

Volunteering with Your Family

by Susan J. Ellis of Energize, Inc.

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If you are like most people, there are simply too few hours in a day. You have many demands on your time, from doing what your boss wants to doing what your children want. And with all that is already filling your schedule, you can't see how you can become a volunteer, even if you want to help solve community problems.

Here's a unique idea that has many benefits: become a volunteer along with some or all of your family members!

Family volunteering can be done by the whole family together or by one parent and one child or teenager as a special "twosome" project. Or it can be several siblings together. It can involve both parents or one parent and an extended family member such as a grandparent or aunt/uncle. The mix-and-match possibilities are endless. The agency receiving your volunteer services benefits by having more helpers at one time. If you volunteer on a regular schedule and occasionally a family member cannot come one week, there are others to help fill in.

What do you gain by volunteering together as a family? First of all, you assure that elusive but much-sought goal of "quality time" with each other. You share a common bond while doing something worthwhile for others. You get to know your children in new ways, and vice versa. The process of demonstrating skills and learning new ones gives both age levels the chance to respect one another, work together toward the same goals — and have something to talk about all week!

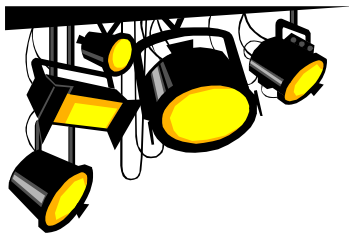
If you are already active as a volunteer somewhere, you can continue your participation with less guilt about the time you spend away from your family. Now you'll be with them — and the organizations you care about will receive even more volunteer help!

Choosing a Family Volunteer Project

Call a family meeting and take time to consider this whole idea. Make sure everyone, no matter how young, participates in the discussion. You might want to proceed this way:

1. Make a list of all the volunteering each member of the family is doing now. Would the others like to help with any of these activities?

2. What causes interest you? Allow everyone to suggest a community problem of concern to him or her. If some of the ideas intrigue the whole family, start exploring what organizations in your community are already working on these. Use the Yellow Pages, go to the library, or visit the Volunteer Center. *(Continued on page 5.)*



Spotlight on Members

Letty Barton

It seems like I have always been involved in the volunteer world. My first recollection of volunteering was when I was a young teen and my mother had me helping out at Red Cross blood drawings. Later I helped teach swimming lessons at the local pond in northern Vermont.

Career-wise I first supervised volunteers as the Activities Director at the N.H. Odd Fellows Home. Most of them were of the senior variety, and I came to realize that I truly enjoyed working with that population. They were always willing to give, and I could sense how meaningful the volunteering was to them.

When a job change seemed necessary some seventeen and a half years ago, it was a natural to become a coordinator for the Senior Companion Program of New Hampshire. As coordinator for the Concord, Manchester, Nashua, and Salem areas, it is my responsibility to recruit and train senior volunteers who then provide twenty hours a week of friendly visiting and companionship to the frail, isolated elderly in their local community.



Letty Barton

Over the years I have seen great growth in the Senior Companion Program. More importantly, I have witnessed the immense value of the service these dedicated folks provide as well as the life-changing effect it has on those enrolled as volunteers.

Outside of work I continue my volunteer activities by being a 4-H leader for twenty-five years, ringing in a handbell choir, and spending immeasurable amounts of time with my five grandsons including a set of three year old triplet boys. My family makes maple syrup every spring. In my spare time I enjoy gardening, reading, sewing and most any type of crafts.

NATIONAL DAYS OF SERVICE

Submitted by Jean Desany

Mark your calendar now for the 2002 National Days of Service that are great volunteer opportunities for yourself and/or your organization.

- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| January 21 | Martin Luther King Jr. Day | September 9-13 | United Way Day of Caring |
| April 26 - 28 | National Youth Service Days | October 26 | Make A Difference Day |
| April 21-27 | National Volunteer Week | November 23 | National Family Volunteer Day |
| June 15 | Join Hands Day | | |



Committee Reports

Program Committee -- Sue Rapter, Chair

Under the guidance of Sue Rapter, the Program Committee met recently in Concord to map out their year's agenda in hopes of better meeting NHAVA members' needs for improved and increased relevance to their work. The Committee itself formulated new ground rules for its planning meetings in terms of frequency of meeting, length of the meeting, and agenda planning. Most importantly, it was recognized that in order to function effectively, the Committee must have its full complement of members present to plan the NHAVA business meetings. Frankly, if NHAVA members have signed on to the Program Committee, then it is hoped this commitment will be carried out either by attendance at planning meetings or communicating by phone or email their task assignment. We all want dynamite business meetings that are stimulating and relevant, but without the continuing help of committed Program Committee members this won't happen.

The Program Committee will be meeting on Friday, January 4, 2002 at Dee Martin's office (669-2411) in Manchester for the express purpose of planning the whole year's program! Kristi Scarpone, Director of Development for the American Lung Association, will facilitate this meeting. Program Committee members - please bring your personal calendars so that future planning meetings can be designated prior to NHAVA's business meetings. For example, planning for the annual meeting in January 2003 will start in August 2002. The idea of spontaneous agenda-planning meetings must be changed in order to present a professional and meaningful program to our members.

