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## *Introduction*

Volunteerism in the United States is neither a new concept nor an uncommon activity. Historically, America has long recognized the importance of “a societal responsibility to join in, to give freely of one’s time to assist or aid others.” This responsibility is frequently iterated in the literature. For example, Alexis de Tocqueville, in 1831, stated in his seminal work, *Democracy in America*, that the U.S. was a “nation of joiners” that regularly formed groups to meet or accomplish common goals.<sup>1</sup>

The past century has seen many notable examples of volunteerism, particularly those associated with federally sponsored programs. For example, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), during the 1930s, worked to plant trees, build bridges and roads, and restore public lands and buildings throughout the United States. In the 1960s, the Peace Corps began work to assist the poorest countries in the world by constructing schools, treating the sick, and assisting in agricultural needs. The Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program, initiated during the same decade, undertook assistance to low-income communities across the nation ranging in services from the conservation of natural resources to the cleanup and restoration of urban centers. Today, AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, Senior Corps, and USA Freedom Corps are national programs that enlist thousands of volunteers to address virtually every kind of pressing human problem or need.

State governments also actively recruit volunteers to help in providing essential services to the citizenry. For instance, volunteers provide various integral emergency services in the wake of natural disasters. Volunteers also lend a helping hand to the state courts and correctional systems. This includes the provision of probation and parole mentors, counselors, teachers and trainers, and foster parents. “Adopt-a-highway” programs, tax preparation assistance, “meals on wheels,” hospital care giving, and literally dozens of other state government-sponsored volunteer programs exist.

Local governments additionally utilize volunteers. Volunteers provide valuable services to local schools and libraries, parks and recreational programs, senior citizen centers, police, ambulance and firefighting units. Statistically, for example, 80 % of the manpower needs of local fire departments in the U.S. are provided for by volunteers.<sup>2</sup>

Non-governmental organizations significantly utilize volunteers as well. Churches, civic groups, neighborhood associations, philanthropic organizations, and a host of other non-profit groups provide a wide-range of volunteer opportunities and services. The American Red Cross, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Catholic Charities USA, Save the Children, Habitat for Humanity, America’s Second Harvest, Make A Wish Foundation, and the United Way are some of the larger and better known charitable and volunteer-based private or non-profit groups.

In this monograph, volunteerism in America will be briefly examined. First, a working definition of a “volunteer” will be given and the benefits of volunteerism will be

highlighted. Second, the magnitude and characteristics of volunteerism in the U.S. will be considered in some statistical detail. Third, various organizational models of volunteerism, as recognized in the literature, will be discussed in order to better understand the key structures that are fashioned to make use of volunteers. Fourth, some narrative will be devoted to volunteerism as it specifically relates to government organizations. Fifth and finally, the State of Texas will be reviewed as a case study which exhibits the promotion, management, and benefits of using volunteers in the public sector.

### *The Definition and Benefits of Volunteerism*

According to the Fair Labor Standards Act, a volunteer is:

An individual who performs hours of service for a public agency [or organization] for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, state law in South Carolina defines a volunteer as “any person who freely provides goods or services to any agency or instrumentality of government without financial gain.”<sup>4</sup>

Beyond these legal definitions of volunteers, it should be acknowledged that there are, in fact, many variations of the meaning of the term “volunteer.” For example, Webster’s Dictionary simply defines a volunteer as one who enters into or offers oneself for a service of his/her free will. In this sense the volunteer is basically distinguished as one who is *not* coerced to perform services. Further, while normally voluntary services are performed for which the individual neither expects nor receives compensation, it does not, in many cases, preclude the payment of expenses—such as per diem, travel allowances, stipends or living allowances, child care, or educational expenses. AmeriCorps volunteers, by way of example, receive a set living allowance and, upon completion of service, are awarded educational vouchers or payments.

Though some remuneration is allowed in many instances, volunteers are thought of typically among the public as “persons who voluntarily render services without payment or compensation.” This would meet the widely accepted definition of a volunteer as defined by the American Red Cross:

A Red Cross volunteer is an individual who, beyond the responsibilities of paid employment, freely and without expectation or receipt of compensation, and for personal, humanitarian, or charitable reasons, contributes time and service to assist the American Red Cross in the accomplishment of its Mission.<sup>5</sup>

The benefits of voluntarism are widely praised and are several. One study states that greater than 50 % of management in the public sector believe that volunteers provide

substantial cost-savings and productivity gains to organizational endeavors, including community goodwill and other intrinsic benefits.<sup>6</sup> The Independent Sector, a prestigious coalition of philanthropic and charitable organizations, states that volunteering—among many other things—adds value to services, promotes social harmony, and creates public trust.<sup>7</sup>

More specifically, what are the many benefits of volunteerism? First, the literature indicates plainly that volunteers provide a real economic cost savings. In one study of local governments, it was found that 91 % of volunteer supervisors felt that volunteers permitted local governments to do considerably more without expense or undue cost.<sup>8</sup>

Second, volunteerism is recognized—generally speaking—to be an effective way to interject public participation into non-profit or governmental operations and decision-making processes. It is believed that volunteers “can see and understand firsthand,” through their various voluntary experiences, that public interests and needs are indeed being seriously and competently pursued and, where possible, successfully met. The literature, in many cases, suggests that volunteers “improve citizenship” and serve as an effective conduit “to educate” individuals outside philanthropic and governmental circles as to the merits of public service.

