



Community Tree Leadership Forum

# *Volunteer Management: People Are the Solution*

Presented by



*Support provided by*



# recruitment. retention recognition

## *Volunteer Management: People Are the Solution*

### **Training Content**

1. The Role of Volunteers
2. Volunteer Recruitment
3. Volunteer Retention
4. Volunteer Recognition

### **Setting the Content**

- Values for volunteer involvement
- Guiding principles for volunteer involvement
- Organization standards for volunteer involvement

### **Effective Volunteer Management Practices**

- Recruiting volunteers
- Volunteer orientation & training
- Volunteer management tips
- Community building approach to volunteering

### **Resource Section**

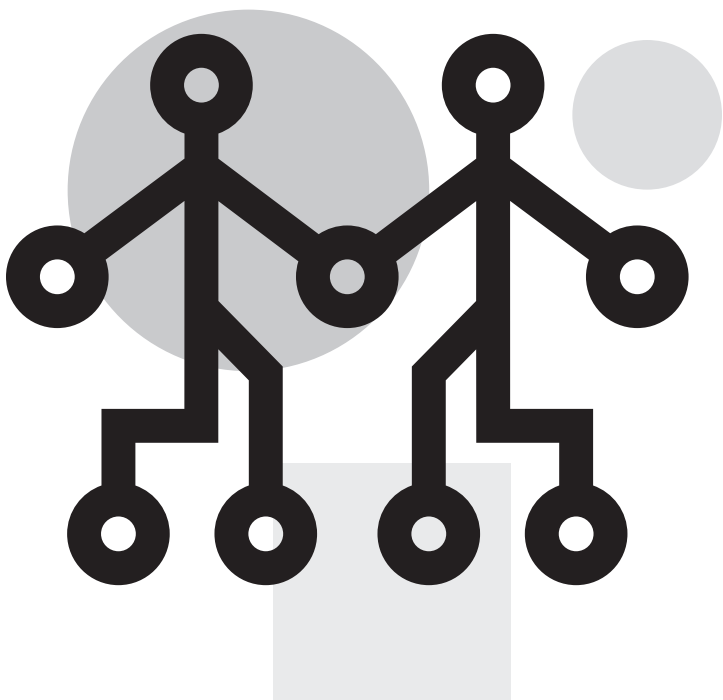
- Reference books
- Websites
- Other resources

*This material was compiled in cooperation with Delores Morton of the Hands on Network.*

*[www.handsonnetwork.org](http://www.handsonnetwork.org)*

PEOPLE ARE THE  
SOLUTION

## UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS FOR PROMOTING EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PROGRAMS



Every day nonprofits have to figure out how to get people to do something, with some degree of quality, sometimes again and again—for free. That is the nature of volunteer recruitment and retention. If you are in the business of community or nonprofit work, volunteer management comes with the territory. In promoting the value of urban forests, successfully recruiting and managing volunteers can become your most effective strategy for mobilizing ordinary people to spread the word.

In many ways, there are no real secrets here. People volunteer for what they believe in all the time. From Girl Scouts to senior citizens to your next-door neighbor, there is a wide variety of reasons that people volunteer. If you can understand some of the reasons and motivations for volunteering, it will make it easier to find the right volunteers.

Here are just a few reasons that people volunteer:

- Express a passion or commitment to a specific issue, activity, community, etc.
- Meet people and make friends
- Learn a new skill
- Have fun
- Achieve a sense of fulfillment or altruism
- Improve their community
- Work as a team
- Contribute leadership experience
- Earn respect or enhance status

But if there is a challenge, it is the tremendous competition for people's time in a busy society. Establishing an effective volunteer program provides the building blocks for finding the right volunteers, maximizing their impact, and recognizing their contributions.

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## START AT THE BEGINNING— WHAT DO YOU NEED VOLUNTEERS TO DO?

The first step in an effective volunteer recruitment effort is thinking through the tasks that you want volunteers to do. How meaningful are the activities on your list? Is your group prepared to work with volunteers? Do you have staff or experienced leaders to supervise your volunteers? What is the time requirement? Does the volunteer task require specific expertise? Will you provide training?

The reality is that volunteers usually participate in three broad areas:

- Service delivery
- Fundraising
- Policymaking

Most volunteers do not want to simply stuff envelopes or spend their free time doing thankless work no one else wants to do. Service delivery is the most common area that volunteers want to work in because they can see and feel a connection to a specific goal, idea, or community benefit. Tree planting, mulching, weeding, or another one-time-only event is perfect for volunteers with limited time who enjoy direct service delivery.

Fundraising volunteers are a very rare breed. These volunteers include kids selling cookies, a group coordinating a Saturday garage sale benefit, or a large committee producing a major fundraising event or campaign. The most essential volunteer fundraisers are your board members. So recruiting board members who are committed to your organization's financial survival is very important.

The third category, volunteers engaged in policy-making or governance, comprises volunteers who feel a deep sense of commitment to an issue or project and who have the ability to inspire others and sustain very high levels of involvement. These volunteers often bring professional skills and relationships that make them great board members, committee chairs, or team leaders.

Let's take a look at the components of an effective volunteer program and how to leverage volunteers to:

- Increase the capacity and impact of your organization
- Inspire greater donations
- "Sell" your story about the value of trees
- Influence elected leaders and add a "face" to your media coverage

If you can effectively recruit and inspire volunteers you can expand both your fiscal resources and multiply the number of people who value trees.

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## THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS

Successfully working with volunteers on community forestry projects begins with understanding some fundamentals about your organization and volunteers' expectations. Here are some concepts to consider in your planning process:

- **Why do you need volunteers? Identify your goals, e.g., increase tree canopy, create more parks, restore water quality, etc.**
- **What role will they play, e.g., plant or maintain trees, remove invasive species, advocate to lawmakers, etc.?**
- **Does your group have resources to support your volunteers?**
  - What is your sign-up process?
  - How will you communicate with volunteers, e.g., e-mail, letters, meetings?
  - Is their work skilled or not? Can you match their skills/interests to a project?
  - What training and orientation will you provide?
  - Who will coordinate your volunteers and serve as their point of contact?
  - How will you thank volunteers and keep in touch?
- **Do you have appropriate equipment, safety practices, and liability coverage?**
  - What safety instruction should you provide to reduce risk and injury?
  - What rules should you make about who is allowed to operate heavy equipment, e.g., vehicles, concrete cutters, augers, etc.?
  - What is your response protocol if someone is hurt or damages property?
  - Are you properly insured for volunteer mishaps, injuries or property damage?
  - Should volunteers sign legal waivers?
- **What is the timeframe for your volunteer project?**
  - Can you break the project up into small parts (one-, two- and three-hour units)?
  - Is there scheduling flexibility for volunteers to choose from?