Needless to say, anyone is most welcome to assist in this process. We need to hear your interests and concerns to make our programs applicable to the Volunteer Administrators of NH, while hopefully increasing and broadening our membership base.

Without Membership input we don't know what you want at NHAVA meetings. Please contact us about the information you want or need that will make your job easier, more meaningful, and fun!



Legislative Committee -- Dave Coombs, Chair

The board asked me to write a few sentences about the disaster leave law. It (SB 136) was signed into law on June 12, 2000. To my knowledge it had not been used until the 9-11 episode, but I haven't checked that with human resources folks at the state. Ken Roos, a veteran disaster action team member and former Chair of the Concord Area Disaster Committee, went to NY on paid disaster leave from his state job. His was the first from our chapter. There were at least two others in the state (from other chapters) who benefited.

The crux of the disaster leave law is that state employees, with consent from their supervisor, can volunteer for major disasters and leave their jobs for up to 15 days without sacrificing pay, allowances, or vacation time. It would be interesting to see how this has affected the Red Cross' national recruiting efforts since many other states also have similar laws for state employees. There is no disaster leave protection for federal employees, however.

(Continued on page 6.)

Cornucopia Corner

New Hampshire Association for the Blind

Submitted by Lois Carroll Powers



BUILDING A COMMUNITY —ONE VOLUNTEER AT A TIME

In the Fall of 2000, a new and enhanced Volunteer Services component of the **New Hampshire Association for the Blind (NHAB)** was inaugurated with the hiring of a Volunteer Administrator. With emphasis on the volunteer department being linked directly to program services, NHAB offers a unique approach to the delivery of state-wide volunteer services.

Building community connections one person at a time is the methodology the Association prefers in building a quality volunteer program. Current volunteer roles include In-Home Community Visitor, Community Shopper and Driver; as well as Center based volunteer assistants for the Low Vision Clinic, Technology Department, Recording Studio, and Social Work Department. Regardless of the capacity in which a volunteer serves, several key elements are important to include in the volunteer department's program design.

The first step is laying the foundation by thorough interview, orientation, and screening of individuals who wish to become volunteers. The eight-hour minimum needed to interview, orient, and train someone to become a volunteer may appear to be lengthy by some standards. However, at the New Hampshire Association for the Blind, we feel it is time well spent to ensure that a person feels competent to perform their volunteer assignment effectively. Each volunteer is also given a volunteer services description, which defines their role clearly and concisely.

A volunteer program is only successful if it truly meets the community's needs. The Association has implemented a referral system in which the first step utilizes our Social Work Department. Clients may call and request the services of a volunteer by speaking with a caseworker. After a referral is made, Volunteer Services conducts a client questionnaire where individualized volunteer needs and preferences are determined. These needs may be met through the services of a one-to-one volunteer match or by referral and/or education of community resources.

Maintaining a program often can be the most time-consuming aspect of successful volunteer recruitment and management. Time is initially spent in making the right volunteer assignment or "match." Reviewing the volunteer service description with the volunteer, client, and staff is essential to establish boundaries within which the volunteer will carry out their tasks. Constant and open communication is also important, particularly with community-based volunteers who might feel nervous or alone in their new volunteer roles. Follow-up calls to a newly-placed community volunteer are crucial to ensuring a successful client-volunteer match. By providing ongoing communication, trainings, and support, we build lasting volunteer relationships.

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NH Association of the Blind *(Continued from page 4.)*

Building a community of volunteers, one volunteer at a time, will help the Association build a strong, quality volunteer program to help sustain our work in the future. Please give **Lois Powers**, Volunteer Administrator, a call or send an email to lpowers@sightcenter.com if you would like additional information about our volunteer program.

Volunteering With Your Family *(Continued from page 1.)*

3. Also consider what types of work everyone wants to do. Make two lists: one for “Things We Know How to Do” and one for “Things We Would Like to Learn How to Do.” Make sure something is listed for each member of the family. This is a great chance to acknowledge the talents of parents and children. These lists will also prove useful when you interview with an agency.

It may take several family meetings to complete these steps, but the conversations should be very interesting! You will then be ready to offer your services as a family volunteer team. Call several organizations for appointments and screen your options. See whether the agency representatives are comfortable talking to your children as well as to the adults in the family. Does the agency have something meaningful for you to do as a group?

You may want to begin with a one-time activity. This will test the water to see how everyone likes volunteering together.

Once you have committed to a volunteer project, take it seriously. Show your children that volunteer work is important and meaningful. Talk about the activity during the week and plan ahead to do it, even when things get hectic. Some of the work may introduce your children to new ideas and possibly to people different from themselves. What a wonderful opportunity to pass along your values and ethics— but only if you take the time to talk about everyone’s reactions. You, too, may be challenged by what you experience as a volunteer. Share those feelings with your children.