In addition to these two main benefits of volunteerism, Brundy (1995) identifies other benefits commonly associated with the use of volunteers in the public sector. These include:

- Volunteers add to the quality and capacity of programmatic services. Volunteers provide enthusiasm, extra resources and, many times, much needed skills.
- Volunteers supplement the normal workforce during times of crisis and especially when workload demands peak.
- Volunteers, who are trained and experienced, provide a ready pool of applicants for employment.
- Volunteers often provide services outside the normal purview of government employees, such as fund raising and advocacy.<sup>9</sup>

### *Volunteerism in the United States*

Studies indicate the United States is the “most advanced country in philanthropy” in two important respects—the percentage of income or gross domestic product (GDP) allotted to charities and the average number of hours devoted to volunteerism.<sup>10</sup> Various reasons account for this phenomenon. For instance, the literature notes that America traditionally possesses a strong belief in community relations and charity. Helping those in need within neighborhoods, parishes, and home districts is rooted in the American way of life. Religion and diversity contribute likewise to a heightened, enduring sense and devotion to the idea and practice of volunteerism. “Americans willingly desire to give their time freely to addressing the problems of crime and drugs, illiteracy, and homelessness.”<sup>11</sup>

In the following section, discussion will be given to the incidence and causes of volunteering. In addition, the characteristics of volunteers as well as the types of organizations that typically utilize volunteers will be reviewed. Finally, the predominate kinds of volunteer activities will be touched upon.

### *Incidence of Volunteering*

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that roughly 59 million people (designated “civilian noninstitutional population, ages 16 and older”) volunteered for organizations, in some capacity, between September 2001 and September 2002. This figure represents about 27.6 % of the U.S. population or more than one in every four American adults.<sup>12</sup>

For the same period, volunteers averaged approximately 52 hours of service. Those who spent 100 to 499 hours volunteering represented 28.2 % of the 59 million while 21.5 % volunteered 1 to 14 hours.<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, the Independent Sector conducts a biennial national survey to examine charitable and volunteering practices in the U.S. In its 2001 published survey, *Giving and Volunteering in the United States*, it found that 44 % of adults over the age 16 volunteered with a formal organization in 2000. Further, 63 % of these individuals volunteered on a regular basis or monthly.<sup>14</sup> The Independent Sector also reported that:

- Volunteers averaged slightly more than 24 hours per month in the provision of services.
- Approximately 83.9 million adults formally volunteered some 15.5 billion hours in 2000.
- Volunteers represented the equivalent of nine million full-time workers at a value of \$239 billion.<sup>15 16</sup>

### *Characteristics of Volunteers*

The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ one-year study of volunteerism in the United States—cited above—also found that women (31.1 %) have a higher incidence or rate of volunteering than men (23.8 %). With regard to age, for example, those individuals between 35 and 44 years old had the greatest incidence of volunteering (34.4 %), a rate that translates roughly to 1 in 3 people. Those persons who are ages 65 and older (22.7 %), and those persons in their early twenties (18.2 %), made up the age groupings which statistically volunteered least. Interestingly, teenagers (16 to 19 years old) volunteered often (26.9 %) which, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, could be “accounted for by the emphasis of volunteer activities in schools.”<sup>17</sup>

In terms of education, college graduates volunteered most often or at a rate of 43.6 %. This rate was twice that of high school graduates (21.3 %) and four times that of those persons not finishing high school (10.1 %).

Marital and family status impact volunteer rates as well. The Bureau of Labor Statistics study found that parents with children *under* the age 18 (36.5 %) volunteered more than those parents with children *over* 18 years (22.1 %). Further, volunteer rates were higher for married persons (32.7 %) as compared to singles (21.2 %).

Finally, it was found that 30 % of all employed persons volunteered in one capacity or another over a year period. Comparatively speaking, the volunteer rates for persons not employed were slightly lower or 25.3 %. It was also learned that part-time employees (35.5 %) volunteered more frequently than the full-time work force (28.5 %).<sup>18</sup>

### *Prevalent Kinds of Organizations for Volunteering*

Most volunteers devote their time to a single organization (69.1 %). Volunteers who give their time to two organizations are considerably fewer or 19.3 %.

The type of organization where people volunteer most is “religious” in nature (33.9 %). This is followed by organizations that are educational or youth oriented (27.2 %). Social and community service organizations are those organizations where 12.1 % of volunteers give their time. Lastly, volunteers devote time to hospitals and health organizations at a rate of 8.6 %.<sup>19</sup>

Unsurprisingly, older volunteers (45.2 %)—65 years and older—give time to churches or religious organizations. In contrast, 28.6 % of volunteers, ages 25 to 34 years, perform some type of activity for religious organizations.

Lastly, persons with children *under* 18 years old (45.9 % mothers and 37.9 % fathers) volunteered for educational or youth organizations. Persons with children *older* than 18 years, volunteered more often for organizations that possess a “community or social orientation,” e.g., a senior center.<sup>20</sup>

### *Types of Voluntary Activities*

Further, the Bureau of Labor Statistics identifies several activities in which volunteers engage in consistently. The list below shows which activities are most predominate.

- Teaching or coaching (24.4 %).
- Canvassing, campaigning, or fundraising (22.9 %).
- Collecting, making, serving, or delivering goods (22.2 %).
- Serving on a board, committee, or neighborhood association (16.3 %).
- Providing care or transportation (12.3 %).
- Consulting or administrative work (14.0 %).<sup>21</sup>

### *Organizational Models of Volunteerism*

Volunteer organizations vary in design or structure as well as in management and operational features. Many are highly structured and formal. Others are ad hoc in nature

and, therefore, considered informal. Valente and Manchester (1989) have identified four models or approaches for distinguishing among volunteer organizations. These include: 1) the ad hoc volunteer model, 2) the outside recruitment, internal government management model, 3) the centralized model, and 4) the decentralized model.<sup>22</sup>

#### *The Ad Hoc Model*

The ad hoc model refers to either a local or state governmental entity identifying a specific need or problem that requires immediate attention. In this respect, a public sector organization would undertake a special project,<sup>23</sup> within a distinct timeline, to address a well-defined problem area. Volunteers would likely comprise the majority of the workforce or assistance here, and governmental entities would provide management and various resources as required.<sup>24</sup>

Ad hoc study groups, for example, are often established by state and local governments to analyze problems and propose solutions. Voluntary participation is crucial in these cases in that they provide outside expertise and assist in building public support and acceptance of governmental proposals and actions.