### *Examples of Volunteer Jobs*

Neighborhood recruitment captain	Tree pruner	Registration worker	Photographer
Crew captain	Truck driver	Intern/office assistant	Grant writer
Tree planting crew	Nursery worker	Donor recognition helper	Special events coordinator
Mulch and watering crew	Gardener	Newsletter reporter	Media outreach coordinator
Litter crew	Tour guide	Newsletter editor	Youth educator
	Tree inventory worker		Political activist

\* Professionals will often donate time or offer reduced rates. Types of people include: arborist, forester, horticulturist, landscape architect, real estate broker, biologist, economist, attorney, accountant, lobbyist, public relations expert, Web designer, technology consultant, etc.



## Welcome to Hands On Network!

Across the nation, Hands On Network affiliates have maintained significant partnerships with the corporate community since 1989—empowering corporate groups large and small to make a difference in the lives of others. As the premier volunteer service network in the United States, Hands On Network focuses on leveraging corporate volunteer programs to most effectively meet critical needs in local communities. Our expertise and experience in planning meaningful volunteer opportunities means we complement corporations' teambuilding and community outreach programs by providing leadership opportunities in each project. Hands On Network partners with corporations to train, support, and assist their volunteer leaders in developing a clear plan and model of service that meets the individual corporation's needs.

### **ABOUT HANDS ON NETWORK**

Hands On Network is an innovative alliance of volunteer organizations transforming people and communities through service and civic engagement. With proven best practices for success, Hands On Network develops entrepreneurial strategies for bridging community resources and needs. Hands On Network provides leading-edge national programming, participation in shaping national service policy and technology support. There are 42 Hands On Network organizations in U.S. including international affiliates in the Philippines and China, as well as 20 partner organizations in the United Kingdom. Headquartered in Atlanta, Hands On Network is a growing coalition of organizations here and abroad, all utilizing the Hands On Network model for volunteer mobilization and management.

### **OUR VISION**

Hands On Network is nationally recognized as the most dynamic network of organizations actively engaging individuals and teams in meaningful service work. Through the unique Hands On Network model of creative project management combined with progressive educational and leadership development programs, the Hands On Network serves and strengthens communities across the country. By providing individuals with compelling opportunities to serve, Hands On Network organizations address pressing needs in their communities at the same time that they build civic leaders and deepen civic investment.

### **OUR MISSION**

Transforming people and communities through volunteer service and civic engagement.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HANDS ON NETWORK**  
please visit [www.HandsOnNetwork.org](http://www.HandsOnNetwork.org) or call (404) 979-2900

# *Volunteer Management Exercise*

Describe a vision for your volunteer program.

<b>Ask Yourself:</b>	<b>Your Notes:</b>
<b>What does success look like for our organization?</b>	
<b>What does the program look like in six months? In one year? When you've left the organization?</b>	
<b>How will you make the program invaluable?</b>	
<b>What might our other stakeholders consider success?</b>	
<b>Who will benefit from the program?</b>	

## VALUES FOR VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

The following value statements highlight the important role volunteerism and volunteer involvement play in ensuring citizen involvement and engagement in society to the benefit of communities. The values statements also recognize the reciprocity of the organization/volunteer relationship.

**Volunteer Involvement is vital to a just and democratic society.**

It fosters civic responsibility, participation, and interaction.

**Volunteer involvement strengthens communities.**

It promotes change and development by identifying and responding to community needs.

**Volunteer involvement mutually benefits both the volunteer and the organization.**

It increases the capacity of the organization to accomplish its goals and provides volunteers with opportunities to develop and contribute.

**Volunteer involvement is based on relationships.**

Volunteers are expected to act with integrity and be respectful and responsive to others with whom they interact.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

The following guiding principles articulate the reciprocal relationship which develops between the organization and the volunteers. These principles can help ensure that there is commitment and support for the volunteer program from both the organization's and the volunteer's perspectives. This means both an understanding of the role volunteers play in assisting the organization in achieving its mission or purpose as well as ensuring that appropriate resources, both human and financial, are in place to support volunteers and the volunteer program.

**Organizations that leverage volunteers recognize that volunteers are a vital human resource and will commit to the appropriate infrastructure to support volunteers.**

The organization's practices ensure effective volunteer involvement. The organization commits to providing a safe and supportive environment for volunteers.

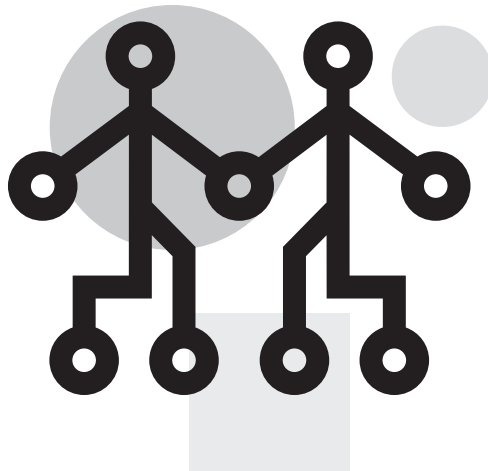
**Volunteers make a commitment and are accountable to the organization.**

Volunteers will act with respect for beneficiaries and community.

## ORGANIZATION STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

The following organization standards for volunteer involvement are core standard procedures which any nonprofit organization should have in place for an effective volunteer program.

