

Minutes

Franklin County Volunteer Network

Friday, January 8, 2010

Mt. Blue Regional School District Administrative Offices, Mt. Blue Middle School

Present: Ashley Hutter, Community Concepts, Isaac Frith, AmeriCorps*VISTA with United Way of the Tri-Valley Area, Linda Rood, HealthReach RSVP, Crystal Cook, United Methodist Economic Ministry, Pauline Rodrigue, Mt. Blue Regional School District, Michelle Mason, VISTA member with SeniorsPlus, Trudy Hamilton, SeniorsPlus, Lana Whittemore, Abused Women's Advocacy Project, Julia Terry, Sexual Assault Victims Emergency Services, Lisa Laflin, United Way of the Tri-Valley Area

Welcome and Sharing:

Ashley Hutter: Community Concepts currently has 425 volunteer drivers serving Oxford, Franklin and Androscoggin counties. Ashley is currently focusing on training volunteers to serve the Somali community in the Lewiston area.

Isaac Frith: The Community Energy Challenge is in full swing. Interior storm windows are currently being measured, built and installed by teams of volunteers. There are currently 52 volunteers engaged.

Linda Rood: As the Field Coordinator for RSVP, Linda works with more than 350 volunteers. In 2009, Linda estimated that these volunteers had a \$970,000 impact.

Crystal Cook: Crystal said that the mission-based housing program that took place this past summer in northern Franklin County engaged volunteers from all over the country who invested 5,300 hours. Crystal currently works with numerous volunteers all year, and, aside from local community volunteers, Crystal supervises a SCSEP worker and an ASPIRE volunteer. She welcomes large groups of volunteers to help with the Economic Ministry's thrift store; she hosted 20 UMF women's soccer team members this fall, for example.

Pauline Rodrigue: Pauline recapped 2009 activity and noted that she had worked with 1,500 volunteers who contributed 25,000 hours.

Michelle Mason: Michelle is working on expanding the use of the VolunteerMaine.org website. She is actively using social networking sites to engage volunteers.

Trudy Hamilton: As Manager of Volunteers for SeniorsPlus, Trudy worked with 189 volunteers in 2009 and collaborating agencies hosted 200 additional volunteers that Trudy placed. Trudy participates on the National Association of Volunteer Managers, and has been working actively on policies, procedures and recruitment strategies at a national level.

Lana Whittemore: Lana announced that 14 volunteers have been screened for 2010 AWAP training. She currently works with 15 active volunteers; these include interns and practicum students for local universities.

Julia Terry: Julia noted that 14 SAVES volunteers contributed 7,000 hours (mostly helpline) and 12 other volunteers who helped with special events or office work contributed more than 300 hours. Julia

will be leaving SAVES this summer, and hopes to ensure that there is a “continuum of connecting in the community.”

Lisa Laflin: Continues to connect volunteers to opportunities as they contact the United Way. The United Way directly works with approximately 25 volunteers as part of its annual fundraising campaign and allocation process. Numerous other volunteers are also engaged. The United Way is currently working with two UMF interns, a VISTA member, and an ASPIRE worker.

Training Busy Staff to Succeed with Volunteers (Session II)

Trudy Hamilton facilitated part two of our tour through Betty Stalling’s training manual. This presentation focused on gaining staff commitment to the volunteer program, building staff competence, and the basics of good training. We also skipped ahead in the tutorial to review how to craft effective position descriptions because this had been discussed at a previous meeting and participants had brought samples of their description with them. Trudy noted:

- There is often resistance to volunteer programs due to job insecurity. Staff may feel like they are giving up control. This can translate into overt sabotage of the program to subtle erosion of the program and investment in volunteerism. To counter this, these resistant staff must have influence and ownership in the program. The first step is to work with the executive staff of the organization to ensure a vision of the volunteer program is developed and then supported so support of volunteers becomes clearly understood and part of the organization’s culture.
- (Discussion veered a bit here, and Trudy noted that volunteers can contribute so much to an organization, and we should not forget to solicit them when fundraising. Volunteers will often make a significant investment in time as well as money. This is important to build a long-term, multi-faceted relationship with your volunteers. It also helps staff embrace volunteers as important components of your organization.)
- Make sure there is complete clarity about who the volunteer reports to and what the role of the volunteer is. Confusion leads to a lack of support, and a less than meaningful experience for the volunteer. An organizational chart should be provided to facilitate this discussion, and ensure the volunteer feels part of a larger effort.
- Make sure staff who work with volunteers are formally recognized. Staff investment often goes unnoticed and needs to be applauded to build support for volunteer programs.
- Make sure staff understands their responsibilities, and support their learning and growth as staff may not feel that they are competent volunteer managers.

Position Descriptions

Position descriptions from Network participants were shared and reviewed. After refining their position descriptions based on collective feedback and new information, it was decided that members would forward their descriptions to Lisa and she would circulate them, and post them all on the United Way website under the volunteer section.

Key points to consider when crafting position descriptions:

- Put your organization's mission statement on the description to ensure volunteer understands the relevance of the position and the "mission fit."
- Include purpose, results, measurements, qualifications, suggested activities, supervision, and don't forget to include the benefits to the volunteer!
- If you use volunteer application forms, rename them volunteer interest forms.

The segments of Betty Stallings training guide that are discussed at meetings, will also be available online.

Other

Lisa discussed the upcoming launch of the "Food Pantry Project." She was encouraged to check with local Girl Scouts and Sean Minear (MB RSU National Honor Society) for collaboration. The Resource Network will endorse the project, but not directly take on the responsibility of coordination. Lisa will, however, be collaborating individually with HealthReach RSVP.

It was noted that a good opportunity for individuals to connect with University of Maine at Farmington students is coming up on February 11. Chad Duncan, UMF professor is coordinating a Community Resource Fair. His contact information is: jchad.duncan@maine.edu Office phone: 207-778-7166

Looking Ahead:

(All meetings are held at the Mt. Blue Middle School in the conference room of the administrative offices. Entrance is to the left of the school, across from the bus garage.)

February 12

Making the best of your volunteer program by using Social Networking sites

March 12

Special guest: Maine Commission for Community Service Representative

Questions, such as the following, will be asked to inform the Commission's current strategic planning process.

- What's going on around you that impacts your organization's ability to carry out its program mission?
- What trends have occurred that impact your volunteer program?
- What forces will influence your volunteer program in the next five years?

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Laflin

Executive Director

United Way of the Tri-Valley Area