#### *The Outside Recruitment/Internal Management Model*

This model is a familiar one. It represents a partnership or affiliation between a private or non-profit entity and a governmental organization. As an example, this might conceivably be a partnership between United Way and a social service-type agency or program. United Way would provide for the recruitment and expenses associated with training, transportation, etc. of volunteers and these volunteers would in turn provide some form of services to social service clients within a government agency or department.<sup>25</sup>

Certain organizations are especially skilled and experienced in the recruitment and training of volunteers. This is particularly true of organizations like the American Red Cross, Service Leader, and the United Service Organization (USO).

#### *The Centralized Model*

The centralized approach for volunteerism is one in which a *single* organization handles all or most aspects of volunteer recruitment, coordination, etc. for government locally or statewide, whichever the case may be. Valente and Manchester define the centralized approach as “a model that implies a jurisdiction-wide program managed by a central entity or staff, and operates from the state agency’s central office headquarters.”<sup>26</sup>

The central model of volunteerism has several benefits. It allows for improved coordination among competing governmental agencies for volunteers. It permits better use or management of scarce resources, allows for better placement or match of volunteers to agency needs, and gives government an overall better profile or standing as regards its emphasis on volunteerism. Additionally, a central model provides for better

data collection and analysis of the benefits that volunteers contribute to government services.

The Kentucky Commission on Community Volunteerism is one such example of a centralized approach to volunteerism. The commission provides for a highly visible central site or contact place for volunteers, coordinates volunteer programs, channels federal and state funding for volunteer programs, and works with local governmental agencies as well.<sup>27</sup>

### *The Decentralized Model*

The decentralized model is that approach where a divisional or departmental unit operates and manages its own separate volunteer program(s). This may be a governmental intra-agency (e.g., a department of mental health) effort that implements its own volunteer programs among several work units. It could also be a single work unit effort within a larger agency structure (e.g., an alcohol and drug treatment center within a department of mental health agency).

This decentralized model allows for greater agency or unit control and flexibility over its volunteer program(s). It can also lend itself more to informality and creativity and permit rapid adjustment to changing or unexpected circumstances. The downside, of course, is that chances for duplication of effort increase and the ability to move or exchange volunteers to other agencies (or programs) are much restricted.<sup>28</sup>

### *Volunteerism in the Public Sector*

In this section, five topics relating to volunteerism in the public sector will be briefly examined. The promotion and recruitment of volunteers will be discussed in terms of leadership endorsements, funding incentives, and the establishment of organizational structures to foster and coordinate volunteer activities. This will also include some remarks as to the “causes” or influences for volunteering. Next, some review of “developing” volunteer programs will be given, identifying the basic steps required to get a volunteer program started and operating in government. Federal volunteer programs will be discussed afterwards with concentration on the USA Freedom Corps, AmeriCorps, and the Senior Corps. This discussion will be followed by a look at some key states with reputations for “excellence in volunteer efforts.” And finally, a glance at local voluntarism will illustrate the significance of volunteerism at the community-level.

### *Government Promotion and Recruitment of Volunteers*

The promotion of volunteerism, especially by governments, takes on many forms. For instance, presidents, governors, mayors, and other government officials may initiate vigorous campaigns or programs to recruit volunteers. Presidents Clinton and Bush called on Americans to volunteer and established programs to recruit, organize and coordinate volunteer initiatives to serve the needy. These programs were called respectively, AmeriCorps and the USA Freedom Corps. Additionally, former mayor of New York City

Rudolf Giuliani marshaled a volunteer effort of enormous proportions to contend with the aftermath of the September 11 disaster.

Special set-aside funding also is an important way in which to promote voluntary activities. President Bush and Congress approved \$1 billion to fund Freedom Corps in 2002, much of which went to spur volunteer services in communities and schools.<sup>29</sup> The State of South Carolina received over \$10 million in 2003 to implement programs sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service programs (AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and the National Senior Service Corps). Other funding sources promoting volunteerism come from banking institutions (e.g., Bank of America), industry (e.g., Microsoft), philanthropic groups (e.g., March of Dimes), individuals (e.g., Ruth Lilly, heiress of the Eli Lilly fortune), and millions of dollars donated by Americans to various churches, charities, and “causes.”

And in what other ways are volunteerism promoted or initiated? One way to effectively promote volunteerism is to establish “infrastructures” to help recruitment and coordination undertakings. This is an integral step in the development of volunteer programs particularly as it relates to assessing needs, gaining staff support, developing job descriptions, interviewing prospective volunteers, and so forth. Another way to promote volunteerism is to offer tax incentives. Some states provide corporations or individuals tax cuts for the active promotion and utilization of volunteers (charitable contributions) in various community and civic programs.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, a couple of remarks on *how* volunteers get involved. The Independent Sector finds in its research that there are three key ways in which individuals learn about volunteer programs. These are instances where 1) people were asked by someone to volunteer, 2) heard about volunteering through an organization, and 3) learned through a family member or relative.<sup>31</sup> Also, Borass (August 2003), an economist with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, found statistical evidence that two primary ways of volunteering exist. The first is by one’s own initiative “by simply approaching a volunteer organization,” and the second is when one is “asked by somebody from an organization.”<sup>32</sup>

### *Causes for Volunteerism*

The causes associated with volunteerism or “*why* people volunteer” are of interest, especially for organizations offering volunteer programs. Indeed, what are the factors or causes associated with volunteerism? Some research has been given to answering this question and the results are informative.