- The board of directors and senior management acknowledge and support the vital role of volunteers in achieving the organization's purpose or mission.
- Policies and procedures are adopted by the organization to provide a framework that defines and supports the involvement of volunteers.
- A qualified person is designated to be responsible for the volunteer program
- A clearly communicated screening process is consistently applied.
- Volunteer assignments address the purpose of the organization and involve volunteers in meaningful ways—reflecting their various abilities, needs, and backgrounds.
- Volunteer recruitment and selection reach out to diverse sources of volunteers.
- Volunteers receive orientation and training for their volunteer assignments
- Volunteers are given regular opportunities for leadership.



# Volunteer Management Audit

Please complete this tool to begin evaluating the effectiveness of your organization's volunteer efforts.

## Checklist to assess your organization's management of its volunteer program

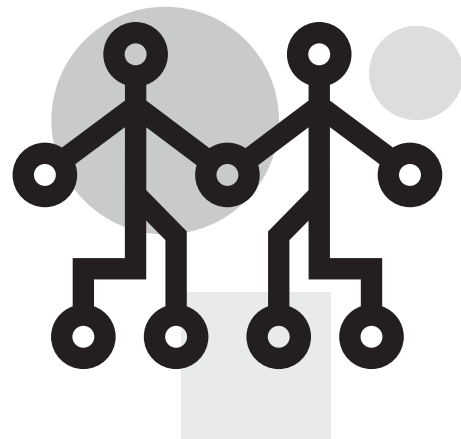
	Rating Scale 1-10 1 = lowest 10 = highest	Action Plan for Improvement
Organization has a good understanding of volunteering and related issues.		
Management and paid staff are strongly behind volunteer involvement.		
The volunteer selection profile is in place and is being implemented.		
Planning and review of progress is a joint effort between paid and volunteer staff.		
All parties are clear about why volunteers are involved and about their respective roles.		
Both volunteers and paid staff see themselves working toward a common goal.		
Volunteer efforts benefit the volunteers.		
Volunteer satisfaction is measured regularly.		
Channels of communication are clear and open to both paid and volunteer staff.		
Volunteers are receiving adequate training and supervision.		
Volunteer staff feels they are valued by paid staff.		
Paid staff feels they are valued by volunteers.		
Staff is enthusiastic and creative.		
Add any other points which are relevant to your organization.		

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## VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

The next phase of volunteer management is recruitment. In today's fast-paced culture, volunteers have literally hundreds of options of where and when to volunteer their time, and a variety of incentives to motivate their participation. Here are some concepts to consider in recruiting volunteers for community forestry projects:

- What is your target audience?
  - People in the neighborhood where the project takes place, e.g., homeowners, neighborhood association members, church congregations, PTA members, employees of local businesses, etc.
  - Young people
  - Seniors
  - Service clubs or groups such as 4-H, Junior League, Boy Scouts, fraternities
  - Corporate volunteer teams or business associations
  - Skilled forestry or natural resources professionals
  - Master gardeners, garden clubs, plant societies, and garden center customers
  - Others—be specific
- What is your message?
  - What's in it for them?
  - What makes your group or project special?
  - Is it fun, a special community benefit, and a learning opportunity?
  - What is your "call to action"?
  - Do all event announcements answer Who, What, When, Where, and Why?
- What strategies and resources will you use for recruiting?
  - One-on-one recruitment
  - Phone & e-mail
  - Handouts or flyers
  - Your website, your partners' websites, and volunteermatch.org
  - Direct mail
  - Promotional event
  - Public relations or media broadcast
  - What is your recruitment time frame? Large scale events need more lead time and more specific job assignments
  - Regular project times (e.g., every Saturday at 9:00 am) make it easy for volunteers to plan and for you to recruit
- Capitalize on holidays and national events, e.g., Earth Day, Arbor Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, NeighborWoods Month, National Public Lands Day, Tu B'Shvat, etc.
- How will you greet and process volunteers?
  - Who greets volunteers?
  - What paperwork needs to be signed, e.g., name tag, sign-in sheet, liability waiver, volunteer assessment form, etc.?
  - When and where does orientation and training happen?



# Recruiting Volunteers

## Targeted Recruitment

Targeted Recruitment is the process of consciously planning a campaign, the result of which is the delivery of your recruitment message to a small audience. Targeted recruitment is a desirable method when the job for which you are attempting to recruit requires some special skills or some characteristics that are not commonly found. Planning a Targeted Recruitment campaign involves asking four questions:

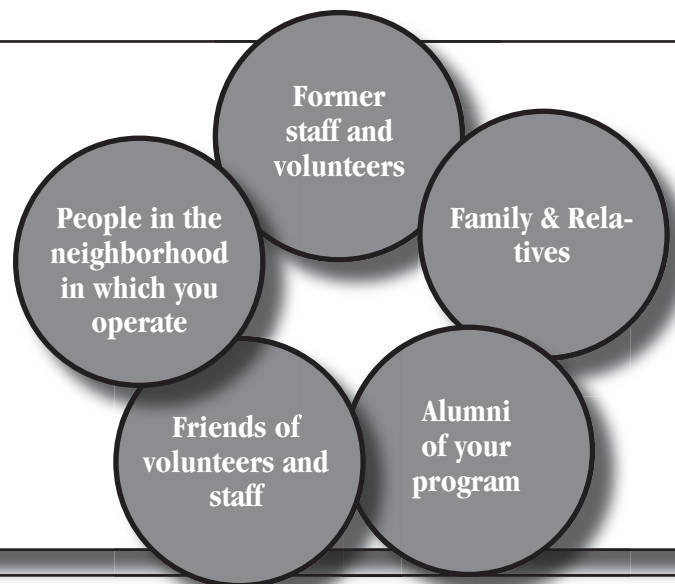
<b>Ask Yourself:</b>	<b>Your Notes:</b>
<b>What do we need?</b>	
<b>Who could provide this?</b>	
<b>How can we communicate with them?</b>	
<b>What would motivate them?</b>	

## Circles of Influence Recruitment

This method involves identifying populations who are already in contact with your agency and attempting to recruit them. Sample target populations might include:

**List names of 2 individuals in each group as potential volunteers:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 10.



