Program leadership requires that the volunteer coordinator work with staff to develop interesting job descriptions. Neither staff nor volunteers should feel that the work assigned to volunteers is labor that no one else is willing to perform. Show employees how the agency will benefit from volunteer assistance.

Volunteers are not motivated by job promotions and economic incentives. They work for personal satisfaction and to advance or enhance the agency's mission. The volunteer coordinator leads by creating a vision that draws people together and by establishing measures of progress. These measures form the parts of the organization framework that will shape the customs, behavior and practices for doing business. Establishing the ground rules is very important for the success of the program.

To assess program achievement, the coordinator must create and maintain a volunteer information database and prepare a report from the data to describe the program accomplishments. The database should include the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the volunteers, track the hours of each individual and describe the tasks they undertook. Feedback from volunteers about their assignments also should be included in the database as a measure of performance. The coordinator should report to the director or general manager on a monthly basis and report to the board of directors or commission annually.

### *Teamwork*

Teamwork is the moving force of a volunteer program. For effective management, the volunteer coordinator will build teams by collaborating with staff. To begin the coordinator should act as or designate a team leader to brainstorm with staff to develop a common understanding of the role of volunteers within the organization.

The coordinator will work with the team to identify ways that volunteers can add value to the organization's mission. Discuss as a group the tasks that will augment not supplant staff duties. Be open to all suggestions and avoid turning



people down or undermining the spirit of the ideas presented. All ideas should be recorded and considered when the volunteer job descriptions are created.

## **Developing volunteer job descriptions and/or duty statements**

A volunteer job description is a written explanation of the duties to be performed and responsibilities to be undertaken within the agency. Like paid staff, volunteers need clearly defined job descriptions.

The job description is a planning tool to help your volunteers understand the expectations of the job. It defines the tasks, what skills are needed and the results to be accomplished. The job description also provides the agency with a means for creating job continuity from one volunteer to the next. Consider it a living document that can be revised as the program changes.

Job descriptions are the building blocks of your program and are essential in the process of recruiting, interviewing, placing, supervising and evaluating your volunteers. A good job description is short, succinct and clear and should contain the following elements:

- Title – a three or four word description
- Goal – the intended outcome
- Supervisor – the name of the person designated
- Time – be specific about the time commitment required
- Training – give details about orientation, required job specific training and on-the-job training
- Evaluation – specify time frame

The process of writing a duty statement will promote greater efficiency and simplify management. Include the following sections:

- Duties – describe the tasks to be accomplished in each area of responsibility
- Qualifications – list the skills necessary for the effective performance of the tasks
- Authority – explain the extent to which the volunteer can make decisions about how work is to be carried out
- Skills – define the aptitudes and proficiency required
- Accountability – describes the results that are expected

A result oriented duty statement can be managed more easily than a loosely-defined one, and in the end, the volunteer will share a sense of achievement when the goal has been achieved. Public agencies may have labor relations issues to consider if volunteers will be working closely with employees or performing duties similar to employees' duties.

### *Maintaining a personnel file*

Tracking information about volunteers, such as the number of hours they work and the type of work they do, is an important function of the volunteer coordinator position. The information gathered on short-term and long-term volunteers will provide the data that the volunteer coordinator will use to assess the value of the program. The data will shape the cost/benefit analysis and be included in reports and presentations that will inform the executive director/general manager and the board of directors/commission about the progress of the program. A volunteer's personal information should be treated confidentially, as specified in the Information Practices Act and the Public Records Act.

Various kinds of application forms, service logs, tax record keeping forms, performance evaluations and exit interview questionnaires have been prepared and published and are available from national nonprofit organizations and on the Internet. Include information in the volunteer database that is directly related to job duties, performance and termination. Consider working with a human resources consultant to shape your volunteer tracking system to meet the needs of your program. Or, consider purchasing human resources software to computerize record keeping. Available software categories include attendance and scheduling, databases, screening, performance and productivity, performance appraisal, recruiting, team building and workforce management.

### *Design a flexible program that allows volunteers to expand their interests as the program grows*

Encourage innovative ideas that go beyond "traditional" volunteer events sponsored by the organization. Support volunteer suggestions that will mobilize your agency in developing new initiatives and partnerships that focus on current trends in recreation. For example, volunteers with professional experience in the health care field can sponsor an event that concentrates on issues of obesity prevention and the life-long benefits of exercise.

### **Volunteer identification**

Volunteers should be easily recognized by the visiting public as an official presence in parks, but their dress should not mimic uniforms worn by park staff or public safety officers. Encourage volunteers to wear regular street dress that is neat, clean and in good taste, or work clothes if physical labor is assigned. Provide volunteers with a special cap or vest that has a patch or decal that identifies the wearer as a member of the volunteer program to distinguish them from the public. Each volunteer also should wear a name tag while performing volunteer duties.

When volunteers are asked to act as the eyes and ears of the parks and are sent on foot patrol, horse patrol or bike patrol, special identification is appropriate to allow them to handle incidents with authority. As described by JoAnn Greco, in "The Power of Patrol", *Parks and Recreation*, September 2004, "whether rangers, police or volunteers, the issue of moving security from park to park within a system, and of establishing a presence" is central to park security. If individuals are expected to approach individuals committing infractions, they should be trained on, and equipped with, special identification and communication devices that allow them to call in the police if they need help.

At historic sites, re-created attire that is consistent with the historic period of the property can be worn. Volunteers wearing period dress should identify themselves to let the public know that they are participating in a particular historic event or time. If the period attire is purchased or made by the volunteer, the volunteer should be encouraged to retain the receipts for the materials used, as these expenses may be tax deductible.

Volunteers of all ages can bring distinct life experiences, unique talents, diverse occupational skills, different languages, new perspectives and fresh ideas to your agency. Mostly they are individuals who are interested in pitching in and helping out in their local communities and who seek opportunities where the organization's mission fits with their vision of service. "Charity begins at home" best describes volunteer activities in California.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Recruitment, interviewing and placement**

Recruitment is the process of securing volunteers for your agency. Successful recruitment depends on the number of volunteers needed, the skills required to do the job and the amount of time the project will take. Adapt your search to your program and limit the number of volunteers you enroll. If you recruit and hire more volunteers than you need, disqualified applicants or volunteers who feel underutilized may hold hard feelings against you and your agency.

#### **Recruitment methods**

Networking with other park and recreational professionals is a good way to learn what your peers are doing to recruit volunteers. Follow up on all leads even if they seem doubtful. You never know where you will find an individual who is self motivated and ideally suited to serving your program. Current volunteers are often the best recruiters. Encourage volunteers to bring a friend to meetings or events. Recruitment should be a year-round responsibility.