Bohse and Associates (1998), a consulting firm for non-profits, compiled some data on the causes of volunteerism. Most significantly, perhaps, it was found that 67 %--or two-thirds of adults—believe that is “very important” for people to volunteer within their communities. People volunteer because of the needs of the community, such as those needs which may be described as “educational and those associated with charitable activities.” Seventy percent (70 %) think that “volunteering makes people feel good about themselves” and that this is a cause or justification in-itself for voluntary participation.<sup>33</sup>

The most noteworthy reasons for volunteering were: 1) “feeling compassion for people in need” (86 %); 2) “having an interest in the volunteer-type activity or work” (72 %); 3) “gaining a new perspective on things” (70 %); and 4) “the import of the activity to those in need” (63 %).<sup>34</sup>

It was also found by Bohse and Associates that “lack of time due to work or family commitments” was a chief reason for *not* volunteering. Additionally, 70 % of adults were “least interested” in volunteering for political activities. Other findings include:

- A clear majority of adults (64 %) feels that individual initiatives over government programs are a preferable way of meeting community needs.
- Most adults (58 %) feel that voluntary service to the community should be a school graduation prerequisite.
- Many adults believe that businesses should give time, money and people to voluntary service to communities.<sup>35</sup>

### *Key Steps in the Development of a Volunteer Program*

In the following discussion a concise examination of the developmental steps connected to volunteer programs will be given. It should be noted that the literature speaks frequently to the basic steps involved in getting a volunteer program up and started. The following seven steps represent the generally acceptable developmental process.<sup>36</sup>

*1) Assess needs and determine objectives.* The logical starting place for a volunteer program, either a new one or one already in existence, is the assessment of needs. The question here is: What are the critical needs of the community and are volunteers a part of the solution to these needs? By survey methods or other means of assessing needs, a list of community priorities are established. From here, explicit objectives should be identified and the participation of volunteers should be clarified.

*2) Prepare a written proposal for the program.* The preparation of a proposal allows for articulating precisely what is to be done. This would amount to a document that details the organization or structure of the volunteer program, the resources required, its operational features, and so on. In other words, such a proposal would adequately explain “the use of volunteers,” including recruitment and training procedures, and management processes.

*3) Provide staff support.* Volunteer programs generally support established organizational entities (e.g., a state agency) by providing resources that are helpful, often skilled, and cost-effective. Since volunteers work within established organizations, it is necessary that they be managed and evaluated by permanent, experienced personnel. In this sense, it is beneficial that regular, paid employees be engaged and supportive of volunteers. Hence, every precaution should be taken to enlist paid employees to work favorably with volunteers in terms of recruitment, management, and encouragement (rewards, merit reviews, and collaboration).

4) *Prepare job descriptions.* Determination of the specific knowledge and skills required from volunteers is paramount. Equally important are the specific duties, responsibilities and tasks that a volunteer will be obliged to provide. Therefore, state agencies and other governmental organizations must clearly and distinctly develop detailed job descriptions for persons volunteering their services. This will provide for an efficient and effective method of matching volunteers with appropriate jobs.

5) *Recruit and select volunteers.* Recruitment of volunteers should be a well-planned and carefully executed undertaking. Likewise, every reasonable avenue to enlist qualified volunteers should be pursued, including advertisements and “volunteer fairs” conducted in malls, at public events, etc. Above all, personal contact for recruitment purposes should be practiced.

Once individuals have applied for volunteer positions, they should be interviewed and screened properly. This application and screening process should be thorough and professionally done. Again, prospective volunteers should be matched with appropriate jobs.

6) *Implement the program.* Like any other worker or service provider, volunteers need to be exposed to some form of training or orientation as to their new tasks. The literature suggests that this training or orientation be meticulously executed so that the volunteer knows clearly what is expected of them, the rules and procedures of the organization, and other details important to achieving maximum performance results. The supervision of volunteers should be constructed so as to ensure proper management and assessment of volunteer work.

7) *Acknowledge and reward volunteers and staff.* A system should be put into place that recognizes and rewards both volunteers and participating paid employees. This will serve as tool for motivation and it will, according to the literature, invariably produce “good public relations.”<sup>37</sup>

### *Federal Volunteer Programs*

President Bush addressed volunteerism in his State of the Union Address in 2002 by asking Americans to give a substantial amount of time and service to their communities and the nation at large. The upshot of this presidential call to service was the creation of the USA Freedom Corps, a newly created federal program that acts as an umbrella for existing and innovative volunteer programs.

Along with the Freedom Corps is the Corporation for National and Community Service, an independent federal agency that administers most of the federally funded domestic volunteer programs, such as AmeriCorps, the Senior Corps, and the Learn and Serve Program. The following narrative highlights these major federal volunteer programs.

*USA Freedom Corps.* The USA Freedom Corps is the newest entity in the overarching arsenal of federally sponsored volunteer programs. The Freedom Corps is described as “a coordinating and White House office that was launched on January 30, 2002 to assist in helping persons answer President Bush’s call to service.”<sup>38</sup>

The Freedom Corps is in essence a clearinghouse for volunteerism. The Freedom Corps provides prospective volunteers with information and contacts to connect with some 75,000 organizations across America. More than five million individuals have, for example, visited the principal web site for Freedom Corps since early 2002.<sup>39</sup>

According to an executive order issued by the president, the USA Freedom Corps...

shall be an interagency initiative, bringing together executive branch departments, agencies, and offices with public service programs and components, including but not limited to programs and components with the following functions:

- (i) recruiting, mobilizing, and encouraging all Americans to engage in public service;
- (ii) providing concrete opportunities to engage in public service;
- (iii) providing the public with access to information about public service opportunities through Federal programs and elsewhere; and
- (iv) providing recognition and awards to volunteers and other participants in public service programs.<sup>40</sup>

In 2003, USA Freedom Corps placed considerable emphasis on specific areas of need which included youth achievement, parks and open spaces, homeland security, and healthy communities. The youth achievement effort, for instance, involved placing mentors with more than one million young people who were economically or socially disadvantaged. With regard to voluntary efforts connected to parks and open spaces, the U.S. Department of Interior engaged Americans to preserve and protect the country’s natural resources through a host of environmental and conservation activities.

*AmeriCorps.* AmeriCorps was created in 1993 and is part of the federally operated Corporation for National and Community Service. AmeriCorps provides training, stipends, and educational awards to volunteers to serve in non-profit and other programs that are aimed to meet crucial needs in education, health, public safety, and environmental protection. Each year, for example, AmeriCorps sponsors some 50,000 persons who serve as volunteers in more than 2,100 non-profits, governmental agencies, and faith-based organizations. These AmeriCorps volunteers teach and mentor young people, maintain parks and recreational facilities, provide disaster relief, and construct family housing.<sup>41</sup> AmeriCorps consists of three key programs: AmeriCorps\* State and National, AmeriCorps\* VISTA, and AmeriCorps\* National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC).

