



## ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS

### Work with Me Here

*Changing Organizational Culture to Engage Volunteers*

Jay Haapala, Minnesota Children's Museum

**F**or the fifth consecutive year, the rate of volunteerism in Minneapolis-St. Paul is the highest among major metropolitan areas in the United States according to "Volunteering in America," an annual report published by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Many community-wide factors contribute to this rich volunteer climate, including high levels of education and attachment to the community, relatively low foreclosure, unemployment and poverty rates and a high ratio of nonprofit organizations to citizens. This is a great community in which an organization can employ best practices for volunteer management and see immediate positive results. Last year at Minnesota Children's Museum, 1,101 people volunteered 28,000 hours and delivered 75 percent of the museum's public programming to about 266,000 visitors.

However, the rate of volunteerism in a community or using the latest volunteer management practices are not the most important factors in an organization's ability

to successfully engage community members in its mission. Five years ago, the Twin Cities was already leading the nation in volunteerism and the museum employed professional volunteer management, but had fewer than one-third the volunteers and volunteer hours it has today. The most important factor is having an organizational culture that is dedicated to community engagement.

According to the National Council on Aging and its 2010 study entitled "The Boomer Solution: Skilled Talent to Meet Nonprofit Needs," volunteerism can provide an 800 percent return on investment. Using U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics to measure the return on investment, the council developed a measurement tool to compare the expense

**A professionally managed corps of volunteers can provide eight times the value of the cost it takes to manage them, and that doesn't include the value of their service to the community.**

of managing skilled volunteers to the value they provided to the organization. A common explanation used by organizations that don't engage the community in their work is that they lack the time and money it takes to manage volunteers. However, the time and money exist; they're just being invested in different activities—and those activities are very possibly generating a lower return than an investment in professional volunteer management would.

Adding to the positive value of volunteerism are the benefits that go well beyond cost-savings. A professionally managed corps of volunteers can provide eight times the value of the cost it takes to manage them, and that doesn't include the value of their service to the community. What is the value of a children's museum? Hopefully, it is greater than its total annual budget. So, if a museum's mission is worthwhile, then cost-effectively increasing the organization's capacity to accomplish it is a positive investment. Volunteers bring diversity to the

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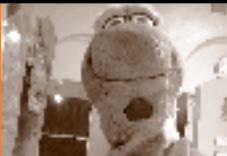
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# ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS

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organization they serve and demonstrate community support for its mission. These benefits are difficult to quantify, but very easy to recognize in thriving organizations that actively engage the community in their work.

## Where to Start

Once a children's museum decides that the benefits of volunteerism are worth the investment, the next step is to create a culture that embraces volunteerism and removes barriers for involvement of community members as volunteers.

Hire a volunteer management professional and convert from a decentralized to a centralized system of volunteer management. While common in nonprofit organizations, a decentralized system of volunteer management means staff are responsible for recruiting and managing volunteers to staff their programs. Efforts to engage volunteers tend to be duplicated across the organization and the investment of time and resources in volunteer management is inefficient and less easily measured. Programs, with their immediate needs, will always take precedence over the long-term, strategic development of organizational capacity that includes volunteer management. A centralized system promotes the investment of resources to engage volunteers in roles across the organization that make the greatest positive impact. It also removes the burden of volunteer management from program staff who are not primarily hired for skill sets that include recruitment and people management.

Once professional volunteer management is in place, finding the people and the partner organizations to support volunteerism is the easy part. Many people want to get involved with your organization—they only need to be asked. The hard part is motivating museum staff members to work with volunteers. This transition requires change and change is difficult for human beings. An early childhood program facilitator may spend less time interacting with families and more time training volunteers to do so; marketing staff may spend less time researching and more time coaching an intern to do the task; and exhibit fabricators may spend less time maintaining components and more time interviewing volunteer applicants. In each case, an organization's capacity grows because two well-managed people can always accomplish more than one. In addition to the difficulty of change management, staff may have had negative experiences with volunteers in the past and they will have

misconceptions of what a volunteer can actually be asked, expected or trusted to do. Professional volunteer program administrators and enlightened organizational leaders understand that volunteers can be managed to fill high responsibility roles as well as interact with the public and complete administrative tasks.