## *Qualities of a Good Recruitment Message:*

- The opening message should be interesting enough to entice the potential volunteer to consider volunteering for the organization.
- The body of the message should present information in an order that psychologically matches how people will think about the offer.

**Need: Is there a problem?**

**Solution: Can this job help solve it?**

**Fears/Questions: Can the prospective volunteer help with the job?**

**Benefits: What's in it for the prospective volunteer?**

**Contact Point: What steps does the potential volunteer need to take to get involved?**

# *The Volunteer Experience*

Orientation and Training are the twin processes of providing volunteers with the information which they require to perform their work effectively.

## Orientation

Orientation involves giving volunteers an adequate background on the agency, its operation, and its procedures. Orientation is required because the volunteer needs to be made a part of the organizational environment, a process which requires the volunteer to understand what the organization is and how it operates.

**A good orientation program will provide the volunteer with the following types of information. What information will you provide during your orientation?**

Orientation Information	Your key messages
Description and history & mission of the organization.	
Description of the overall programs of the organization.	
What have you achieved to date in your programs?	
Why should the volunteers care about the issues you are addressing?	
What are the differences volunteers can make in your services?	

# *The Volunteer Experience*

## Training

Training is the process of instructing volunteers in the specific job-related skills and behavior that they will need to perform their particular volunteer job. It is designed to tell the volunteers:

- How they are supposed to perform their particular job.
- What they are not supposed to do in their job.
- What to do if an emergency or unforeseen situation arises.

An effective training program operates by identifying skills, knowledge, and behavior which would be essential in good job performance and then designing a training format which instructs the volunteer. It should be practical, experiential, and tailored to the individual needs of the volunteer. It is helpful in doing volunteer training to involve both other staff and volunteers in designing and delivering the training.

Please complete the following information to help prepare a volunteer training agenda.

<b>Ask Yourself:</b>	<b>Your Notes</b>
<b>What are the jobs that volunteers will perform?</b>	
<b>How are volunteers supposed to perform their particular job?</b>	
<b>What are volunteers NOT supposed to do in their job?</b>	
<b>What should volunteers do if an emergency arises?</b>	

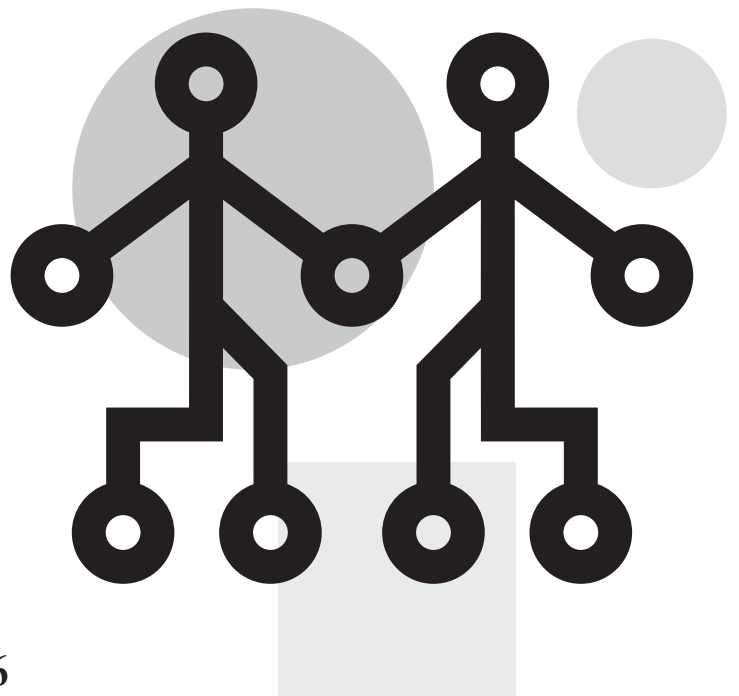
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## VOLUNTEER RETENTION

Consistently retaining volunteers is an important part of overall volunteer management. Especially for multi-phase projects, proper volunteer support requires an investment of time, training, and other resources to sustain the overall quality of your project. Even for one-day-only projects, retaining volunteers is a combination of encouraging a positive perception and good rapport so that they feel valued and can sustain increased awareness about the value of trees.

Here are some concepts to consider in retaining volunteers for community forestry projects:

- Highlight the short- and long-term impact of your specific project and the difference volunteers will make. Measure specific improvements such as the number of trees planted, amount of trash collected, or volume of invasive plants removed. Be sure to tell volunteers how the work they do that day fits into bigger goals. For example:
  - Improves water quality and stabilizes stream banks
  - Increases property values
  - Contributes to neighborhood beautification
  - Increases tourism
  - Reduces air pollution
  - Shades playgrounds for children's health
  - Provides habitat for songbirds
- Make your project fun and convenient
  - Serve refreshments and, for lengthy events, provide restrooms
  - Make sure your directions are easy to follow
  - Parking should be free or low cost and easily available
- Set a schedule and conclude on time. Three hours is a good limit per volunteer shift.
- Provide good supervision and education
- Maximize praise and minimize bossiness and criticisms
- Encourage networking and social interaction
- Be a gracious and entertaining host
- Ask for feedback on the volunteer experience
  - What else might be of interest?
  - Was the project well organized and reasonably paced?
  - Was it fun? Did they learn a new skill or more information about trees?
- **Recognition, recognition, recognition**
  - Say Thank You!!
  - Informally—show appreciation one-on-one, e.g., phone calls, referrals, creating “choice” assignments
  - Formally—provide job descriptions, project titles, tokens, and awards



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Volunteers are far more than “a way to get the job done.” They are future donors, political advocates, and leaders for your mission. Increase the knowledge, skills, and consciousness of your volunteers and they become your best ambassadors for the message that “trees matter.”

If there are local practices that concern you, such as tree topping or improper mulch application, then build education into all of your volunteer projects. For instance, all tree-planting projects should have care and maintenance components so that volunteers learn the importance of maintenance to the survival of urban trees. If “mulch volcanoes” are a problem, then be sure that every volunteer learns proper practices to use at home. Challenge volunteers to learn one or two take-home points that they can repeat to a friend or neighbor. These should be simple and non-technical (e.g., mulch shouldn’t touch the trunk, English ivy is bad, etc.)