Much of the federal funding for AmeriCorps goes to AmeriCorps\* State and National (ACSN). ACSN supports governor-appointed state commissions which serve as a

financial conduit for federal monies (grants) to support local non-profits and public agencies. Volunteer program recruitment and selection is the responsibility of local or state organizations. Volunteers serve the needy in areas such as education and health. ACSN grantees also include nationally affiliated groups like the American Red Cross, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Habitat for Humanity.

AmeriCorps\* VISTA serves persons and communities suffering from impoverished conditions. VISTA has been in existence for more than 35 years. VISTA volunteers work in all capacities to help people overcome illiteracy, improve healthcare, and provide for adequate housing. According to the literature, “VISTA volunteers are assigned to local project sponsors. Volunteers focus on enhancing community capacity, mobilizing resources, and increasing self-reliance.”<sup>42</sup>

AmeriCorps\* NCCC is a full-time volunteer residential program for individuals ages 18 through 24. For ten months the NCCC program trains its volunteers in leadership and team building skills. This training takes place in five locations across the U.S. and coincides with community service in areas of public safety, disaster relief, and public health.

*Senior Corps.* The Senior Corps consists mainly of three major federally funded programs that utilize the skills and talents of older Americans to assist those in need. Greater than one million persons, age 55 and over, work with various non-profits, public agencies, and faith-based organizations to provide essential services to Americans of all ages.

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) enlists people 55 years and older to provide a wide range of voluntary services, including tutoring children, renovating homes, and organizing neighborhood watches. The Foster Grandparents Program allows for seniors to serve as extended families to at-risk young people. Foster Grandparents help neglected and abused children, care for babies, mentor troubled teenagers, and assist families generally in any way possible. Finally, the Senior Companions Program enables those 60 years and older to provide help and assistance to frail or infirm seniors with daily living tasks. Senior Companions spend 20 hours a week helping with the preparation of meals, transportation, shopping, etc.

*Learn and Serve America.* The Learn and Serve Program provides monies and technical support for service-learning activities in schools and community organizations throughout the U.S. Volunteers are trained to provide assistance and to organize programs for students from kindergarten through college. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, “Learn and Serve grants permit the establishment of new programs and strengthen existing ones, as well as provide training to staff, faculty, and volunteers.”<sup>43</sup> Currently, nearly one million students are benefiting from Learn and Serve programs.

“Service-learning,” as the name implies, is a way in which students participate in organized programs or services to benefit directly communities by addressing their needs

first-hand. Students, assisted by full-time staff and volunteers, undertake projects such as “preserving indigenous plants, building playgrounds, teaching young children to read, preparing meals for the homeless, and organizing recycling programs.”<sup>44</sup> In this way, Learn and Serve America attempts, on the behalf of students, to promote civic responsibility, provide structured community service activities, and heighten the awareness of public or societal needs.

A comprehensive study of Learn and Serve America indicates that its programs in fact contribute to the improvement of student’s grades, increase school attendance, and promote responsibility. The study also found that students appear to improve critical thinking skills, communication, and teamwork capacity.<sup>45</sup>

### *State Volunteer Programs*

Many states in the U.S. have strong, centralized volunteer programs. In an article which appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor* (November 2001), it was reported that the United Way of America had recognized several states for excellence in promoting and coordinating statewide volunteerism.<sup>46</sup> Connecticut and Kentucky were mentioned as first-rate in the category of performance. Other more recent appraisals have highlighted the accomplishments of Virginia, California, and Indiana. In the following discussion, focus will be given to five states’ voluntary program efforts.

*California.* GO SERV, an acronym for the Governor’s Office on Service and Volunteerism, administers California’s volunteer programs throughout the state. Its stated mission is “to bring Californians together to meet state and community challenges through service and voluntary action.”<sup>47</sup> In what can be described as both “an aggressive strategy and a widespread outreach campaign,” GO SERV aspires to several goals, including, 1) invigorating a strong ethic of civic responsibility, 2) ensuring voluntary action in resolving many of the state’s educational, health, and environmental problems, and 3) connecting Californians from diverse backgrounds to find ways to address issues associated with the state’s ever-increasing population growth.

GO SERV’s primary activities are those associated with making grants available to non-profits and community-based organizations, matching volunteers with work and support opportunities, and operating its Citizen Corps which focuses on emergency preparedness.

In 2003, GO SERV provided approximately \$20 million in funding to aid volunteerism in California. This money was dispersed largely to locally based programs as well as AmeriCorps, Citizen Corps, and the Cesar Chavez Service program. GO SERV funding, for example, supported some 2,400 AmeriCorps volunteers in 26 programs statewide.<sup>48</sup>

*Connecticut.* The Connecticut Commission on National and Community Service (CCNCS) was established in 1993 and is administered by staff of Connecticut’s Department of Higher Education. According to the CCNCS, its purposes are to encourage community service and volunteer participation, to develop a long-term strategy of service

initiatives in Connecticut, and to serve as the state's liaison to national and local volunteer organizations.<sup>49</sup>

Similar to other state commissions on volunteerism, CCNCS channels federal grants (e.g., AmeriCorps funding) to local or community non-profits and public entities. The CCNCS, however, conducts a number of programs that are unique. One program, the Governor's State Employee Mentoring Program, is a statutorily authorized initiative which allows more than 2,000 state employees to volunteer as mentors with Connecticut's Big Brothers/Big Sisters organizations. Another program recognizes exceptional volunteers who are identified or selected not only through the CCNCS and its established criteria, but also, in collaboration with standards acknowledged by the independent Points of Light Foundation.