Produce and distribute written materials about your program and update them regularly. A potential volunteer may not sign up immediately upon receiving the information, but may come back to you when they are ready. A brochure should describe the goals of your program. Include a contact name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and Internet address.

Consider including an application form as part of the brochure. The application can be completed at home and returned in the mail. Maintain a mailing list of individuals who have expressed interest in your program, including the names of parks in which they are interested in volunteering. You can use the list to contact people about upcoming events or for emergencies. Coordinate each name with the preferred park location for mailings targeting potential volunteers for that park.

If a large number of volunteers are needed for a short period of time, and the job is one that most people can do with very little training, you can distribute recruitment materials widely. When a targeted recruitment is desirable where special skills or some characteristics that are not commonly found are required, be selective in your recruitment. Answer the following questions to identify and locate potential volunteers who have the qualifications you need:

- What skills are needed?
- Who can provide these skills?
- How can we contact them?
- What will motivate them?

Identify individuals who are known to agency staff and live near your parks. Target those who benefit from your programs. Create a compelling message to explain why your organization is worthy of a donation of volunteer time. The message should be short, simple, and direct. Be sure to stress community needs.

Colleen Janssen, Marketing and Community Outreach Specialist at the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District, suggests marketing your program in local service clubs and schools. In her presentation, "Savvy Volunteer Management," she recommends contacting community organizations, such as Rotary, Kiwanis and high school Key Clubs, which are looking for speakers for their monthly meetings. She also suggests contacting high school academic counselors about specific volunteer tasks. Colleges and universities are also good recruitment sources, particularly if students are looking for internships. Sign up for a booth at school health fairs or for special events held by local church groups. Talk to Girl and Boy Scout leaders who can develop merit badge opportunities in your parks.

Consider canvassing your neighborhood for potential volunteers. Author Susan Ellis in *The Volunteer Recruitment Book* suggests picturing your facility as the center of a bull's eye, with concentric circles around it. If you are in an urban area, walk out your front door with a clip board and pen. If you are in a rural area, do this by car. Walk completely around the block or drive in a circle. Write down everything you see: stores, businesses, churches, parking lots, houses, schools, etc. After you have done this close circle, branch out to the next two blocks or the next quarter mile, then farther. With your list of neighbors in hand you can identify ways they might be able to volunteer by asking the following questions:

- Are there business people who could volunteer at your site on their way to or from work?
- Are there students or seniors with daytime hours available?
- Might the neighbors be interested in a community service project?
- Are there professional skills that might be tapped? Self-employed professionals such as architects, artists, accountants, or consultants often control their own schedules and can be flexible.
- Do any of your neighbors share your service goals, an interest in your client population, or have anything else in common that might lead to collaboration?

### *Announcing volunteer opportunities and programs in the media*

A volunteer recruitment announcement is much the same as an announcement for a paid position. The key components of a recruitment announcement are:

- Position title – a descriptive title giving a sense of identity and reflecting the job function. It is not necessary to include the word “volunteer” in the title any more than the word “paid” would be included in the title of a salaried position. However, the job description should clearly state the position is not paid.
- Work location – could the assignment be done at home, or does the volunteer need to be on site?
- Volunteer impact – the purpose of the overall project and how the volunteer position will contribute to it.
- Responsibilities and duties – list specifics and define what the volunteer will be expected to do.
- Qualifications – include skills needed, education, experience wanted, etc.
- Commitment required – if you have a minimum length of service, such as hours per month or week, be sure to include that information.
- Training – will training be provided or is it required before the volunteer begins work.
- Volunteer Supervisor contact information – who to call and where to apply.

### *Seeking a diverse volunteer base*

Almost 44 percent of the volunteers identified in the U.S. Labor Department *Occupational Employment and Wages* 2003 report were asked by someone in the organization if they wanted to become a volunteer. Only two in five volunteers became involved on their own initiative. This finding is highly significant and shows that the successful recruitment of volunteers for any new program must be proactive. Agencies need to seek out new groups and not rely solely on a traditional volunteer base. Highly visible volunteers from diverse populations and various age groups are ambassadors to the community. They expand your visitor base and reflect the community they serve.

In seeking diversity, the agency must respect the right of each individual to maintain his or her own cultural heritage. Encourage volunteers from different personal and professional backgrounds to become involved in mutually respectful relationships and share their talents and skills with each other. In the article, “Personal Capacities for Volunteer Administrators: Drawing Upon the Past as We Move Into the Future,” Safrit and Merrill conclude that “the ultimate outcome we all seek is improving ourselves, others, and our society.”

### *Preparing a volunteer job application*

A job application will help you gather useful data about the prospective volunteers. Contact information, such as name, address and phone number, the name of their nearest park, and areas of interest, can be entered into a retrievable database. Include a checklist of interests and skills that relate to your agency’s operations.

In addition, ask your volunteer applicants to describe how they have served the community in the past, why they want to become involved with your agency, and what they hope to gain from volunteering. Request the following information on the application form:

- References. Ask for names, addresses, and phone numbers for individuals who are familiar with the potential volunteer and their work (do not ask for this information if you do not intend to contact the references)
- Driver's license number
- Language skills
- Emergency contact information
- Pre-Employment Arrest/Conviction Disclosure questions should be completed by volunteers who will be interacting with the public or handling funds. Ask the question, "Have you ever been convicted, or adjudicated as a juvenile offender, or any criminal offense by either a civilian or military court, other than a major traffic violation?"
- Certification. Applicants should certify that the information on the application is accurate. Wording such as: "I certify that all of the statements made in this application are true, correct, and complete, to the best of my knowledge, and are made in good faith. I understand that misinformation or omission of information could result in disqualification and/or termination. I also understand that background and security checks may also be conducted."
- Signature and date
- Signature of parent or guardian if the applicant is under 18 years of age

## **The interview**

Finding the best qualified person is the primary goal of the job interview. To achieve the goal, the interviewer can orchestrate the process to elicit the information he or she will need to judge a candidate's qualifications. Before the interview, write out the questions and review them with the supervisor. If there is more than one person interviewing for the position, make sure that each candidate is asked the same questions in the same sequence.

### *Developing and structuring interview/assessment questions*

In her article "Conducting the Information Interview," <http://www.roquecom.com/interview>, Stephanie J. Coopman of the Department of Communications Studies at San Jose State University, suggests that carefully worded interview questions are more likely to bring forth thoughtful and accurate answers than general questions. "In crafting questions," she explains, "recognize how they can focus a response." Open-ended questions are broad and introduce a subject, while closed ended questions require specific responses. She also



recommends that an interviewer avoid emotionally-charged language and leading questions that imply an expected answer such as, "Wouldn't you agree that youth sports fields are underfunded in this city?"

