

Minutes

Franklin Volunteer Network, May 8, 2009

Present: Lana Whittemore, Abused Women's Advocacy Project, Al Feather, Farmington Rotary, Janet Smith, Women, Work & Community, Janis Walker, Healthy Community Coalition, Trudy Hamilton, SeniorsPlus, Lisa Laflin, United Way of the Tri-Valley Area, Pauline Rodrigue, MSAD #9, Judy Rawlings, Sexual Assault Victims Emergency Services, Cindy Brophy, Western Maine Community Action, Judith Frost, Western Maine Community Action, Tania Gage, Western Maine Community Action, Becky Perkins, University Maine Farmington, Ruth St. Amand, HealthReach RSVP, Glenn Gordon, Community Concepts Transportation, Pam West, Farmington Rotary, Joyce King, Farmington Rotary, Dennis O'Neil, Farmington Rotary

Welcome and Introductions

Lisa Laflin (United Way) opened the meeting and welcomed all. She noted that this was collaboration with Pauline Rodrigue and MSAD #9. She said she was thrilled with the turnout at this initial meeting and particularly pleased with the diversity of organizations and interests represented around the table. Each person in attendance then introduced him or herself and briefly described their experience with managing volunteers, or volunteering themselves.

Challenges and opportunities to working with volunteers

Group members discussed a number of issues of concern including:

- Can't seem to find enough volunteers
- Confidentiality – need volunteers but have confidential information in setting. Training is time consuming and it takes a significant amount of trust to believe volunteers will hold information in confidence despite signing a form indicating their agreement
- Turnover of volunteers for those who are engaged in long-term projects (like Operation Santa Claus). It is hard to keep people from year to year and it is difficult to train large numbers of volunteers each year. It's like starting from scratch.
- Time and supervision requirements. It takes a lot of time to effectively recruit, train and supervise volunteers and many are in small offices wearing multiple hats.
- Having sites value volunteers.
- Volunteers not being utilized well – volunteers feeling disengaged because they were not given a meaningful experience.
- We need to encourage volunteers to see the value in what they are doing and that they can translate their experiences to a job search, educational pursuit, or other opportunities. (Resume builder.)
- Volunteers willing to work on weekends as well as sites to accommodate weekend volunteers

- When we are recruiting volunteers, are we thinking about the connection the volunteers have with the service they are providing? We need to look at their investment – what drives them and how can we fuel their passion.
- We should look at the ASPIRE program more closely and see what the requirements are and how we can communicate opportunities through ASPIRE
- When volunteers are able to give additional hours but the host site doesn't have any more projects, it would be good to network with other organizations to let them know of the volunteer's availability

Operation Santa Overview – Opportunities for Collaboration

Operation Santa was started in 1972, so it has had a long history of serving families over the holidays. This year 1,000 families were served in Franklin County. The group discussed the plans for this year for Operation Santa, and how the Network could support this important holiday gift giving effort. Western Maine Community Action will again coordinate the program. Suggestions and observations included:

- Having unwrapped gifts set aside to be able to serve those who missed the deadline
- Explore ways to integrate more with United Methodist Economic Ministry and other initiatives taking place at the same time
- Publicize the need for gifts and the application deadline much earlier. (Send applications with LIHEAP applications.)
- Good volunteer training is needed.
- Add an area on the application for people to indicate how they might want to give back.
- Encourage all Network members to be aware of the program and that any help with gift solicitation from now until December is appreciated.
- Judy Frost noted that there is very little left in inventory from last year and UMF students were very helpful in storing things.
- It was mentioned that it would be good to involve UMF students in the process but expand their role from wrapping to sorting and other skilled projects

Month of Caring

Those in attendance agreed that a Month of Caring would be a good initiative for the Volunteer Network to be engaged in. This is an expansion of UMF's Month of Service spearheaded so effectively by Becky Perkins. The goal is to have organizations and agencies identify volunteer opportunities that already exist and promote them via a public awareness/media campaign that showcases volunteer opportunities and demonstrates the value of volunteering. The Month of Caring will be held in September; UMF's weekend service opportunities with students will be one of the volunteer initiatives anchoring the Month. New efforts can also be initiated during this month

Next Steps

Members present agreed that they would like to meet and officially re-launch the Franklin Volunteer Network. There was considerable energy and motivation to continue the momentum from this first

meeting. Becky Perkins volunteered to host future meetings at UMF. Meetings will be monthly in the beginning, particularly as we head into a Month of Caring in September. The next meeting will be 8 am, June 12, 2009.

Respectfully Submitted

Lisa Laflin
United Way of the Tri-Valley Area