



Age is Just a Number; How Organizations Can Help Older Volunteers Reap the Rewards



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Discussion Group

1. Who in this room utilizes volunteers that are 60 or better?
2. Those of you who don't why not?
3. Those of you who do, what are some of the volunteer jobs that they do?
4. What do you feel are some areas that you perceive someone over 60 not being able to participate in? If any.

Utilizing Time and Talents of Older Adults



Why Utilize Older Adult & Senior Volunteers?

- They have substantial knowledge, skills & abilities to share
- May be retired or considering ways to fill their time after they retire
- Often have flexible schedules

Where Can You Find Them?

- Churches
- Companies and institutions with retirees
- Long term care and assisted living facilities
- Manufactured Home Communities
- Seniors' Centers
- Senior Housing Facilities

What Kind of Volunteer Opportunities Might Interest Them?

- Contributing to a non profit board or committee
- Teaching, mentoring, or tutoring young people
- Visiting with seniors
- Making or repairing toys or clothing



What Kind of Volunteer Opportunities Might Interest Them?

- Providing computer or office assistance to a non profit agency or organization
- Community theatre, museums, and musical groups and programs.
- Driving people to appointments or delivering Meals on Wheels



How can your organization prepare to work with older adult & senior volunteers?

- Don't assume that a volunteer wants to do the same kind of work they did in their paid employment. Ask them what they want from their volunteer experience.
- Make the most of their skills. Ask current volunteers if they feel their time and abilities are being put to the best use.
- Unwillingness to make a year round commitment is a big reason people give for not volunteering, or for not volunteering more than they already did. By offering short term and flexible volunteer positions, your organization can appeal to those who cannot or do not wish to volunteer all year long.
- Be ready. Older adult and senior volunteers expect to have meaningful, purposeful work when they volunteer. Make sure the position is properly resourced, with the goal or task clearly outlined.

How can your organization appeal to older adult & senior volunteers ?

Show them that volunteering allows the individual to:

- Give back to their community and society as a whole
- Support causes they believe in
- Put their skills and experience to use for the benefit of others
- Share the knowledge and experience they gained during their careers
- Connect with people who have similar interests and/or values
- Take on new challenges and try things they have not done before because they were too busy working
- Keep their minds, bodies, and spirits active and healthy

The Health Benefits of Volunteering for Older Americans





The Health Benefits of Volunteering for Older Americans

KEY FINDINGS FROM SELECTED RESEARCH:

Previous research has shown that volunteers live longer. This was observed in volunteers age 70 and older (Luoh and Herzog, 2002; Harris and Thoresen, 2005) and, in a more recent national study, among volunteers who were 50 and older (Lee et al 2010). A study of Americans over age 60 found that those who volunteer reported lower disability and higher levels of well-being relative to non-volunteers.

Research Implications

- Efforts should be made to engage populations that could benefit the most from volunteering or are underrepresented among current volunteers, including low-income individuals and people with disabilities including seniors.
- Volunteering can provide a sense of purpose and future outreach should include older adults undergoing transitions such as unemployment, retirement, or the loss of a spouse.
- For those living in rural areas, volunteering can provide an important way to stay connected and active. Programs for older Americans should include volunteer opportunities in rural areas and consider ways to lower the barriers to volunteering, such as stipends that can reimburse the cost of transportation.

Research Implications

- Adoption of key practices, such as matching volunteers with appropriate and challenging assignments, providing professional development opportunities for volunteers, and treating volunteers as valued partners, can help build organizational capacity to recruit and retain boomer volunteers.
- Marketing and recruitment efforts should reference the potential health benefits of volunteering, but researchers/medical community should consider designing health interventions based on volunteering.
- National days of service, including the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service and the September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance, can be an effective way to introduce new volunteers in service activities that can turn into a long-term commitment.



2016 Signature Days of Service

- [9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance](#) September 11, 2016
- [Make a Difference Day](#)-October 26, 2016
- [Veteran's Day](#)-November 11, 2016
- [Family Volunteer Day](#)-November 29, 2016



2017 Signature Days of Service

- [MLK Day](#) - January 17, 2017
- [National Volunteer Week](#) - April 23-29, 2017
- [9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance](#) - September 11, 2017
- [Make A Difference Day](#) - October 28, 2017
- [Family Volunteer Day](#) - November 18, 2017



Identifying Barriers

- Cultural myths and perceptions that old age is a time for relaxation, not learning or contribution.
- Lack of confidence in their ability to contribute -- inability to translate their life experiences and skills to a particular program's needs.
- Fear about safety, such as having to use public transportation, go into a stranger's home, and concerns about drugs and crime associated with teens or low-income populations.
- Difficulties with transportation.





Identifying Barriers

- Financial issues, including concerns that expenses associated with volunteering may strain their already limited financial resources.
- Competition for volunteers is yet another obstacle; it is likely that many other organizations are trying to recruit the same "volunteer-minded" older adults that you are targeting. In addition, baby boomers are staying in the workforce longer, or returning to it after retirement, thus limiting the time they have available to volunteer.
- Physical limitations, such as illnesses or lack of energy.