Phrase questions simply. Request limited amounts of information. Do not ask questions the interviewee can not answer and do not ask multiple questions, such as, "How and why did you begin your career in recreation?" Use words that interviewees will understand. Be specific, precise and concrete. Watch for words that sound similar and might be confusing. Avoid language that will offend or insult. Questions should assess the skills of the candidate and elicit answers that demonstrate how well he or she will be able to accomplish the tasks identified in the job description.

Before the interview begins, review your questions, the job description and the candidate's application. Take time to relax. Be sure the interview room is free from interruptions. To open the interview, welcome the candidate warmly. Be sure to listen to what the candidate is saying and make notes if necessary. At the end of the session, invite questions and comments. Be aware that the candidate is interested in you and any information you provide about the position. In closing the session, describe the next steps, and be specific about the projected date for a final decision. Be concise and upbeat, and thank the candidate for his or her interest. Follow up with all applicants, successful or not.

### *People to avoid*

Use your instincts when evaluating potential volunteers. Avoid people who seem troubled. Watch out for people who ask for a high profile job before you have a chance to evaluate their abilities. Steer clear of those who want to list the organization as a reference but fail to join into the volunteer activities. Be aware that students, who are forced by their parents to volunteer "for their own good," sometimes exhibit behavior problems in a group setting.

The goal of interviewing is matching the agency to the volunteer. The process is a negotiation where each side seeks to find something suitable in the other. Look for a happy fit between the interests of the volunteer and those of the agency.

## **Contact references and perform background checks**

### *Contact references*

In evaluating a prospective volunteer, make sure to contact each individual reference the candidate has identified on his or her application in a polite and

sensitive way. In telephoning the reference, make sure the individual is free to talk. Ask if the time and situation is good for them, and offer to call back if it is not. Identify yourself and the volunteer program. Give a brief description of the agency. Make sure to provide the full name of the individual about whom you are requesting a recommendation, and briefly describe the job you expect the volunteer to undertake. Ask about specific interests, goals, skills, and talents that qualify the individual for the position.

### *Background checks*

Program management is responsible for conducting background checks if a volunteer will be working with the public or handling funds. California Public Resources Code (PRC) 5164 prohibits public agencies from engaging a volunteer in a supervisory or disciplinary position over any minor who will perform services at any park, playground, or community center used for recreational purposes if the person has been convicted of certain crimes as referenced in the Penal Code. This and other pertinent laws can be found at [www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov). Specific laws to review are California Penal Code 11105 (b) (10), 13300 (b) (10), 11105.3; PRC 5164; and California Education Code 10911.5.

California Public Resources Code Section 5164 (b) (1), states: "To give effect to this section, a county or city, or city and county, or special district shall require each such prospective employee or volunteer to complete an application that inquires as to whether or not that individual has been convicted of any offense specified in subdivision (a). The county or city, or city and county, or special district shall screen, pursuant to Section 11105.3 of the Penal Code, any such prospective employee or volunteer, having supervisory or disciplinary authority over any minor, for that person's criminal background."

According to PRC 5164, there is no charge to the local agency for requesting the records of a prospective volunteer. "(b) (2) Any local agency requests for Department of Justice records pursuant to this subdivision shall include the prospective employee's or volunteer's fingerprints, which may be taken by the local agency, and any other data specified by the Department of Justice. The request shall be made on a form approved by the Department of Justice. No fee shall be charged to the local agency for requesting the records of a prospective volunteer pursuant to this subdivision."

### *Criminal offender records*

The California Department of Justice maintains the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) that provides law enforcement agencies with information directly from federal, state, and local

computerized information files. However, restrictions have been placed on the user to ensure that the rights of all citizens of California are properly protected.

Article 1, Section 1, of the California Constitution grants California citizens an absolute right to privacy. In 1977, the State Supreme Court ruled that only arrest entries resulting in conviction, and arrest entries that indicate active prosecution may be provided for evaluation for employment, licensing, or certification purposes. It is only through the submission of fingerprints to the Department of Justice's Criminal Offender Record Information that the true identity of an individual can be established and criminal history information accessed. For information about the Criminal Offender Record Information program, contact:

Department of Justice  
Applicant Processing Program  
P. O. Box 903417  
Sacramento, CA 94203-4170  
Phone: (916) 322-2209  
Fax: (916) 227-2000

Fingerprint records may be requested through the California Attorney General's Office at [www.caag.state.ca.us/fingerprints/publications/livescan.pdf](http://www.caag.state.ca.us/fingerprints/publications/livescan.pdf).

Also, be sure to check out the Megan's Law website described in Chapter 2 (26) at <http://meganslaw.ca.gov/disclaimer.htm>, to identify registered child molesters.

## **Volunteer placement**

Different people volunteer for different reasons. Some people volunteer for status, some to socialize, and some to gain work experience in the field of parks and recreation. Give volunteers tasks that match their interests and where they can see the benefits of their work. For example:

- The "prestige" person might enjoy being the master of ceremonies, a media spokesperson, or task force leader
- The "people" person might like committee work, canvassing or public relations
- The "achievement" person might do well planning an event, chairing a committee, working on a new activity, or being on the executive board

Use the information you have gathered during the screening process when placing a volunteer, and make sure that the volunteer and the supervisor see eye to eye about the tasks to be accomplished. In making the final decision to hire the volunteer, acknowledge that either the volunteer or the supervisor can change his or her mind if the placement is not working out.

### *Execute written/signed agreement*

Consider having a contract or written agreement between the agency and the volunteer that describes the commitment of each party. Describe the responsibilities of both the volunteer and the agency. The agreement should include the following sections:

- Verify rights and responsibilities
- Describe the duty statement and tasks
- Identify the starting date and proposed schedule
- Release of liability statement
- State both parties' rights to terminate volunteer service with or without reason
- Explain any dress and/or identification requirements

To insure that the work described in an agreement is accomplished within the principles and standards of the organization, volunteers will benefit from receiving an introduction to the policies and best practices of the agency. To be effective, this introduction should emphasize agency operations and the skills, knowledge, and behavior required for good job performance. Chapter 6, Volunteer Orientation and Training, underscores the value of providing volunteers with the information they will need to perform their work effectively.

## Chapter 6

### Volunteer Orientation and Training

Orientation and training are the twin processes of providing volunteers with the information they need to perform their work effectively.

#### Orientation

The purpose of orientation is to make new volunteers feel welcomed and appreciated, and to give them information to help them accomplish their work. Give the volunteers background on the organization, its operation and procedures. The better a volunteer understands how the agency operates, the better he or she will be able to fit his or her own abilities/talents into the operating system and develop ways to help the organization.