## Managing Change

The importance of the change management process to the success of volunteerism is emphasized by the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration, which now trains its members in change management in addition to volunteer program administration. The concept of change management is based on the understanding that improvements in a business or organizational setting include mechanical elements like strategy, processes and structure as well as psychological elements. Change management theory provides tools, techniques and processes instrumental to any organization intending to create a culture that promotes volunteerism.

Everett Rogers, a 20th century social science and communication scholar and best known for his "Diffusion of Innovations" theory, created a bell curve model that describes how people adopt changes over time. When presented with a new idea, a small percentage (2.5 percent) of people are described as "innovators" followed by a slightly larger group (13.5 percent) of people known as "early adopters." Next, a two-level "majority" of people (64 percent) adopt the change followed by a small group (16 percent) of "laggards" who resist until there is no other choice. In affecting organizational change, such as increased volunteerism, the early adopters are an important strategic group that, when successfully supported, will create a tipping point for change to spread throughout the organization. Based on this theory, that key 12 percent of a museum may mean one department, one staff member or one gallery.

In order to support the early adopters, another change management theory developed by Harvard professor John Kotter can be applied. In his book *Leading Change*, Kotter introduces the "8 Step Process for Leading Change," which advises to first create urgency, form a powerful coalition and create a vision for change. This means identifying the early adopters, gaining their buy-in and making a plan. Next, remove obstacles and create short-term wins. This is where the change gains momentum, but requires

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**Today, a company's CSR program often integrates the philanthropic efforts of volunteering and financial contributions with a strategy linked to corporate goals and creates partnerships with nonprofit organizations with similar goals. That does not mean the corporation will not support nonprofits that are not aligned with its goals, but fewer resources will be used for efforts not tied to their primary goals.**

## If You Ask...Will They Come? Working with Corporate Volunteers

Mary Ellyn Voden

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### What Are Corporations Looking For?

Why is a profit-driven corporation willing to invest corporate resources (financial and talent) in their community nonprofits? According to a 2009 Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship Survey, the top three reasons a corporation will support an employee volunteer program are the following: 1) to improve corporate reputation and public relations; 2) to encourage employee engagement, especially job satisfaction and retention; and 3) to support employee team building. In addition, A 2007 Deloitte Volunteer Impact survey stated that an employee volunteer program can improve corporate recruiting efforts, especially with the Millennials, who are looking for ways to integrate their work with their life passions.

While it is obvious that corporations want their community contributions to help improve their reputation with customers and stakeholders, the focus on the employee may seem surprising. Corporate leadership is concerned about how invested or engaged an employee is with the corporation. They know a discontented employee is not productive and is likely to leave. Both actions negatively affect the corporate bottom line. Results from other surveys, including another Deloitte Volunteer Impact Survey (2011) show that an opportunity to volunteer on behalf of the corporation does deepen an employee's job satisfaction and builds his/her pride about the corporation. That satisfaction helps create a highly engaged employee who is not likely to leave and is more productive day-to-day.

Corporations are always looking for ways to help build their teams. Nonprofits

are considered great sites for team-building. The cost is usually minimal and the corporate employees consider the experience both fun and a way to give back. The challenge to the nonprofit is to offer flexible, one-time, full- or half-day experiences. Activities may include assisting with annual painting and cleaning, decorating for a holiday or a special event or assisting at an event.

A one-time experience may lead to an ongoing team commitment. At Crayola, the creative design team decorated a local children's club for a holiday. The team had a good time but became concerned that the organization did not have the resources to offer regular art experiences. This led to the development of a monthly afterschool art workshop led by that same team.

Is there a way to package a museum's need for help as a team-building experience? Start by working with the corporate volunteer manager, who will market the opportunity within the corporation. Have clear job descriptions and make sure the group knows if the job has some physical requirements (climbing, lifting). Determine a gathering space for the group and if it is an all-day event, a place where they can have lunch, which they will provide. In some cases, the corporate team may be able to help with some of the supplies and equipment needed to do the work.

