

Minutes
Franklin County Volunteer Network

Friday, November 13, 2009, University of Maine at Farmington

Present: Dennis O'Neil, Janet Smith, Linda Rood, Issac Frith, Nancy Teel, Glen Gordon, Pauline Rodrigue

Community Energy Challenge

Nancy Teel described the Community Energy Challenge which is funded via a grant to the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area from the Maine Commission for Community Service's Maine HEARTH project. The focus of the project is to engage homeowners and volunteers to measure build and install interior storm window panels in Greater Franklin County. An initial training in Farmington had 30 in attendance. The project has been piloted at 82 High Street in Farmington, with expansion plans underway. There has been considerable promotion to the general public, including a flyer has gone out to LIHEAP clients to inform them of the opportunity. Linda Rood will send out information in RSVP's newsletter. The project will expand even further as windows become available from MaineHousing. These windows are made by inmates at the Maine State Prison. Nancy is actively seeking volunteers to become involved, and she is particularly interested in engaging homeowners who are receiving the windows to sustain the project. This prompted a discussion about generally engaging those being helped through various projects. Removing barriers such as childcare and transportation were mentioned, as was developing a "Buddy System" where one volunteer recruits another based on his or her positive experiences. Being mindful of opportunities for home-bound seniors was also mentioned.

Volunteer Opportunities

Lisa shared two volunteer opportunities with the group.

- LEAP has a new day program and has a client who has volunteered in the past and is anxious to be involved in the community. She is deaf, works with a signer, and is assisted by a LEAP worker; she has previously worked with older adults and animals. For more information contact LEAP at 755-1900 or 755-1700 and ask for Rebecca Yarborough.
- Lisa was contacted by Louse Earle in regards to a New Vineyard resident who is working with the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). She is available to work for a non-profit organization in the region. She is paid by SCSEP. For more information contact Louise Sale at 624-5151.

Working with ASPIRE Program participants and Community Service volunteers

A discussion in regards to the challenges and opportunity of working with ASPIRE and Community Service volunteers (those mandated by the court to perform service) resulted in the following points:

- The expectations of case workers often exceeds the site's capabilities, interest, or supervision capacity.
- It is sometimes difficult to find enough skill-appropriate work to make it a rewarding experience for both parties

- Many of volunteers from these situations do not have an adequate support system so crises are often a challenge that affects the ability of the individual to volunteer. This includes childcare, transportation, ect.
- School systems, and other non-profits have particular challenges ensuring confidentiality

It was agreed that while there are significant challenges, there are opportunities as well. The United Way will continue to act as a clearinghouse for those who contact the United Way looking for meaningful volunteer experiences. She will also refer to VolunteerMaine.org.

Volunteer Incentive/Recognition

The topic of appropriately recognizing volunteers continued to be discussed. While it was noted that 90% of volunteers don't want recognition, it continues to be an important investment for volunteer managers.

- Sporadic hand-written notes are effective, as are practical, inexpensive but useful items.
- Lisa Suggested the group develop a Community Cares card. Local businesses can offer a discount on services/items, and these opportunities can be featured in small blocked around a wallet-sized card. Linda Rood agreed to work with Lisa on this concept.
- There are opportunities to recognize volunteers through the media. It was agreed that Lisa will collect stories and publish these items via an article series in local papers, the web, and radio shows. Each member of the Network will send an article to Lisa at lisa@uwtva.org. Articles should also feature a picture of the volunteer being recognized, as well as contact information.

Updates

- Stuff the Bus- 35 boxes of school supplies were delivered throughout Greater Franklin County
- Flu Shots- went well in Mt. Blue RSD. Very effective coordination and engagement by many volunteers.
- Technology Survey- In an effort to increase our capacity to use technology to engage volunteer (board members from very rural regions, for example), the Network is interested in identifying technology that can facilitate this.
 - Skype will be explored
 - Pauline will check with Mt. Blue RSD regarding its technology capacity and access by the public
 - Janet will connect with Women, Work, and Community to better understanding its state-wide efforts regarding using technology
 - The conversation turned on using Facebook and other social networking sites. This will continue to be a topic of conversation.

UMF Internships/Practicum Students

Lisa spoke of new opportunities being developed with the University of Maine, Farmington. She will keep the group updated, as discussions continue.

Project INVEST

Information on Project Invest was distributed. Project INVEST is a new initiative of the Maine Commission for Community Service to offer professional training for managers of volunteers at all skill levels across the state. Tuition support is available. Contact Elizabeth Cole at 287-6718 or Elizabeth.cole@maine.gov for more information.

Community Impact Award

The United Way of the Tri-Valley Area is again honoring a community member or group with a Community Impact Award. UWTVA invites recommendations. Please contact Lisa to recommend a recipient.

Warming Centers

Warming Centers will once again open in Farmington, January- March. New this year will be a Warming Center in Wilton and Salem! More details, including times and a calendar will be forthcoming.

In closing, Janet reminded the group that the **Western Maine CA\$H Coalition is seeking volunteers again to help with volunteer tax preparation.** Last year, more than \$400,000 in tax return dollars was brought back to this region via this program.

Meetings for the first half of 2010 will be from 8:00-9:30 at new meeting location: The Superintendent's administrative Offices at Mt. Blue Middle School. (Park across from Bus Garage and enter in the door that is on the left side of the Middle School.)

Meeting dates are:

January 8

February 12

March 12

April 9

May 14

June 11

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Laflin
Executive Director
United Way of the Tri-Valley Area