Orientation for a one-day project/activity such as tree planting or trash clean-up need not be lengthy. Topics to cover include:

- Introductions
- Background of agency and how the project fits in
- Description of the day's project, broken down into tasks
- Sign in procedure
- Parking passes or permit;
- Roles and responsibilities
- Emergency procedures
- Health hazard or physical restriction warning

If volunteers have signed up in advance, consider sending a welcome letter with the following information:

- Date and time of activity
- Where to report, including a map to the site and a map of the park if it is extensive
- What to wear (hats, jackets, work boots, etc.)
- What to bring (water, lunch, sunscreen, etc.)

An orientation program for long-term volunteers should provide the following information:

- Mission and history of the organization
- Description of programs and services
- Organizational chart
- Facilities and layout of the organization
- Roles and responsibilities
- General policies and procedures

- Workers compensation and tort liability
- Emergency procedures
- Description of the volunteer management system

#### *Orientation to facilities and storage of personal items*

Begin with a tour of the buildings and park facilities. Point out restrooms, supply cabinets, equipment, break rooms, and other locations. Make the volunteer feel welcome. Provide a secure place for personal belongings, a desk, closet, or locker.

#### *Introduction to agency staff members and description of their duties*

Introduce the volunteer to staff and give a brief description of the employee's responsibilities. Provide an organization chart to help orient the volunteer to reporting pathways and his/her place in the agency.

#### *Where to go for help*

The volunteer coordinator is the primary contact for most volunteer needs. However, emergencies do arise, and volunteers need to know who to contact when they need help. Be sure volunteers understand emergency exit routes, the location of alarms, and any other safety features.

#### *Provide tort liability and injury compensation information*

As discussed previously, volunteers may be covered by the agency's workers compensation insurance if the agency has so elected. If coverage is provided, and a volunteer is injured while working or causes injury to another individual, the volunteer must be compensated as if s/he is a paid employee. Volunteers should be provided with this information as part of their orientation.

#### *Time and record keeping procedures*

Stress the importance of being on time and following through with commitments. Treat volunteers as treasured employees. Make sure they understand that their contribution to the organization is valuable and that their presence is important. If volunteers know their work is appreciated, they will not be tardy.

Set up a central location where volunteers record their hours. An annual tally of volunteer hours documents the program's in-kind contribution to the community. Many government agencies and nonprofit foundations accept in-kind contributions as matching funds for grant-funded projects. Volunteers should be recognized for the number of hours they contribute to the agency.

Volunteers should be encouraged to keep track of expenses incurred while volunteering. While the agency usually cannot reimburse the volunteer, the expenses can often be used as income tax deductions.

## **Training**

Training is the process of instructing volunteers in the specific job-related tasks to be accomplished in a particular volunteer job. An effective training program will also identify the skills, knowledge and behavior required for good job performance. At a minimum, the volunteer should learn the following:

- How to perform the job
- What not to do in the job
- What to do if an emergency or unforeseen situation arises

Include regular agency employees in designing and delivering the volunteer training program, specifically in the areas of record keeping, use of equipment, cash management and accounting. Volunteer record keeping, equipment use, cash management and accounting must follow the same procedures used by the agency as a whole.

### *Using agency equipment*

An area of training that requires involvement by agency staff is the use of equipment. Regardless of whether a volunteer is proficient in operation of a type of equipment, he/she should be instructed and observed by a qualified employee to determine the volunteer's competence. Training includes the safe use and care of equipment and the review of appropriate operations manuals. This training can prevent injury, accidents, and potential workers compensation claims.

### *Special program requirements*

Special programs and events are exciting for all members of the agency staff. Training for the specific needs and requirements of special events should be equal for paid and volunteer staff. The appropriate trainer is determined by the

volunteer coordinator. Volunteers, staff and outside trainers can all be tapped for special event training.

### *Cash management and accounting procedures*

Volunteers who will be handling funds should be trained in the accounting procedures used by the agency. Cash should always be counted by both paid and volunteer staff and the results reconciled.

### *Docent training*

The specialized training needed for a docent or a volunteer guide is developed on a site-specific basis. Volunteers who interpret the resources your agency administers – natural areas, historic sites, artifacts, visitor centers or museums, etc. – should be thoroughly trained in how to effectively present the information in an engaging and educational manner. Include as trainers persons who conduct interpretive programs at your sites or similar facilities, or instructors from nearby colleges.

Local experts in the natural or cultural resources are also valuable trainers. Docent trainees should follow or ‘shadow’ experienced docents to learn from their example. A final examination or presentation of the information learned is an excellent way to gauge the ability of your trainee to be an effective interpreter. Refresher courses or guest lectures should be arranged for new and experienced docents to help them learn new information or brush up on seldom used skills.

You can create a successful partnership with your volunteers and strengthen the lines of communication by recognizing their commitment to service and by bolstering their morale. Techniques for keeping them involved with your agency are found in Chapter 7 - Volunteer Retention: An On-going Process.



## Chapter 7

### Volunteer Retention: An On-going Process

#### How to keep volunteers coming back – morale-bolstering methods

Volunteers respond well to a welcoming environment where they accomplish interesting and rewarding work and are recognized for their accomplishments. The key to developing a successful partnership with your volunteers is to bolster morale by strengthening the lines of communication and recognizing the volunteer's commitment to service.

#### *The importance of saying "Thank you"*

Don't forget to say "thank you." The phrase is an important way to recognize and to reinforce your agency's appreciation. The words should become a standard in your vocabulary. When you are busy, these two little words are easily overlooked. Send a thank-you card to a volunteer who has made a special effort. Show your volunteers that you appreciate them:

- Greet volunteers with a friendly smile and call them by name
- Inquire about their concerns, opinions and ideas
- Say good-by and thank you every time they leave
- Involve volunteers in staff meetings and agency activities
- Assign new responsibilities and new challenges
- Send birthday cards
- Send pool or special event passes
- Phone volunteers when they are sick
- Take a personal interest in their well being

#### Volunteer Recognition

Recognizing excellence in your volunteer program has many advantages and will assist your agency in attracting and retaining dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers. Awards programs should be based on merit alone. Nominations should be come from the people who work or have worked directly with the volunteer.

A free park pass is an appropriate gift for a volunteer who has helped with a special event. T-shirts and other items of clothing that signify "membership" in the agency are both rewards for the volunteer and publicity for the program. Establish a bulletin board where both volunteers and paid staff can see it that features photos, news articles, or other visual reminders of the importance of volunteers. Offer volunteer of the month awards with inexpensive gift certificates for coffee or dessert, or discount coupons for movies.