Since the inception of the CCNCS in the early 1990s, it has provided more than \$20 million in federal funds to community and other organizations throughout the state. The CCNCS has also raised several million dollars in state/local resources to further its mission "to engage volunteers in aid to thousands of needy Connecticut residents."<sup>50</sup>

*Indiana.* Initially, in 1994, former Governor Evan Bayh established the Indiana Commission on Community Service (ICCS) to serve as the state's central coordinating agency for volunteerism. Then in 1997, Governor Frank O'Bannon reconstituted the ICCS into a larger and more multifaceted agency, the Governor's Voluntary Action Program (GVAP). The current mission of GVAP is:

To challenge the people of Indiana to strengthen their communities through service and volunteerism. [Additionally,] to identify and mobilize resources, to promote an ethic of service, and to develop in communities the capacity to solve problems and improve the quality of life for all individuals and families.<sup>51</sup>

The GVAP also actively reviews and responds to issues related to community needs and assesses the impact of volunteerism on solving local problems. The GVAP is staffed by an executive director and a cadre of volunteer specialists. The GVAP prepares a strategic plan for volunteerism and produces an annual report on volunteerism in the state. Finally, the GVAP has a number of programs that encourage and enlist volunteers, including the Youth Ambassadors, the Citizen Corps, and "Indiana 2016."<sup>52</sup>

*Virginia.* Much like other states, Virginia has set up a state commission/agency to oversee and administer a set of programs aimed at volunteerism. In 2003, Governor Mark Warner issued an executive order creating the Virginia Commission for National and Community Service (VCNCS). The VCNCS counsels the governor on all matters related to volunteerism and, additionally, the VCNCS promotes and develops voluntary programs, administers federal grants, and generally fosters "a spirit of civic duty among Virginians."<sup>53</sup>

VCNCS also assists and coordinates 70 local volunteer service centers. These local centers provide several services connected to volunteerism such as the distribution of

information, training, technical assistance, access to library resources, recognition events, and newsletters. Most importantly, the local service centers link volunteers to suitable jobs within Virginia's varied communities.<sup>54</sup>

VCNCS is staffed by 11 full-time professionals and offers some distinctive programs. One such program is in the area of performance management. Performance Management Training is offered to federal grantees and stresses the significance of articulating and reporting programmatic performance or results. The VCNCS also cultivates a team-building approach and encourages participation in team-building exercises among voluntary program workers.<sup>55</sup>

*South Carolina.* Once headed directly by the Office of the Governor (Office of Volunteer Services), South Carolina's Commission on National and Community Services (SCCNCS) is now headquartered in the state's Department of Education. The principal focus of SCCNCS is to administer or funnel some \$10.8 million in federal monies to some 68 organizations throughout the state. These monies fund the three main federal volunteer programs: AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America. For example, 700 AmeriCorps volunteers participated in communities across South Carolina. Roughly 6,000 older South Carolinians volunteered for participation in the Senior Corps. And, service-learning was made available to some 94,000 South Carolina students.

### *Local Volunteerism*

As the previous discussion of state voluntary programs indicates, states are heavily involved in local volunteer efforts. Mainly, this involvement is two-fold. First, state commissions, agencies or departments coordinate and help link national and state voluntary programs to local level voluntary activities. Second, these state coordinating entities also act as conduits to channel federal and state funding to local voluntary programs.

But, local organizations also have voluntary programs that are singularly inspired, initiated, and maintained at the community or neighborhood levels. Historically, fire, recreation, and many human services would be examples of strictly local voluntary efforts. To emphasize this point, the literature generally states that "volunteers have been the backbone of American local government. Planning commissions, zoning boards, and school boards exemplify this, as do voluntary firefighters, crime patrols, and election or polling staff."<sup>56</sup>

In the following narrative, local volunteerism will be examined in light of the uses local government makes of volunteers. Additionally, some examples of particular local volunteerism in towns and cities will be briefly reviewed.

*Local Uses of Volunteers.* The literature indicates that a large proportion of local governments are making use of volunteers, particularly in special work categories. These five distinct work areas include: 1) public works, transportation, and utilities; 2) public safety; 3) health and human services; 4) parks and recreation; and, 5) support functions.<sup>57</sup>

In the public works area, for example, volunteers provide services such as roadside cleanup, tree trimming and related landscaping activities, snow removal, and generally speaking, any support or administrative activity associated with public works. However, in many cases, volunteers in public works activities are restricted due to the technical or specialized nature of the work area and dangers associated with transportation and utilities systems.

Public safety is complementary to volunteerism in many cases. Fire prevention and suppression are the foremost areas where volunteers are useful and plentiful. Ambulance service, crime prevention and patrol, and emergency services are also areas wherein volunteers participate strongly. Lesser areas of volunteer participation, but still of significance, include traffic control, animal control, and home safety prevention.

Local government health and human service entities use volunteers in several key areas. Volunteers assist the elderly in various capacities, provide an array of services to children, and in general provide a helping hand to those who are in need and the poor. Volunteers in the area of health and human services are reported “to find their work and contributions highly satisfying and are eager to volunteer and volunteer often.”

Volunteers in localities contribute much also to parks and recreation. Beautification efforts are favorite areas for volunteerism. Upkeep and decoration of public spaces by volunteers assist in seasonal events and help local governments build and nurture community enthusiasm. Public facilities (e.g., auditoriums) benefit from volunteers as well. Many volunteers also participate in the planning and operation of cultural and art programs within local settings.

Finally, volunteers are enlisted to assist local government in a few activities that may be termed “administrative” or “support-related.” Such volunteerism may be found in any local government office setting, depending on whether or not local governments actively welcome and seek out such voluntary support. Welcome centers are one venue for volunteers as are other support activities that require (direct) public contact.<sup>58</sup>

*Specific examples of local volunteerism.* Virginia Beach, Virginia, a favorite east coast resort city, utilizes volunteers extensively in its recreational programs. Over 3,000 volunteers provide a host of services, including the coordination of athletic or sporting activities. Since the mid-1950s, the City of Virginia Beach has been supported by volunteers who—for example—coach, officiate, and provide playing-field maintenance. In addition to these types of recreational activities, volunteers also have aided the city through garden clubs, crafts and sewing programs, and “therapeutic activities” such as swimming, yoga, and dancing. All volunteers are supervised and evaluated by paid city workers, and depending on the type of voluntary activity, some volunteers receive special training.<sup>59</sup>