If you have several children, the time may come when you want to focus on an individual son or daughter. Sharing a volunteer project as a twosome may be the key to helping each child feel special.

What about Divorced Families?

Divorce is a fact of life for a growing number of Americans and may be for you, too. And although there are many models for joint child custody arrangements, in the majority of cases one parent becomes the primary custodian of the children. If you are the non-custodial parent, you face the prospect of short-term “visits,” often over weekends or school holidays. Do you fear becoming solely a playmate in your child’s limited free time?

All of the reasons why volunteering as a family unit is a good idea go double for divorced families! By selecting a mutual volunteer project, you and your children have the chance to share something special together — something not done with the primary caregiving parent.

You have a purpose to some of your mutual time, beyond filling the hours with play. Of course the volunteering should be fun, but it has a meaning besides enjoyment. You can demonstrate values and ethics to your children, passing along important parental expectations that might not otherwise come up during an afternoon at the ballpark.

(Continued on page 6.)

Mark Your Calendar



Next Membership Meetings

April 10, 2002
July 18, 2002
October 16, 2002

Volunteering With Your Family *(Continued from page 5.)*

Non-custodial parents can lose track of how fast their children develop. By teaming up as volunteers, (you can observe your youngster's skills and personality. Similarly, your son or daughter has the opportunity to get to know you in completely new ways.

Because time is precious during a visit, you may not want to commit to a volunteer assignment requiring weekly attendance. Volunteering can be scheduled once a month or even seasonally at first. If you live in the same community as your children, it may be possible to arrange for joint volunteering at a time in addition to your predetermined visits. For example, if your child is active in a youth organization or sports league, you might become an adult volunteer and join your son or daughter at the regularly-scheduled group activities.

As children grow into teenagers, the rationale for parent/child volunteering becomes even stronger. The much-discussed "communication gap" is a problem even when a teen lives under the same roof as the adult. When a parent is separated from the daily growth process of a teenager, it is important to find ways to become re-acquainted as each new stage of maturity is reached. If the volunteer work is truly selected out of mutual interests — or perhaps in support of your child's concern for a cause — the volunteer activity becomes an anchor around which to maintain a relationship.

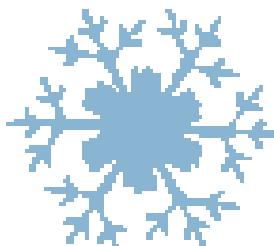
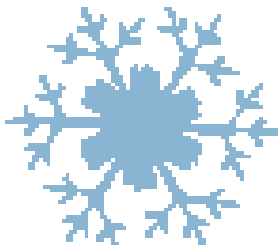
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Committee Reports *(Continued from page 3.)*

Mentor Committee

Just a reminder that the mentor program is alive and well. Please contact **Dave Coombs** at 225-6697/800 464-6692 or email coombsd@redcross-concordnh.org to sign up or for more information.

In order to continue the process of networking, the Program Committee decided that all members must wear a name badge at NHAVA meetings. These badges will be provided at the Annual Meeting. If members forget their name badge, they must contribute a door prize for the next meeting.



**DIRECTIONS TO NHAHA MEMBERSHIP
ANNUAL MEETING
January 17, 2002
Common Man Resturant in Concord**

I-93 SOUTH at Exit 13:

I-93 to exit 13; bear right (Rt.3 North)to stop sign, turn right, and the Common Man is on the right.

I-93 NORTH at Exit 13:

I-93 to exit 13; turn left after stop and after the second set of lights, the Common Man is directly on the right.

From the Seacoast:

From Route 393 to I-93 South to exit 13; bear right (Rt.3 North)to Stop Sign, Turn right and the Common Man is on the right.

From the West:

Take Highway 89 to I-93 NORTH, follow above directions from Exit 13.

*Please note the deadline for submission to the **April 2002** NHAHA News is **March 1, 2002**. Send all correspondence to Deborah Emery-Gigliotti, whose email and "snail mail" address is on this page, to the right.*

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Agenda for the Annual Meeting

8:30 - 9:00

Registration, Coffee and Muffins

9:00 - 9:30

Business Meeting

9:30 - 10:30

The Volunteer Experience (volunteers representing the American Red Cross, the NH Lung Association, and the Belknap/Merrimack Community Action Program, will inspire you!)

10:30 - 11:30

Volunteer NH!

11:30 - 1:00

Awards Luncheon

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VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATORS
(NHAHA)
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NHAVA
PO Box 3364
Concord, NH
03302-3364



**NHAVA Annual Meeting
January 17, 2002
at The Common Man, Concord, NH**

Name: _____

Please check your meal choice:

Turkey Sandwich, Salad, Soup du jour

Quiche, Salad, Soup du jour

Send this form no later than **Friday, January 4, 2002** to:
NHAVA, PO Box 3364, Concord, NH 03302-3364

Your 2002 Annual Membership must be paid to attend this meeting as this covers all costs.