Volunteers often merit more formal recognition. Establish a program that acknowledges outstanding leadership skills and a strong commitment to service. Recognition should be given to individuals and groups who promote the mission of the agency and serve the needs of the community. Develop specific award criteria to acknowledge teamwork, collaboration and organization. Acknowledge the contribution of younger volunteers to foster social responsibility or emphasize excellence in a specific discipline. Take advantage of community-wide recognition programs, such as Points of Light, Community Services Planning Council, Directors of Volunteers in Agencies (DOVIA) and the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP).

Ask a corporation or business in your community to sponsor a volunteer recognition program partnership. In contacting a local sponsor, be prepared to describe the benefits that your agency provides, and list the volunteer skills and leadership qualities that your volunteers bring to the community. Any proposal should include a line item budget to show how the corporate gift will pay for an awards dinner and purchase recognition pins, plaques, ribbons and trophies. Any recognition event should acknowledge the corporate sponsor and list the names of all partners involved.

Not all volunteers want the traditional plaques, certificates or trophies. To be truly appreciated, the award should suit the volunteer who is being recognized. For example:

*At the end of a 20 mile walkathon, volunteer walkers received certificates of completion. Some beamed with pride and proudly showed it to parents, friends, etc. (Many of those certificates ended up framed on walls.) Others smiled appreciatively and then crammed it into their pockets (probably to be retrieved wet and soggy by Mom after it was washed along with the jeans!). Yet another young walker grinned from ear to ear as he received it, exclaiming, "Wow, thanks, it's just what I needed!" He then proceeded to carefully place it on his lap as a "plate" for his post-walk barbecue beef and chips!*

Here are some suggested alternatives:

- Agency-sponsored field trip
- A program or award named after a special volunteer
- A surprise party for the honoree
- Letter praising the volunteer to his/her boss, union, etc.
- Letter of commendation for young volunteers (good for college applications)
- Impressive job title
- Gift certificate from a sporting goods store
- A special book or piece of equipment they have been wanting or needing
- Scholarships for training outside the agency

- An invitation for a volunteer to participate in a focus group to help guide the agency's mission and long-term development

## **Tax Benefits**

Volunteers often have expenses associated with the time and role they fulfill. Some expenses may be tax deductible and should be carefully recorded. Included are bus or transit fares to the volunteer work site, mileage, phone calls, organization membership fees, research materials such as books and field guides, equipment purchased specifically for use when volunteering, and materials used to make period clothing for volunteers at historic sites. The amount and type of deductions allowable should be discussed with a qualified tax preparer.

## **Ongoing training**

### *Sharing the Mission*

Volunteers can promote your agency's mission by sharing their experiences with classroom students or by making a speech to a community service group. They also can use their special skills to train new volunteers and increase volunteer involvement.

### *Guest Speakers*

There is always more to learn. New equipment, new methodology, new studies, and new discoveries are all reasons for inviting guest speakers to address your volunteers. The prestige of being invited to attend a guest lecture by a noted expert in a relevant field not only makes a volunteer feel valued, but also results in a better trained and more knowledgeable volunteer.

### *Volunteer Connection*

Solicit feedback from volunteers to improve your volunteer program and to improve the volunteer experience. Incorporating volunteers' ideas into the daily operations of the program will increase program credibility, but it requires time, effort and good management to accomplish.

Recognize the shared traditions of volunteering to build a unifying force for stronger communities. Encourage your volunteers to network with others to celebrate volunteerism. Your agency can promote volunteer connections by sponsoring events where government and nonprofit sector volunteers get

together to share their experiences. Special events such as luncheons, health fairs, walk-a-thons, golf tournaments, and art exhibits provide an opportunity for volunteers to interact with others, meet people and exchange ideas. The event should be structured so that all the participants can share their stories and congratulate themselves on a job well done. Develop an annual community volunteer award by partnering with other government agencies and nonprofit organizations.

### **Suggestions on what to do when good volunteers go bad**

Even when certain tasks are deemed necessary to achieve an agency's mission, a volunteer's work may not meet expectations. Repetitive tasks can become onerous and personality conflicts can arise when motivational needs of the volunteer are not met. Frustrated expectations can cause some volunteers whose behavior is otherwise good to behave in seemingly destructive ways.

When volunteers are acting on what they believe is required to accomplish a task, yet their actions do not conform to the conventions of the agency, the volunteer coordinator will need to step into a situation and find a way to curb the behavior without destroying the individual's motivation to continue to volunteer.

Steve McCurley, in his article, "Why Good Volunteers Do Bad Things: A Look at the Subtleties of Volunteer Motivation," found on the National CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children) Association website, <http://www.casenet.org> suggests ways a volunteer coordinator can keep motivated volunteers on track:

- Urge volunteers to bring problems to you, and let them know you will work to find some way of meeting the needs. If a volunteer thinks the agency doesn't care, he or she will eventually stop volunteering for that agency.
- Explain clearly why certain actions are prohibited. Do not simply cite rules or refer to policy. You can point out how assigned tasks accomplish the mission. When volunteers connect with the "mission," they are more likely to respect the rules.
- Build a sense of personal connection and bonding between the agency and the volunteer. The most common bonding occurs between the volunteer and his or her immediate supervisor. This can be done by making the volunteer feel like they are a part of the agency.
- Develop a system of peer pressure by encouraging bonds among volunteers. If volunteers relate well to one another they will reinforce acceptable behavior and not want to "let their buddies down."

### *Handling resignations and dismissals*

Firing a volunteer is very stressful. Procedures for handling resignations and dismissals should be included in a volunteer program policy statement approved by the commission or board of directors when the program was established. All individuals have limitations as well as strengths; assess their idiosyncrasies during the recruitment process. Dismissal shows inadequacies and deficiencies in preparing the job description, in the interview process, in training and in supervision. Therefore the decision to terminate a volunteer should be only taken as a last resort.

Situations that appear to warrant a dismissal may be remediable. Look for alternatives such as:

- When you have a volunteer who automatically tests the rules as part of his self-expression, re-enforcing the rules may end the problem.
- Transfer the volunteer to a new position if he/she is not getting along with the supervisor or other volunteers.
- Some people take longer than others to learn new techniques and may require re-training with a different approach.
- A volunteer may not realize or admit they're burned out. Give them time to re-charge. Consider having an 'inactive status' list for volunteers who want to take a break from active service.
- Refer a volunteer to the Volunteer Center or set up an exchange program with another agency.
- Recognize that some volunteers reach a diminished capacity. Give them the honor they deserve as they leave the program.