If your organization is working to change a tree law or is asking lawmakers for more public funding for tree care and parks, tell your volunteers what they can do to help. Have them sign a postcard to mail their elected official, add them to an advocacy e-mail list, or ask them to write a letter to the editor of your newspaper.

Many people believe that volunteers do not donate money. On the contrary, volunteers are more likely to donate money to your organization, having personally experienced your mission. Be sure to invite volunteers to take part in your organization as donors and to identify other roles and con-

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tributions they can make as volunteers. Remember that the volunteer experience you provide shapes the perception of many potential donors. You may be working alongside a passionate tree planter who also happens to be a millionaire.

Take the time to invest in your volunteers—they are VIPs who deserve your best effort. A positive volunteer experience is the best way to grow a passion for trees. Not only that, volunteerism breeds better citizens and a better society—be sure that you provide experiences that leave your volunteers feeling empowered to solve other problems to improve their communities.

# Volunteer Management Tips

<p><b>1. Introductory E-mail/Phone</b> Send an introductory e-mail with basic project information to volunteers who have registered.</p>	<p><b>2. Notify Volunteers of Changes</b> If something about the project changes, such as a task getting cancelled, call or e-mail the volunteers to alert them to the change.</p>	<p><b>3. Ask for the Tools You Need</b> If you don't get all the tools you need, ask your volunteers to see if they have something to loan. Most volunteers would rather bring something than not have the project happen at all.</p>
<p><b>4. Provide Correct Directions</b> Verify that your directions are correct by driving the directions. If there are changes, notify your volunteers.</p>	<p><b>5. Send Reminder E-mail</b> Send an e-mail reminding them of all the key points of the project and any other last minute items.</p>	<p><b>6. Express Thanks</b> Thank your volunteers in all your e-mails, at the beginning of the project and at the end of the day.</p>
<p><b>7. Explain Why</b> Before the project, introduce the agency/community representative and have him/her share a little about the site's history and community/people served. Thank the agency/community representative for hosting the project. Then explain the tasks that are happening and why each task is important.</p>	<p><b>8. Introduce the Task Leaders</b> Have your Task Leaders lead volunteers to their task area and begin working. Utilize the larger number of volunteers to gather tools and move materials to appropriate area.</p>	<p><b>9. Manage "Organized Chaos"</b> The first 30 minutes of every project may seem to volunteers a little chaotic as people get acclimated to their task area, receive answers to their questions about the task and late volunteers arrive on the project site. However, YOU KNOW THE PLAN! You should be calm and confident in the project you have developed and the Task Leaders you have recruited to provide a successful volunteer opportunity to all the volunteers.</p>
<p><b>10. Clean Up! Clean Up!</b> Everybody do their part! Have Task Leaders lead volunteers in cleaning up task area to look better than it did when they arrived. All materials should be used or donated to the agency/community. All tools should be returned to the truck or loading area.</p>	<p><b>11. Thank Them Again</b> You can't thank volunteers enough! Be sure to thank them often.</p>	<p><b>12. "Strike while the Iron Is Hot!"</b> Have a great community building activity ready that will engage the volunteers in discussion and challenge them to make a commitment to volunteer on an ongoing basis with the agency/community.</p>



After each service project, Hands On Network encourages volunteers to reflect on their service experience. While volunteers think about their experiences independently, a conversation among all participating volunteers creates a stronger sense of accomplishment and establishes a deeper connection to the community. A group conversation at the end of your project provides structured time for volunteers to think and talk about what occurred during the project. This group conversation can often deepen volunteers' understanding of the conservation issues your project addresses and increase their commitment to service. We encourage you to facilitate these conversations after each service project and toward that end, offer the following template:

The most effective approach is to gather everyone together at the end of the project (although it can also be effective during lunch or a break) and reflect upon the significance of the day, the work completed, and the impact it will have on the community. Work with your community partner to facilitate the discussion. It will only take a moment of prodding to get people to express what they think. Speak from your own heart and ask your community partner to speak about what your project will mean to the community.

Community Building can take place anytime during the service project.

<p><b>Books</b></p> <p><b>At the Beginning of the Project</b> Community Building can be led at the beginning of the project, prior to volunteers serving. Gather everyone around and begin a conversation using the Three Steps to Community Building (provided later in this section). Explain how the work being completed today will directly impact that community. The agency/community representative should be prepared to discuss what ongoing volunteer opportunities are available and sign up individuals who are interested.</p>	<p><b>During the Project</b> Community Building can be led during the project. Using signage, one-on-ones, and interviews, inform volunteers about the impact of the project to the community. Posting inspiring quotes and getting people to share their stories of community and service are effective methods of Community Building.</p>	<p><b>At the End of the Project</b> Community Building can be led at the end of the project, once service has been completed. Gathering everyone around, use the Three Steps to Community Building to engage people in conversation by asking volunteers to share their stories about what was accomplished during the event. Make arrangements to include people from the community served in a post-service discussion. At the conclusion of the discussion ask people to make a commitment to assist that agency/community with their needs and commit to inspiring others.</p>
	<p><b>At All Stages of the Project</b> You can also integrate community building at all three points, depending on nature of project and how much content and reflection you want at your project.</p>	

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## THREE STEPS TO FACILITATING A COMMUNITY-BUILDING CONVERSATION

### Step One: SERVE

- Ask volunteers the “WHAT” question, e.g., What happened today?
- With the agency/community representative, congratulate and thank volunteers for achieving the goal at the end of the project.
- With the agency/community representative, connect the day’s volunteer service to broader contemporary issues. The agency/school representative might offer a short story or anecdote that will demonstrate the impact.
- With the agency/community representative, offer some statistics to give a scope of the social concern.

### Step Two: UNDERSTAND

- Ask volunteers the “SO WHAT” question, e.g., “What are the consequences of the day’s actions?”
- Hold a group conversation about a central issue related to the day’s service.
- Choose an inspirational quotation to begin a conversation.
- Ask volunteers to offer their life experiences and knowledge that may include work-related activities, family responsibilities, and previous education that they can use to make a positive impact.