Another example of volunteerism in Virginia Beach involves area libraries. Volunteers are especially helpful to libraries and serve in many capacities such as aides, technicians,

and reference specialists. Many library aides in Virginia Beach, for example, are skilled in providing services to the blind. Others are trained in the special needs of children and children services. Overall, volunteers who serve in libraries are generally considered extremely beneficial since funding for salaried library personnel is often limited.<sup>60</sup>

New Orleans, Louisiana, offers another approach to local volunteerism. It created a centralized, city-wide agency to coordinate its volunteer programs across a range of municipal services. Called the Volunteers in Government Responsibility (VIGOR),<sup>61</sup> this agency coordinates several thousand volunteers among some 100+ city agencies and departments. VIGOR places volunteers in jobs ranging from research projects to social service activities to child advocacy programs. VIGOR also supports a group of volunteers that can be sent out readily to city agencies when a need for volunteers presents itself. Finally, VIGOR has an ongoing recruitment process, a structured interview procedure, and offers orientation and training as needed.<sup>62</sup>

The human resources office for the City of Arvada, Colorado, also runs a city-wide volunteer program. This program not only coordinates volunteer efforts for local government but also actively assists non-profit organizations with finding volunteers. For example, volunteers work with Arvada's police department in crime prevention and data entry or record keeping. Volunteers additionally assist the city's finance, personnel, and center for cultural affairs in various operations and services.

#### *The State of Texas—A Case Study in Volunteerism*

One of the most comprehensive studies about volunteerism, within the framework of a state government, was completed in 2002 by the Texas Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service and the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service, a unit of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs. The study's report, entitled *Investing in Volunteerism*, surveyed 18 Texas agencies and departments as to their usage and coordination of volunteers. With a response rate of 91 %, several significant findings were made, including:

- In 2001, more than 218,000 Texans provided in excess of 2,762,000 hours of service to 18 state agencies. The value of this contribution exceeds \$35 million.
- In addition to providing direct service, volunteers raised more than \$7 million in cash and in-kind contributions.
- Volunteers provide an important alternative approach to service delivery by increasing the effectiveness of government while leveraging and extending scarce resources.
- Through community and faith-based volunteers in Texas agencies, children and seniors are safe and cared for, parks are clean, historic sites are preserved, prisoners are visited, our cultural heritage is celebrated, relationships are formed, and many other needed services are rendered.

- Volunteers are enhancing Texas government programs and services in more than 100 different service assignments. Volunteers contribute technical, professional, and support services.
- The most effective engagement of volunteers in state agencies is a centralized organizational model in which an agency has a dedicated office [to engage citizen volunteers in assisting the agency and its mission].<sup>63</sup>

It is these findings and others that appear to make several strong statements as to the value and importance of volunteerism in governmental operations and programs. It suggests that “volunteers provide patent economic savings; that volunteers boost the quality and capacity of service delivery; that volunteers individualize and generally enhance the quality government programs; and, that volunteers improve government’s relations with the community.”<sup>64</sup>

### *History of Volunteerism in Texas*

Texas has a relatively long history of volunteerism as relates to its many state agencies and departments. For instance, in 1951 a group of women from Terrell, Texas initiated a volunteer program to support the state’s mental hospitals. From this initial effort, other similar volunteer programs affiliated with state mental health facilities began to flourish. By 1958, the Volunteer Services State Council (VSSC) had come into existence, a non-profit organization that coordinated with the state’s departments of mental health and mental retardation. Currently, 22 chapters of the VSSC provide voluntary assistance to a host of state programs associated with the treatment of mental illness and associated disabilities.

Another example of a volunteer program connected to the state government of Texas, historically speaking, is Texas’ Adopt-A-Highway program, which began in 1987. Since its inception, it has been replicated in 47 other states. Of interest is the fact that it has been estimated that the 17 year-old adopt-a-highway program has contributed to a total of “12.5 million hours of volunteer service valued at \$102.9 million.”<sup>65</sup>

Coinciding with these and other state-sponsored programs, is the history of federal contributions to volunteerism in the State of Texas. The Domestic Volunteer Act of 1973, for example, was the original legislation that established the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). VISTA has had a major impact on many impoverished Texans over the last three decades, and continues today under the auspices of the federally-sponsored Corporation for National and Community Service to provide job training and other vital services to help the poor. Of course, other federal programs (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, etc.) are today aiding Texans at both the state and local levels of government through a variety of voluntary initiatives.

### *Centralized Voluntary Units: Key Texas Agencies*

A centralized organizational unit, dedicated to volunteerism, within a state government agency or department is a fairly common occurrence. Generally, this consists of a specialized state agency unit that coordinates all recruitment, training, and placement of volunteers. This centralized unit for volunteerism is staffed by at least one full-time staff person, and often, other supporting permanent staff specializing in varied aspects of volunteerism. Such centralized units generally have system-wide support and established collaborative arrangements among compatible non-profits and community-level programs. Centralized units also tend to benefit more in terms of fiscal support from federal and state funding sources.

In Texas, four state agencies represent this centralized model of volunteerism. These agencies include the Office of the Attorney General (OGA), the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, and the Texas Youth Commission.

*Agency Example 1.* Within the Office of the Attorney General is the Child Support Division (CSD). Two important goals of the CSD are “to inform the public of child support enforcement” and “to recruit volunteers to serve in their field offices to assist with this responsibility.” In FY 2001, OGA recruited 65 CSD volunteers who provided 81,563 hours of service, which equates to a monetary value of \$1.1 million.<sup>66</sup> According to observers, this volunteer effort has been critical to the overall provision of child support in the State of Texas.

*Agency Example 2.* The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDJC) has a centralized organizational unit that coordinates volunteers for several vital service areas. TDJC provides for voluntary services in education, job skills, and parenting. Other services provided by volunteers to TDJC detainees include drug and alcohol rehabilitation, religious programs, counseling, and mentoring. In FY 2001, 25,000 volunteers gave of 500,000 hours of service with an estimated value of some \$8 million.<sup>67</sup>

*Agency Example 3.* A central office staffed by four full-time employees coordinates the volunteer unit of the Texas Department of Metal Health and Retardation. Assisted by other staff throughout the department, volunteers participate in numerous capacities ranging from counseling to education to food services to transportation. FY 2001 saw more than 2,800 Texans volunteer, providing some 180,000 hours of service to mental health and disabled patients.