Have an authorized procedure in place for suspension and termination as a last resort when none of the alternatives work. Make sure to distribute copies of the guidelines and discuss the procedures during orientation. Include measurable objectives in the job description. Incorporate an assessment of behavior in the standard evaluation. Tell volunteers of their unsatisfactory performance, counsel them on improving their work, and then re-evaluate. Failure to conform to standards over time becomes grounds for termination. Document all steps in writing, and include in the volunteer's personnel file.

In receiving an unsatisfactory review, a problem volunteer is likely to decide to resign rather than face dismissal. In the event that no resignation is offered, and the decision to terminate is reached, meet in private to tell the volunteer that he or she is being separated from the agency. Be quick, direct and absolute and do not counsel. Follow up with a letter and inform staff of the decision.

### *Voluntary separation and termination*

Volunteers may decide to end their service with an agency for many reasons, including completion of a specific project, relocation, personal or family

obligations or a career/job change. Volunteer service may also be terminated by an agency. Regardless of the reason for the departure of a volunteer, a notation summarizing the reasons for separation and any letter of resignation should be attached to the volunteer's file for future reference. If possible, an exit interview should be conducted.

### *The exit interview*

Interviewing volunteers when they leave your agency can help you improve your volunteer program. The exit interview offers a fleeting opportunity to find out information about your program that otherwise might be difficult or impossible to obtain. The interview should be optional and the information offered freely.

Interviews can be written or oral. Questionnaires with multiple choice or short essay questions such as, "What did you find most satisfying?" or "What did you find most frustrating?" provide limited information but are more easily quantified when generating information for a database. Conversely, when volunteers who are leaving are given the opportunity to answer open-ended questions and to express their opinions in an oral interview, they will be more likely to be frank in their discussions. The oral interview is a good chance to take a hard look at personal perceptions of your program and your agency.

Select an impartial interviewer, someone who is independent from the daily activities of the program. Choose a person who listens well, is open minded and will not disagree with the departing volunteer. Select open-ended questions, such as "Is the volunteer program well managed?" or "What would you change about the program?" so that the interviewee will feel free to express his or her opinions. Ask how conditions or morale can be improved. At some point in the interview ask "Why are you leaving?" Be prepared for unexpected answers, take note of important points, prepare a written summary at the end of the interview, and integrate any useful suggestions.

The exit interview can lay bare the good points and the bad points of the program and can be used as a tool to assess success and initiate improvements in the program. The next chapter, Chapter 8, Program Evaluation, will demonstrate ways that an ongoing system of evaluation will record your advances and innovations in community service.

## Chapter 8

### Program Evaluation

When volunteer involvement is critical to carrying out the mission, and volunteers are considered adjunct to the real work of the agency, the program is more effective. Agencies that view volunteers as “add-ons” hobble themselves with limited vision. Creating a centralized volunteer program adds value to services and frequently changes the way an agency looks at itself.

To demonstrate the benefits and deficiencies of a volunteer program, agencies will need an ongoing system of evaluation that objectively measures improvement and innovation in community service.

#### **Assessing the cost and benefit of your agency’s volunteer program**

Organizations want to know, in concrete terms, what volunteers cost and what they contribute--and they want both of these calculations to be in monetary terms. While there is some recognition that volunteers contribute to organizational culture and give gifts that are intangible, these organizations are looking for a bottom line answer to the question: "Are volunteers worth it?"

An estimated dollar value can be obtained by quantifying the volunteer effort. By multiplying the number of individuals and the number of hours worked during a twelve month period, an agency can assess the value of volunteer time. To underscore the tangible value of the volunteer program, this quantifiable information should be conveyed to the agency’s board of directors or supervisory body on a regular basis.

#### *A fair average value for a volunteer hour*

Each agency will need to calculate a fair average value for the volunteer hour depending on the skill level of the work performed by its volunteers. The average hourly earnings for recreational workers in your agency can provide the basis of the calculation, or you can justify the amount based on U. S. Department of Labor statistics.

A May 2003 U.S. Labor Department report defines recreation workers as individuals who conduct recreation activities with groups in public, private, or volunteer agencies or recreation facilities. They organize and promote activities, such as arts and crafts, sports, games, music, dramatics, social recreation, camping, hobbies, taking into account the needs and interests of individual members. The mean hourly wage for recreation workers in top paying metropolitan areas ranges between \$13.85 and \$14.76. The mean annual wage

ranges between \$28,800 and \$30,700. Labor statistics can be found at <http://stats.bls.gov/data/home.htm>.

Independent Sector, a coalition of leading nonprofits, foundations and corporations, has estimated the dollar value of volunteer time for 2004 in California at \$18.67. The data is based on the average hourly earnings of all production and non supervisory workers on private non farm payrolls. The Independent Sector figure is increased by 12 percent to account for fringe benefits. Additional information about the value of volunteer time is available at [http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer\\_time.html](http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html).

### **Evaluating the work of volunteers**

An informal dialogue between the staff supervisor and the volunteer about specific assigned tasks should be ongoing and on an “as needed” basis. Frequent discourse can help identify difficulties before they become irresolvable problems.

Conduct an informal interview with each new volunteer after the first month or six weeks of work. The interview gives all parties, including the volunteer coordinator, a chance to review the progress of tasks outlined in the job description. If appropriate, tasks can be revised to accommodate unexpected problems that might arise during this first interview. A second interview should take place at six months when additional adjustments can be made if they are necessary.

If the project is long-term, volunteers, like paid staff, should receive annual written evaluations from their supervisors. The evaluation assesses the accomplishment of tasks and contains a brief written narrative and a numeric score. The narrative is the place to make any constructive recommendations for improvement or to praise good work. Remember that volunteers who feel criticized leave. Evaluations should be worded carefully.

Good communication and frequent chats about the volunteer’s work can help the supervisor assess the motivational level of the volunteer. High motivation frequently will lead to burnout if individual expectations are not met by the assigned job.

### **Evaluating the volunteer program**

Creating a framework for evaluation is essential in determining the success or failure of your volunteer program. The framework must assess the capacity of the volunteer coordinator and the accomplishments of the program as a whole.



### *Success of the Program*

A rating scale, customized to meet your agency's standards, can measure the importance of each of the following criteria:

- Number of volunteers providing service
- Number of new volunteers within a designated period
- Total number of volunteer hours contributed
- Length of service
- Quality of service
- Degree to which volunteers help the agency in reaching its goals

The resulting score evaluated over time will highlight accomplishments but will not measure the volunteer coordinator's ability to lead the program. The rating measures the success or failure of everyone who participated in the planning and implementation of the program including board members, directors, managers, coordinator, employees and volunteers. The score will gauge the value of the program to the agency.