### Step Three: INSPIRE

- Ask volunteers the “NOW WHAT” question, e.g., “What are the next steps to have further positive impact?”
- Give homework. Encourage volunteers to tell their story of volunteer service. Be sure to point out that our friends, co-workers, or family members will be inspired to volunteer because they know that you were able to make a real change in our communities.
- Sign up for the next service opportunity. Be prepared to take advantage of the enthusiasm that service can create. Have a system for signing volunteers up for the next project or for managing interest of new leaders if they come forward.

### Quotations to Spark Discussion:

No shade tree? Blame not the sun but yourself.  
– *Chinese Proverb*

The time is always ripe to do right.  
– *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve.  
– *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Acts of creation are ordinarily reserved for gods and poets. To plant a pine, one need only own a shovel.  
– *Aldo Leopold*

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.  
– *Margaret Mead*

The cultivation of trees is the cultivation of the good, the beautiful, and the ennobling in man.  
– *J. Sterling Morton*

# Program Model: Volunteering

## TREES NEW YORK: Citizen Pruner Tree Care Course

### PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Train adults and teenagers in tree care and pruning (In 30 years Trees New York has certified over 10,000 adults and 5,500 teenagers.)
- Provide professional certification and allows graduates to legally work on public land
- Provide a much-needed tree service to community and neighborhood groups

### THE CONCEPT: A CERTIFIED TREE-CARE TRAINING PROGRAM

Since 1975, Trees New York has offered a one-of-a-kind training program targeted at a diverse population from throughout New York City and organized by a corps of volunteers and staff instructors. The training course features:

- Classes offered twice per year
- Classes held once a week for two hours, for a total of eight hours of classroom training followed by four hours of hands-on field experience
- Course topics include: tree identification, tree biology, the Asian Longhorned Beetle and other pests' identification, tree pit gardening, tree pruning and how to have a tree planted on your block.
- Certification: students take an exam, offered in English and Spanish, developed and graded by Trees New York, that certifies them to be legally qualified to do certain work on trees owned by the City of New York. Certificates are co-signed by Trees New York and the New York City Commission of Parks. According to Trees New York, it is the only organization in the area that has established this relationship with the city.

*A low participant tuition combined with private funding*

The \$90 student tuition includes a comprehensive manual and other materials. This affordable participant tuition plays a role in the program success but covers only part of the program expenses. Private foundations primarily fund the program. In addition, Trees New York has partnerships with various organizations such as the Parks Department and the Borough of the Bronx that provide scholarships for some participants.

*An urban program for urban communities*

Adult classes are offered in each of the five boroughs of New York City, and additional classes are held in Manhattan in response to high demand. It is important to note that because there is limited funding for community tree maintenance, Trees New York can connect graduates with community and neighborhood groups where the need is significant.

The classes for teenagers are held in partnership with various after-school and school programs and follow a different schedule but a similar curriculum.

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**THE PROMOTION: POST-PROGRAM  
COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL**

Trees New York promotes the training course by outreaching to other groups, such as immigrant alliance, workforce development organizations and offering the certification exam in Spanish and English. Following program certification, Trees New York continues with:

- Ongoing affiliations with community and neighborhood associations and helps to match graduates to employment opportunities
- Consistent participant communications including e-mails and newsletters
- An annual party provides an opportunity to network and celebrate accomplishments

**LESSONS LEARNED:**

1. Legal recognition is important. This increases the value of the course to participants and greatly increases their ability to use their skills.
2. It is important to maintain close supervision over course instructors, especially if non-staff faculty is used. Although there is a set curriculum, it is important that it be interpreted and presented in a skilled and judicious way. Make sure you know how your material is being used.
3. Flexibility is key. When you are working with a diverse group of students, it is essential to remember that people have different education levels, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds

that affect how they learn the material and, consequently, how fast the instructor can cover the material. Although there is a standard curriculum, how it is presented to students may vary from class to class. It may take more than the standard 12 hours to cover all the material.

4. Work with other organizations in the field when developing a curriculum. You do not want to reinvent the wheel but you need to give credit when appropriate.

**For more information:**

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# Program Model: Volunteering

## TREES ATLANTA: Working with Volunteers

### PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Recruit volunteers to plant trees every Saturday, rain or shine (October–March)
- Encourage a sense of community pride
- Increase volunteers' knowledge of tree maintenance and its community impact

### THE CONCEPT: A VOLUNTEER

#### TREE-PLANTING PROGRAM

Trees Atlanta was established in 1985 by Central Atlanta Progress (the downtown business leaders' association), the Atlanta Commissioner of Parks, and the Junior League to improve the green space in downtown Atlanta. Its original focus was on planting large street trees in the downtown area. Trees Atlanta raised money for both the trees and for contractors to do the planting.

In 1995, Trees Atlanta decided to broaden its scope beyond the downtown area and begin planting in the surrounding neighborhoods. This change allowed Trees Atlanta to develop a network of volunteers to assist with the planting and maintenance of the trees. Neighborhood trees were smaller than those planted in the downtown area and could be managed by volunteers. In addition, there was not enough money to pay landscapers for the new target areas.

Over the last decade, this volunteer planting effort has developed into an extensive program involving:

- 1,500 volunteers and resulting in the planting and maintenance of 1,500 trees annually
- Volunteers donate about 2,500 hours each year.

### *Current Volunteer Program*

From October through March, Trees Atlanta sponsors two planting projects every Saturday from 9 am to noon. Each planting project involves approximately 30 to 100 trees and requires about half as many volunteers. Trees Atlanta has two full-time staff members who oversee these plantings.

### *Site Selection*

Target areas for the plantings are selected in two ways: (1) Trees Atlanta applies for grants to sponsor planting in certain areas, and (2) individuals and neighborhood groups request planting projects. Trees Atlanta uses the following criteria to evaluate requests from individuals and groups:

- Type of trees requested (native shade trees are given preference)
- Amount of existing tree canopy in the neighborhood
- Support from neighborhood for the project
- Feasibility of success based on environmental factors and on commitment of neighbors to provide ongoing care

### *Volunteer Recruitment*

Once a target area is chosen, Trees Atlanta contacts the neighborhood association to encourage neighborhood buy-in and to attract volunteers. In each neighborhood, two or three volunteers are selected to be neighborhood coordinators and to head up the project. Neighborhood coordinators are responsible for recruiting additional volunteers from the target area for the planting.

