

UP NEXT MONTH:

Youth Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector

U.S. VOLUNTEER STATISTICS
Giving USA Foundation | Giving USA 2014

- 64.5 million U.S. adult residents volunteered in 2012.
- Total volunteer hours by adults living in the United States amounted to 7.9 billion hours (equivalent to \$175 billion contributed to charities and communities across the nation in 2012).
- Greatest percentage of volunteers: ages 35–44 (15.5 percent) and 45–57 (14.7 percent). More than a quarter of U.S. residents older than 55 volunteered in 2012.
- Volunteers during 2012 were most involved in the following institutions:
 - Religious (34.2 percent)
 - Educational (26.5 percent)
 - Social service organizations (14.4 percent)

ASU Lodestar Center

- 24.6 percent of Arizona residents volunteered 171 million hours of service in 2010. The estimated worth of these volunteer services is \$3.6 million.



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Harnessing the Power of Volunteers

Executives sitting on nonprofit boards should consider volunteers as a way to aid the nonprofit's cause and cash flow.

by Laurel Kimball

▶ Volunteers are everywhere — sorting donations at food banks, tutoring children at local schools and greeting visitors at the zoo. They play an integral role in nonprofits across America, guiding tours at museums, visiting the sick at hospitals and wielding hammers for Habitat for Humanity. They also are active behind the scenes, serving on boards and committees, and even conducting sophisticated long-term project assistance.

Their feet-on-the-ground presence and behind-the-scenes support of a nonprofit organization's mission play another significant role: Volunteers can bolster the nonprofit's financial health. "By serving as an unpaid work force, volunteers help nonprofits meet their mission and service delivery more efficiently by significantly reducing the bottom-line costs," says Rhonda Oliver, president and CEO of HandsOn Greater Phoenix, a nonprofit volunteer management organization.

They also serve as exemplary ambassadors, through word of mouth and social media communications, lending a unique and heartfelt perspective about an organization's mission. What's more, they frequently turn into donors. "Their closeness to the mission and understanding of the resource constraints of an organization make them ideal investors," says Oliver.

But how does the nonprofit mobilize those volunteer troops and ensure their efficiency? In a word: strategy.

"Organizations must be strategic in their volunteer engagement," says Oliver. "Assess organizational needs and develop opportunities that specifically meet those needs. Volunteers can do anything, so engage them in ways that help you deliver your mission more efficiently."

That strategy should also include the appointment of a leader to coordinate volunteer opportunities. This paid employee or board member will assist with the scheduling and training of volunteers and help develop the necessary policies and guidelines for volunteer staff; ensure liability coverage is in place; and determine how many hours volunteers will work, what tools the nonprofit will provide to volunteers, what the nonprofit expects of its volunteers and what clearly defined tasks are assigned to volunteers.

Establishing detailed position descriptions for every volunteer opportunity will ensure that volunteers have a good experience and help them see where their strengths can best be used. Nonprofits benefit when they strategically align volunteers based on skill sets.

Another key is to provide diverse volunteer opportunities that meet the organization's needs. Consider offering unskilled and skilled opportunities, individual and group tasks, scheduling variety, age inclusivity (especially family-friendly opportunities), and remote and on-site tasks.

And be sure to say thanks. Whether volunteers are asked to paint, plant, clean, fundraise, organize, build, plan, teach, train, mentor, cook, market or measure, let them know they are appreciated. Any volunteer engagement, from the mundane

task to the complex, can be rewarding if the volunteer understands the value or impact of the work and feels recognized for his or her contribution.

FINDING VOLUNTEERS

When a nonprofit commits to developing a volunteer program, executives serving on the board may not be sure where to begin. Where are all those volunteers, anyway? How can the nonprofit identify and reach out to them?

In Maricopa County, HandsOn Greater Phoenix is a good place to start the search. In Pima County, United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona can assist. Both organizations are part of the HandsOn Network, affiliated with Points of Light, the world's largest organization dedicated to volunteer service.

Organizations such as Experience Matters and AARP connect the skills and talents of experienced adults with the diverse needs of nonprofits through their affiliation with the national Encore Fellows program. Retired businesspeople, engineers, educators and other professionals seeking volunteer opportunities are paired with local nonprofits. AmeriCorps Vista and ASU Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation can help nonprofits identify younger volunteers and interns.

"Businesses are another largely untapped source of valuable volunteer hours for local nonprofits," says Dan McQuaid, president and CEO of OneOC, a California organization that connects volunteers from Orange County's local business community with its nonprofits. OneOC provides corporations with custom and ready-made volunteering programs designed to serve the specific needs of Orange County's nonprofits. They match corporate volunteers in nonprofit board roles, offer volunteer activities designed to also bolster leadership and team-building, and coordinate corporate volunteers on nationally recognized volunteer service days.

"The most successful nonprofit and corporate partnerships are ones that focus on the shared values of their collaboration," says McQuaid. "It is good for nonprofits, good for business and good for the community." When board members encourage their nonprofit to engage volunteers strategically, they can not only help the organization realize financial gains but also gain vocal advocates who will tell corporations, foundations and friends about the nonprofit's good work. Why not explore the possibility? ■

AARP createthegood.org/volunteer-search

ASU Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation lodestar.asu.edu

AmeriCorps VISTA

nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps/ameriCorps-vista

Encore Fellows encore.org

Experience Matters experiencemattersaz.org

HandsOn Network handsonnetwork.org

Points of Light pointsoflight.org