### **Evaluating the Volunteer Coordinator**

The volunteer coordinator must have the technical and professional competence to run a program smoothly and see that assignments are carried out, and he or she must be a competent link between the volunteers and the agency. A good working relationship must be maintained with both volunteers and the agency to assure a successful program.

The following list of quantifiable criteria should be used to measure the volunteer coordinator's tasks:

- Goals and objectives accomplished
- Board policies implemented
- Recruitment techniques strengthened
- Program participation expanded
- Performance goals and objectives met or exceeded
- Resources allocated
- Creativity improved
- Communication between staff and volunteers developed
- Service gaps filled
- Community relations enhanced
- Volunteerism promoted

The skills of the volunteer coordinator should be evaluated with the following criteria:

- Judgment, the ability to make quick and fair decisions based on all the available facts

- Assertiveness, the tendency to push forward rather than remain passive to requirements or tasks
- Communication, the skill to speak with clarity and with a good choice of words, and the ability to convince others of one's point of view
- Planning and organization, the talent to organize work activities and to integrate ideas to form a guideline for approaching problems or accomplishing tasks
- Cooperation, the capacity to work with others and accommodate divergent opinions
- Self confidence and the capacity to grow, a positive belief in one's self which is realistic and an acceptance of personal responsibility

Today, one in three Californians is willing to volunteer. As the Baby Boom generation approaches retirement, the opportunity to expand volunteer programs in local agencies will increase dramatically. In answering the question, "Are volunteers right for my agency?" think long term. In evaluating your program, make sure that you identify and understand the steps necessary to manage volunteers in your agency and verify that volunteers can sustain and enhance the park and recreation services you provide.

## Resources

### Volunteer Organizations

#### *Association for Volunteer Administration*

The Association for Volunteer Administration is the international professional membership association for individuals working in the field of volunteer resources management. Founded in 1960, the organization by a group of volunteer coordinators, the organization has steadily widened its scope to include 2,100 members in 16 countries. Members are very active in committees related to awards, ethics, educational endorsement, higher education, professional issues and short-term task forces. In this way the organization is member driven and provides many opportunities for leadership development.

Association for Volunteer Administration

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 32092

Richmond, VA 23294

Phone: (804) 672-3353

<http://www.avaintl.org>

#### *California Service Corps*

The mission of the California Service Corps is to provide meaningful forms of volunteerism and service to the people of California who want to strengthen and support their state through service. The Corps will also financially support existing programs that apply for AmeriCorps grants and services. When you bear responsibility for California and serve the Golden State, you are a member of the California Service Corps. There are numerous opportunities for people of all ages to become involved in their communities through nonprofits, schools, colleges and universities, places of worship and employment.

California Service Corps

1110 K Street, Suite 210

Sacramento, CA 95814

Phone: (916) 323-7646

<http://www.csc.ca.gov>

#### *Directors of Volunteers in Agencies (DOVIA)*

DOVIA is the generic name for Directors of Volunteers in Agencies associations, but your local group may have a different name, such as Volunteer Directors Roundtable or Council of Volunteer Coordinators. These are

associations of leaders of volunteer programs who meet regularly to exchange information and ideas, host workshops and speakers, and plan collaborative activities. There are several hundred DOVIAs operating in cities and counties across the USA and they are beginning to emerge in other countries.

Go to <http://www.energizeinc.com/prof/dovia.html> for a list of DOVIA groups in your area.

### *Points of Light Foundation*

The Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to engaging people and resources more effectively in volunteer service to help solve serious social problems. The Foundation offers assessment and consultation necessary in developing and improving volunteer programs and structures. With service focused on the specific needs of each organization, the foundation has a proven track record in providing value-added consultation to organizations of all sizes and markets such as Fortune 500 companies, international governments, national nonprofits and local grassroots citizens' programs. Through customized 90 minute workshops to month-long peer-to-peer training programs, the foundation offers the performance-improvement training that caters to the specific needs of agencies interested in developing a volunteer program.

The Points of Light Foundation  
1400 I Street, NW, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20005  
Phone: (202) 729-8000  
<http://www.pointsoflight.org>

### *Senior Corps*

Senior Corps is a network of programs that tap the experience, skills and talents of older citizens to meet community challenges. More than half a million Americans age 55 and over assist local nonprofits, public agencies and faith-based organizations carry out their missions.

Senior Corps  
1201 New York Avenue, NW  
Washington, D. C. 20525  
Phone: (202) 606-5000  
<http://www.seniorcorps.org>

### *Volunteer Today*

Volunteer Today is an e-newsletter for those who manage the work of volunteers in nonprofit agencies, government or corporate programs. Its aim is twofold – to build the capacity of individuals to organize effective volunteer programs and to enhance the profession of volunteer management.

Volunteer Today  
MBA Publishing  
925 “E” Street  
Walla Walla, WA 99362  
Phone: (509) 529-0244  
[www.volunteertoday.com](http://www.volunteertoday.com)

### *USA Freedom Corps*

In January 2003, President George W. Bush signed an executive order creating the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation to recognize the important contributions Americans of all ages are making in our communities every day through volunteer service. Take Pride in America, AmeriCorps and Citizen Corps programs are administered in California by the California Service Corps. Council members include entertainers, athletes, retired elected officials, business and media leaders, leaders of nonprofit and volunteer service organizations, and community volunteers. The USA Freedom Corps website includes a list of local volunteer opportunities organized by zip code and state.

The USA Freedom Corps  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500  
Phone: (877) USA-CORPS  
<http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov>

### *Volunteer Centers of California*

The nonprofit Volunteer Centers of California was incorporated as a 501 (c)(3) in 1973. The Board of Directors is comprised of representatives of the business sector whose companies actively support employee volunteerism throughout California. The association works with a statewide network of 29 volunteer centers and their numerous branch sites to help coordinate statewide services in strengthening volunteerism throughout California. As a central point of contact, the Volunteer Centers of California provides a site through which nonprofit organizations, governmental departments, businesses and volunteer centers can collaborate on state, regional and local community service initiatives.

The centers refer over 650,000 volunteers each year to approximately 40,000 community-based organizations.

The centers launched the AmeriCorps Ambassador Mentoring Program, a highly successful statewide recruit program, in January 2002. The organization offers many workshops and trainings to support and strengthen volunteerism such as volunteer management, grant writing, board development, strategic planning and more.

Volunteer Centers of California  
1110 K Street, Suite 210  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Phone: (916) 324-4521  
<http://www.volunteercentersca.org>

#### *Volunteer.Gov/Gov*

Volunteer.Gov/Gov is a web portal to help connect people with public sector volunteer opportunities to help build America's communities of service. The website is sponsored by a partnership among the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, State of New York Division of Veterans Affairs, the Corporation for National and Community Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S.A. Freedom Corps and provides a single, easy-to-use database with information about volunteer opportunities. The site allows you to search for volunteer opportunities by keyword, state, activity, partner and/or date range.