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In addition, neighborhood coordinators contact residents at locations where trees will be planted to get their “blessing” and support. Although most tree plantings are on public property and do not require residents’ permission, Trees Atlanta solicits buy-in from residents so that the trees will receive appropriate care over the long term.

Trees Atlanta staff members meet informally with neighborhood coordinators and explain the process and expectations. There is no formal training class. Volunteer training consists of on-site demonstration and project supervision by certified arborists.

In addition, Trees Atlanta has a database of approximately 1,500 volunteers who receive weekly e-mails outlining the current planting projects for the week. E-mail recipients are strongly encouraged to respond if they will be participating in that week’s projects so that staff can best plan the event.

The goal each week is to have at least half of the volunteers from the selected neighborhoods and the remaining volunteers from the regular volunteer list.

#### *Summer Projects*

After the planting season, from April through September, Trees Atlanta organizes a volunteer maintenance project every Saturday morning in an area where it has previously planted trees. Volunteers mulch, prune, stake and water trees. Areas

are selected based on need. Since Trees Atlanta has planted over 20,000 trees, there are many areas needing follow-up care.

Not only do the summer projects provide maintenance for the trees, they also offer a consistent opportunity for volunteers to offer their services.

#### **RESULTS:**

Since its inception Trees Atlanta’s achievements include:

- Over 20,000 large shade trees planted in downtown and midtown Atlanta
- Over 60,000 young shade trees planted and distributed by volunteers in metro-Atlanta
- Hundreds of trees saved through partnerships with community groups and stronger tree protection laws
- Over 7,500 volunteers who have given time and money to the organization

#### **LESSONS LEARNED:**

1. If you are operating a weekly planting program, find one nursery to work with consistently. Working with multiple nurseries can lead to confusion.
2. Make the event enjoyable. Provide coffee and doughnuts and a time to socialize. Get to know people and help newcomers feel included. After plantings, Trees Atlanta volunteers and staff go out for pizza.
3. Offer a consistent program that is easy to understand and sign up for. Trees Atlanta operates a volunteer program every Saturday, rain

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or shine, so volunteers know that there is a regular opportunity to participate. The Website ([www.treesatlanta.org](http://www.treesatlanta.org)) has a volunteer sign-up form as well as a calendar of events. Once volunteers have completed the form, they receive weekly e-mails detailing that week's volunteer opportunities.

4. Keep volunteers busy and make them feel useful. Nothing is worse than feeling as if your efforts were not needed. Make sure there is enough work for everyone.
5. Keep in touch with volunteers. If you are operating a frequent planting program, you need people who volunteer on a regular basis. Since you do not want to start each week with all new volunteers, it is important to keep the regulars coming back. Trees Atlanta keeps in touch with its volunteers by regular e-mails.
6. Show your appreciation. Trees Atlanta hosts volunteer appreciation parties twice a year—once at the beginning of the planting season and once at the end. Volunteers who have participated in six or more plantings are invited to these potluck suppers where they receive gifts (t-shirts, mugs, etc.) based on years of participation.
7. Trees Atlanta has discovered that most people volunteer for one of the following reasons:

environmental concerns, desire to beautify the neighborhood, social reasons, or desire to get a good workout. Keep these reasons in mind when recruiting volunteers and when planning your events. Many Trees Atlanta volunteers have become close social friends and use an e-mail list operated by Trees Atlanta to exchange information on social activities and opportunities.

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# Program Model: Volunteering

## FRIENDS OF TREES: Working with Volunteers

### PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Community building
- Mobilize approximately 2,000 people annually to plant and care for nearly 20,000 trees and shrubs in the Portland-Vancouver area
- Provide volunteer opportunities at differing skill and time-commitment levels

### THE CONCEPT: A VOLUNTEER TREE-PLANTING PROGRAM

Volunteers have always been a central part of Friends of Trees. Established in 1989, the mission of Friends of Trees is to “inspire community stewardship of our urban forest by bringing people in the Portland-Vancouver area together to plant, care for, and learn about city trees.”

In 1996, Friends of Trees initiated a five-year Seed the Future Campaign “to bring volunteers together to plant 144,000 trees and seedlings in neighborhoods, natural areas, and on school grounds throughout Portland’s five-county region.” The campaign was successful in attracting 19,000 volunteers to plant 157,046 trees in 52 neighborhoods, 59 natural areas, and on 62 school grounds. These programs also offer volunteer opportunities at differing skill and time-commitment levels including:

- neighborhood coordinator
- tree-planting laborer
- crew leader
- maintenance worker
- truck driver
- office assistant
- fundraiser
- special events worker
- intern

### *Current Volunteer Programs*

Each year Friends of Trees selects approximately 30 neighborhoods to participate in its Neighborhood Trees program. Low-income areas and areas with diminished tree canopies are given preference. The actual number of neighborhoods selected each year depends on how many sponsors Friends of Trees is able to attract.

Once neighborhoods are chosen, Friends of Trees meets with neighborhood associations and community groups within the target areas and recruits a neighborhood coordinator. Then Friends of Trees offers a three-part training session to introduce the coordinators to the program and their responsibilities. This training is critical. It focuses on:

- How the process works
- How to recruit additional neighborhood volunteers and sponsors
- How to identify the homes that need trees
- How to select, plant and water the appropriate trees

Neighborhood coordinators are responsible for finding crew leaders to assist them in guiding volunteers on planting day. Crew leaders usually attend the last two training sessions. Typically 100 to 200 volunteers participate on planting day, and between 90 and 140 trees are planted.

In addition, Friends of Trees recruits summer tree care volunteers who care for the newly planted trees over the critical summer months.

### *Natural Area Restoration*

Friends of Trees also partners with public agencies, other nonprofits and community groups to organize natural area enhancements and restoration projects.