Closer Look at Physical Limitations/Disabilities

Sensitivity Training Exercise:



Blindness

Dexterity



Sensitivity Training





[Optional] Checklist for Station Accessibility

This questionnaire is designed to allow evaluation of the overall accessibility of the ABC RSVP program by looking at where we send volunteers to serve. It is not meant to eliminate stations for possible placement of RSVP volunteers but to provide information needed to match volunteers with volunteer stations.

Organization Name _____

		No	Yes	Comments
1	Is there a flat, non-gravel route from parking/street through the front entrance? Does the parking lot have spaces reserved for persons with disabilities?			
2	Are doors (entrance, rest room, etc.) no heavier to open than refrigerator door? Are door knobs throughout push/pull or lever-type, not twist knobs?			
3	Are halls and passageways at least one yard wide? Are they level, with non-slip stable surfaces and no trip hazards?			
4	Are there no steps without alternate routes (elevators, ramps, other entrance) available? Are stairs of uniform heights?			
5	Is there adequate maneuvering clearance at entrances, especially rest rooms?			
6	Does an accessible restroom have an accessible stall 5' x 5'? (There are other legal configurations, but check to see if a person in a wheelchair can close the door)			
7	Does an accessible restroom have a sink with level faucets, hot water pipes wrapped to prevent burns, and paper towels lowered?			
8	Are emergency alarms both audible and visual? Are evacuation plans and areas of rescue assistance accessible to individuals with mobility impairments?			
9	Do policies, practices or standards – either formal or informal- have the direct or indirect effect of excluding or limiting the participation of individuals with disabilities in your organization's program or activities?			
10	Do policies exist that ensure that a "reasonable accommodation" is made to individuals, including volunteers, with disabilities?			

Name/Signature of person completing checklist

Date

Managing Limitations-Physical

- Although older volunteers have many similarities to their younger colleagues, they may also bring with them physical or other limitations that need to be accommodated. Potential volunteers just need to be candid with the volunteer coordinator about what they can do and what they can't. Make it safe, make it comfortable for the volunteers to say 'I have a limitation' without feeling like they can't volunteer or that they're going to be a drag on the project.
- Ask the volunteers what they would like to do, rather than assigning them a task that they may not feel comfortable with. Say something along the lines of, 'You know, this job involves a lot of standing. Is that something you think you would like? I know my feet are always tired at the end of the day, so personally I would want a job that involved a chair. This approach is respectful and friendly, and lets them know that we have similar limitations.'

Managing Limitations-Physical

- What can someone do who is bedbound? (A intergenerational gardening project in a Boulder nursing home once involved every resident by asking those in bed to "plant sit" seedlings in cups.)
- Since some volunteers reach their 80's by "aging in place" (meaning they started with us at a younger age and just keep going), how do we find attractive and genuinely useful projects to transition them away from what they can no longer do into what they can?

Managing Limitations-Other

- How can we solve the transportation problem for people who have given up cars and driving? If we can work out methods to bring seniors to medical care, why not to volunteer work that keeps minds healthy?
- How can we bring meaningful work to homebound or less mobile elders? How will this problem change as people age with computer skills/access?



Retention of Senior Volunteers: Providing a Sense of Control to Volunteers

“When we talk about giving volunteers a sense of control, we are talking about giving them the authority to think, the authority to plan and evaluate their work, the authority to decide what to do. The volunteer has a degree of autonomy in determining what they do and how they go about doing it. With this authority the individual or team of volunteers not only does the work but can also play some part in deciding how to do it.”

Retention of Senior Volunteers: Providing a Sense of Control to Volunteers

“By “empowering” volunteers, we mean making them more autonomous, more capable of independent action. The wisdom of this approach is that it is easier to get good results from empowered people than from people who are dependent. We can do this by giving them authority to decide, within limits, how they will go about achieving the results for which they are responsible.

Retention of Senior Volunteers: Providing a Sense of Control to Volunteers

“In such a relationship, the manager becomes a source of help for the volunteer rather than a controller or a goad. This not only feels better for the volunteer but allows the manager to spend less time making decisions about the volunteer’s work and more time to think strategically, to concentrate on grasping the opportunities that will never be seen if she is mired in the muck of day-to-day detail. It also gives her time to work with other staff of the agency on how to improve their involvement of volunteers.”

List of FL Senior Corps Programs



- Partner with Retired and Senior Volunteer Programs (RSVP) in your area to assist with recruitment and management of Senior Volunteers
- http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/state_profiles/pdf_2016/FL%20Senior%20Corps.pdf

Focus Areas

Disaster Services

Economic Opportunity

Education

Environmental Stewardship

Healthy Futures

Veterans and Military Families

Handouts

- 16 Tips in Recruiting Adult Volunteers
- Don't Call Me a Senior!
- List of National Service Days for 2016 and 2017
- Providing a Sense of Control to Volunteers

Websites

- <https://www.nationalservicerresources.gov/volunteermember-staff-management/disability-inclusion>
- <https://www.energizeinc.com/>
- <http://www.pointsoflight.org/blog/2015/09/29/top-six-resources-nonprofits>