[No mailing address](#)  
[No phone number](#)  
[Web portal address:](#)  
<http://www.volunteer.gov/gov>

#### *Volunteers of America*

This nonprofit organization provides human service programs and opportunities for communities and individuals to volunteer.

Volunteers of America  
1660 Duke Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone: (703) 341-5000  
<http://voa.org>

## **National Recognition Awards**

The following national organizations provide recognition for those who perform significant service in their local communities.

### *AmeriCorps Education Awards*

AmeriCorps members receive an education award following the completion of their term of service. Full-time AmeriCorps members (those that commit a year of their life to full-time service) receive an education award of \$4,275. Part-time members are eligible to receive pro-rated education awards based on the number of hours they serve. Education awards can be redeemed up to seven years from the completion of the term of service and can be used to pay for any combination of the costs of: (1) attendance at a qualified institution of higher education; (2) approved school-to-work programs; or, (3) repaying qualified student loans. In addition, AmeriCorps members who have outstanding qualified student loans may be eligible for forbearance on their loan payments.

AmeriCorps  
1201 New York Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20525  
Phone: (800) 942-2677  
<http://www.americorps.org>

### *Daily Points of Light Award*

Sponsored by the Points of Light Foundation, this award is designed to recognize individuals, organizations, groups, families, business or labor unions for their service. Recipients are recognized for responding to a community need, making a significant impact, and approaching the problem with innovation and dedication.

Points of Light Foundation  
1400 I Street, NW, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20005  
Phone: (202) 729-8000  
<http://www.pointsoflight.org>

### *Do Something*

The BRICK Awards honors youth who display leadership in working with Do Something, a nationwide youth network, to improve their communities. Up to five young people receive the award annually. Recipients are recognized at a national ceremony and receive higher education scholarships and grants to continue their service.

Do Something  
24-32 Union Square East  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor South  
New York, NY 10003  
Phone: (212) 523-1175  
<http://www.dosomething.org>

#### *President's Volunteer Service Award*

The President's Volunteer Service Award consists of two programs – the President's Student Service Scholarships and the President's Student Service Awards. Two students from every high school in the nation are eligible to receive a \$1,000 scholarship for outstanding community service through the President's Student Service Scholarship Program. Students from kindergarten through college may receive recognition via the President's Student Service Award for the completion of 100 hours of community service.

The USA Freedom Corps  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500  
Phone: (877) USA-Corps  
<http://www.freedomcorps.gov>

#### *Start Something*

Co-sponsored by Target and the Tiger Woods Foundation, Start Something is a program aimed at helping adolescents in the development of core values and goals, strategies to achieve goals, and relationships with role models and mentors. The program is geared towards children and is designed as a means to help them gain the confidence they need to make their dreams come true and become role models for other kids.

Start Something  
P. O. Box 59214  
Minneapolis, MN 55416  
Phone: (800) 316-6142  
<http://startsomething.target.com>

#### *Prudential Spirit of Community Awards*

The awards program honors young people in middle level and high school grades for outstanding volunteer service to their communities. Created in 1995 by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary



School Principals, the awards constitute the United States' largest youth recognition program based solely on volunteering. Over the past nine years, the program has honored more than 55,000 young volunteers at the local, state and national level.

Prudential Spirit of Community  
751 Broad Street, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Newark, NJ 07102  
Phone: (973) 802-4568  
<http://prudential.com>

#### *Congressional Award*

Sponsored by the United States Congress, this award is designed to honor young Americans 14-23 years old who excel in volunteer public service, personal development, physical fitness and expeditions. This award, unlike others, which honor past accomplishments, challenges youth to achieve goals they have set for themselves.

The Congressional Award  
Western Region  
Senior Program Manager  
P O Box 77440  
Washington, DC 20013  
Phone: (202) 226-0130  
<http://www.congressionalaward.org>

#### *National Caring Award*

The Caring Institute annually recognizes five youth (12th grade and below) with an award and an education scholarship for their dedication to helping others. Recipients demonstrate a commitment to service and to improving society. Nomination forms can be found online and are accepted from the beginning of the school year through March.

National Caring Awards  
Caring Institute  
228 Seventh Street, SE  
Washington, DC 20003-4306  
Phone: (202) 547-4273  
<http://www.caring-institute.org>

#### *Jefferson Awards for Public Service*

Sponsored by the American Institute for Public Service, the Jefferson Awards are presented at both the local and national levels. Local recipients serve their

communities selflessly and without reward, while the service of the four national recipients has been recognized and appreciated nationwide. Nominations may be submitted online.

American Institute for Public Service  
100 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 215  
Wilmington, DE 19801-9108  
Phone: (302) 622-9101  
<http://www.aips.org>

## **Recognition and Award Products**

Recognition and award products come in all shapes and sizes. Contact manufactures and businesses in your area to get ideas on ways to thank your volunteers. The following list of websites identifies some of the commercial recognition and award products that are available, such as trophies, medallions, lapel pins, seals, lanyards, cups, special event posters and flyers, identification badges and much more. The list is neither exhaustive nor is it intended to endorse specific products.

### *Baudville*

Baudville specializes in putting applause on paper and is dedicated to providing top-quality award and recognition products to nonprofits, schools and government agencies across the country.

Baudville  
5380 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49512  
Phone: (800) 728-0888  
[www.baudville.com](http://www.baudville.com)

### *Crestline Company*

Crestline offers custom imprinted and embroidered promotional products for advertising, incentives and personalized promotions. The company continues to seek environmentally-friendly items and the “recycled” logo appears throughout the website and catalogs for specific products.

Crestline Company  
Mailing address:  
P. O. Box 2027  
Lewiston, ME 04241  
Phone: (800) 221-7797  
[www.crestline.com](http://www.crestline.com)

### *Positive Promotions*

Positive Promotions is an on-line source for special event, educational and awareness tools. You can purchase personalized products that can be imprinted with your agency’s logo.

Positive Promotions

15 Galpin Avenue  
Gauppauge, NY 11788  
Phone: (800) 635-2666  
[www.positivepromotions.com](http://www.positivepromotions.com)

*VolunteerGifts.com*

At Volunteergiffts.com you will find original designs, especially made for non-profit organizations and other volunteer associations. Most styles are available in generic versions or can be personalized for your agency.

Volunteer Gifts.com  
1700 N. Dixie Highway, Suite 103  
Boca Raton, FL 33432  
Phone: (800) 293-0032  
[www.volunteergifts.com](http://www.volunteergifts.com)

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