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Friends of Trees helps arrange follow-up maintenance for these projects, again using volunteers.

**RESULTS:**

During the 2003-04 planting season, Friends of Trees volunteers planted 2,124 street and yard trees and 17,023 native trees and shrubs in urban natural areas.

**LESSONS LEARNED:**

1. Make the activity fun. Friends of Trees offers food and beverages at all its plantings and, often, music. Plantings are used as opportunities for neighbors to network and enjoy each other.
2. Make your volunteers feel important, appreciated, and informed. Once you recruit volunteers, you want them to keep coming back. Friends of Trees makes a concerted effort to honor its volunteers with annual volunteer appreciation festivals, written and verbal expressions of thanks, and consistent updates on Friends of Trees activities. Updates take a variety of forms including Tree Mail (a monthly e-mail on training opportunities, volunteer needs, and other activities), a quarterly online newsletter, and a mailed biannual newsletter. In addition, volunteers are encouraged to join Friends of Trees as members.
3. Remember that your board members are also volunteers and honor them accordingly.
4. Emphasize the tangible results of volunteers' work. Once a person plants a tree, he or she is associated with that tree for as long as it lives. Help them feel that connection.
5. Let volunteers know about ALL the benefits of the work they have done. Publicize and explain the residual benefits of the work you do. For example, not only do trees provide beauty and shade, they also help control storm-water runoff, reduce air pollution, and help curtail global warming. Encourage your volunteers to see how their efforts are improving the community over time.
6. Expand the use of volunteers beyond "a way to get a job done" to "a way to build the community." Promote networking.
7. Have clear parameters of what you are asking of volunteers and make sure they understand what those parameters are. Volunteers need to know clearly what they are signing up to do and if they have the needed skills. Spend the time at the beginning to make sure there are no misunderstandings as you go through the process. For example, do not have a volunteer fix your truck until you know that he or she actually has the appropriate expertise. Make sure neighborhood coordinators know the breadth of their responsibilities and how to undertake them. At the same time, let people know the limits of their responsibilities. Volunteers are not the spokespersons for the nonprofit organization or the local government.
8. Give opportunities for different levels of volunteering, and try to ensure that people can truly commit to the level they choose. Some people can commit to only one day of service; others are able to commit to several months. See Friends of Trees' Website (<http://www.friendsoftrees.org>) for its listing of volunteer opportunities and a volunteer sign-up form.
9. Make your program consistent, clear, and well organized. Volunteers' time is valuable. Do not waste it.

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# Volunteering Resources

*From the Top Down : The Executive Role in Volunteer Program Success*  
by Susan J. Ellis

*Measuring the Difference Volunteers Make: A Guide to Outcome Evaluation*  
by Melissa Eystad  
Energize Press

*Promising Practices for Partnership: How to Be and How to Use Corporate Volunteers*  
by Cynthia Fox  
Greater DC Cares Press

*The (Help!) I-Don't-Have-Enough-Time Guide to Volunteer Management*  
by Katherine Noyes Campbell and Susan J. Ellis

*NeighborWoods Guide and Workbook*  
by Alliance for Community Trees  
Alliance for Community Trees

*Volunteer Management*  
by Steve McCurley, Rick Lync

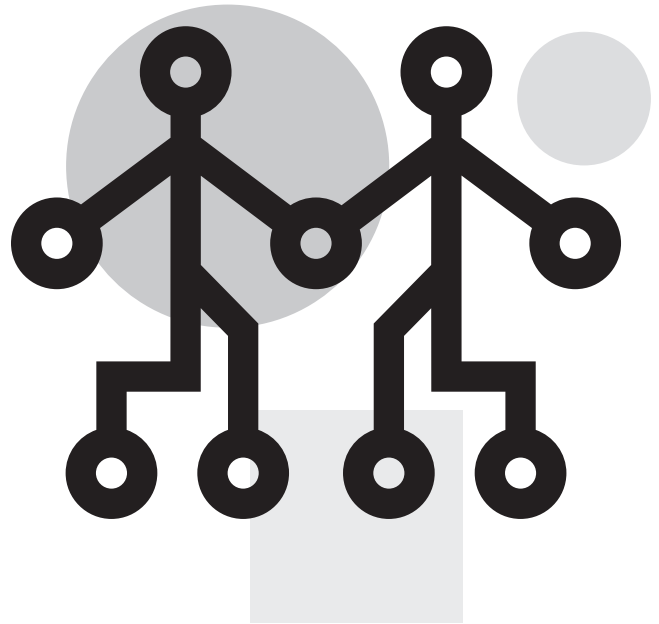
## Web Resources

[www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org)—AmeriCorps is a network of local, state, and national service programs that connects more than 70,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet our country's critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment.

- AmeriCorps\*State and National
- AmeriCorps\*VISTA
- AmeriCorps\*NCCC

[www.chicagowilderness.org](http://www.chicagowilderness.org)

Chicago Wilderness is a regional conservation collaborative dedicated to restoring biodiversity to the Chicago region.



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[www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org)—This National Arbor Day Foundation page provides information about volunteer opportunities and describes the valuable *Resource Kit for Volunteers*, which can be purchased online.

[www.arborday.org/programs/treecitybulletin-browse.cfm](http://www.arborday.org/programs/treecitybulletin-browse.cfm)

This link will help you find issues(s) of The National Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City Bulletins that are related to this topic.

[www.handsonnetwork.org](http://www.handsonnetwork.org)—Hands On Network (formerly CityCares) is leading a national civic movement bringing people together to tackle tough community problems. The organizing force behind the movement is our growing network of local non-profit organizations that act as civic action centers. The Hands On approach inspires volunteers, creates leaders, and changes lives and communities through effective volunteer action.

[www.pointsoflightfoundation.org](http://www.pointsoflightfoundation.org)—The Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network engages and mobilizes millions of volunteers who are helping to solve serious social problems in thousands of communities. Through a variety of programs and services, the Foundation encourages people from all walks of life—businesses, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, low-income communities, families, youth, and older adults—to volunteer.

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[www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)—online service, helping thousands of nonprofit organizations attract the volunteer support they need.