*Agency Example 4.* Lastly, the Texas Youth Commission’s (TYC) central volunteer unit manages volunteer programs to assist young people in dozens of key areas. Mentoring, educational and recreational programs, fund-raising, and a host of other youth service areas are coordinated by trained volunteers. Greater than 2,000 volunteers served the TYC in 2001.

### *Texas Volunteers and Their Work*

Given this scale of volunteerism in Texas, two important questions present themselves. Who are these volunteers and, in general, what kinds of work do they perform? To answer this two-part question, the Texas Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service and the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service asked 18 Texas agencies specific questions, in their 2002 comprehensive survey, as to the demographic profile of volunteers and the kinds of work they contributed. The responses are of interest and, in the main, informative.

First, a review of youth volunteers (persons up to age 18) is revealing. Generally speaking, opportunities for youth volunteering are limited. Some state agencies in Texas will not accept persons 18 or younger as volunteers, including the Department of Criminal Justice, the Youth Commission, the Commission on Arts, and a few others. Young people (up to the age 18) do volunteer for a number of agencies and the jobs they perform are several and varied. “Service learning” participation is high as are summer camp and recreational service-oriented programs.

College students are engaged considerably more than youth volunteers. For example, the Student and Volunteer Efforts (SAVE) program, recruits student volunteers possessing a “social services curricula or study area” to work with the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. The Office of the Attorney General and the Department of Mental Health and Retardation also actively enlist the help of college students and interns. Generally, areas of voluntary work responsibilities include counselors, rehabilitation, clean-up, record-keeping, recreational services and health services.<sup>68</sup>

Adults make up the overwhelming share of volunteering Texans in service to state government agencies and programs. For instance, senior volunteers work heavily with the Texas State Library and the Archives Commission. They are involved in the talking books program, document restoration, and genealogical services programs. In administrative areas, adult volunteers provide clerical duties, customer service, and website development and support. In client service areas, adults act as advocates, instruct in music and the arts, visit homes, repair clothing, and mentor children.<sup>69</sup>

### *Summary Observations of the Texas Study*

The study conducted by the Texas Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service and the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service also made several summary observations related to volunteerism. These observations or conclusions are based on the overall findings in the 50-page report, *Investing in Volunteerism* (2002). A few notable conclusions include:

*Observation 1.* “Volunteers make an incredible contribution to the purposes and work of state government; e.g., delivering needed services, protecting the environment, and saving the state’s cultural heritage.”<sup>70</sup> In this regard, some systematic and comprehensive effort should be given to collecting data and monitoring the impact that volunteerism has

on the state. In this way, a clear and precise understanding can be ascertained as to volunteers and their contribution or donation of time, funds, and services.

*Observation 2.* “With increasingly limited resources, volunteers provide a highly reasonable alternative to service delivery and support.”<sup>71</sup> Most states have seen significant budget reductions over the past five years. These reductions have meant that fewer state employees are available to provide needed services. Volunteers can help offset this growing shortage of state workers in several areas, including administrative functions and client-oriented services.

*Observation 3.* “Volunteers should be treated well and managed capably.”<sup>72</sup> Volunteers should be extended the professional and other courtesies that are given to permanent, paid staff. Volunteers should likewise be recognized and rewarded in some way to show appreciation for their commitment and performance. Observers agree that “full-time, paid staff should manage carefully volunteers and assess their effort, productivity, and overall contribution to agency or departmental goals.”

*Observation 4.* “Innovative volunteer programs should be studied and study findings should publicized.”<sup>73</sup> Many volunteer programs associated with state and local governments are exceptional and have been recognized as such. State and local officials should aggressively pursue the publicity of these exceptional programs so that other governments across the U.S. can replicate and benefit from their extraordinary processes, procedures, and outcomes.

*Observation 5.* “Adequate infrastructure (organization) is important to the development of any voluntary initiative.”<sup>74</sup> Volunteer programs should be well staffed and financed. Recruitment procedures should be developed, as should adequate training for volunteers. Proper placement of volunteers within suitable service areas should be practiced and the supervision of volunteers should be thoroughly and completely exercised by qualified staff.

### *Conclusion*

In this monograph, volunteerism has been succinctly examined so that its importance or contribution to organizations in delivering needed services to people might be highlighted. Volunteers have a tremendous impact on aiding those in need. America has a strong ethic and long history of volunteerism. The hungry are fed, those who cannot read are taught, those that are sick are cared for, and the land is protected and nurtured.

More specifically this monograph has offered a glimpse of the meaning and benefits of volunteerism, the extent and kind of volunteerism experienced in the U.S., the model organizational structures that provide opportunities for volunteers, and an overview of volunteerism within the public sector.

In sum, state and local governments benefit from volunteerism, as do the Americans they serve. This can be measured in dollars and cents, but more significantly, it can be felt in

the pride and self-satisfaction of those who freely offer their time and efforts to volunteering. And even of greater consequence, the recipients of volunteer efforts—those who are assisted or helped in some way—are the ones that experience the greatest of humanitarian rewards.

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- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Independent Sector. Retrieved January 9, 2004 from <http://www.independentsector.org/PDFs/GV01keyfind.pdf>.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> McGuckin, F. (1998). *Volunteerism*. New York, NY: The H.W. Wilson Company, p. 85. McGuckin points out that the definition of "volunteers" for the Independent Sector includes "volunteers at theaters, museums and other cultural institutions, and informal volunteering like baby-sitting and baking cookies for a school or fair."
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Valente, C. and Manchester, L. (1989). "Volunteers," *Service delivery in the 90s: Alternative approaches for local governments*. A Special Report edited by C. Farr. New York, NY: ICMA, pp. 46-57.
- <sup>23</sup> This may take the form of a special task force of volunteers.
- <sup>24</sup> Op. cit. Valente, C. and Manchester, L. (1989).
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