### Measuring Corporate Volunteer Program Results

Increasingly, the corporate volunteer program along with corporate philanthropic efforts are aligned with a business's corporate strategy. This helps justify the resources allocated to the programs and demonstrates that there is a relationship between the program's success and the corporation's bottom line. The corporate volunteer program manager develops annual program objectives aligned with corporate strategy. One objective, for example, may focus on employee engagement.

From the corporate perspective, measuring volunteer impact is not as easy as measuring the impact of a productivity

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# Q&A VOLUNTEERS

Marcia Hale

**How can a small children's museum find good volunteers given that our stretched-thin staff has so little time to recruit?**

Happy volunteers bring in more volunteers. No matter how small or large, a museum that needs the services of volunteers must commit the time to create and nurture a volunteer program before a single volunteer comes in to help. There are *no* shortcuts.

First, make time to discuss what needs to be done in the museum and then decide what you want volunteers to do. Be very, very clear on what work is appropriate for volunteers to handle and what isn't. You are not going to *use* volunteers, you are going to utilize their talents to help get the museum's work done, including some day-to-day operations or specific events or projects that lend themselves to committees of volunteers.

Write job descriptions. Yes, even volunteer positions need job descriptions. Decide who will interview, schedule and train the volunteers. There is no way around dedicating staff time to managing the program. Down the line you may be able to parcel some of these duties off to leadership volunteers, but staff has to start the process.

Recruit from the people who love you the most. Museum visitors are all potential volunteers. Enlist board members to mine their network of associates. Is there a college with an early childhood program nearby, a high school with service requirements or a service organization that might create a volunteer program for you as a project? I worked at a museum that was started by the local Junior League as a volunteer project.

Plan, and plan well! Create and launch your volunteer program process from recruitment to training to evaluating...no shortcuts. If you are not willing to invest the time up front to create a program, you are doomed to fail.

**As a new children's museum, we are just beginning to organize a formal volunteer program under the leadership of a half-time volunteer manager. What's the first step?**

Make the position full time. If a volunteer program is essential to the success of the museum in terms of floor staffing and the like, then an investment in a full time coordinator is essential. Since many small and mid-size museums were started by volun-

Marcia Hale built successful volunteer programs at The Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (Portland, Oregon), the Chabot Space and Science Center (Oakland, California) and at a social service agency. She later managed public education and special events/marketing for The Discovery Center of Idaho in Boise. Hale now lives in Portland, Oregon, where she's serving a year with AmeriCorps helping older adults navigate the uphill battle of finding employment.

Through her consulting company, Volunteer Services, Inc., Hale works on building or repairing volunteer programs in the education/attraction environment (museums, gardens, nature centers, etc.).

*A volunteer program is only as successful as the support it is given from the top down.*

*The volunteers recruited will know just how valued they are by the respect shown to them and to the person running the volunteer program.*

*A happy volunteer coordinator/manager/director = happy volunteers who stay.*

teers, and for years perhaps entirely run by them, it's hard to all of a sudden decide to pay for something you always had for free. So think of it this way, without the investment of the volunteers who got you where you are today, everyone would still be a volunteer. Let's reward that early investment by compensating a well-qualified person to develop a volunteer program that continues to honor the legacy of all those who worked for nothing in the start up phase. If you can't find it in your budget to add one fulltime employee, then make very sure that the staff who will manage the volunteers when the half time person isn't there, knows what they are doing. I don't think a volunteer coordinator needs to be on the floor 24/7, but they do need to be given the time and resources to build a program correctly. Unless you are only open a few days a week, a few hours a day, and don't get many visitors anyway, you will end up spending more in the long run as half time volunteer coordinators move on to greener pastures, better pay and less stress.

**College student volunteers: they start out great—enthusiastic, hardworking, love working with kids—but as the semester goes on, their attendance becomes less consistent. How can we use this volunteer pool more effectively?**

College volunteers are an animal unto themselves. Visit with the college's community service (volunteer) office and be clear about your service expectations. The college can then break the news to you about the reality of student service. Plan projects that incorporate breaks during those times you know students won't be around (mid-terms, finals, spring break, etc.). Consider a training just for college students that explains the importance of showing up. Perhaps shorten their shifts during critical academic times or only ask for two shifts a month instead of once a week. Your expectations, the student's expectations and reality must meet somewhere in the middle. It is far better to have college-age volunteers serve in internship capacities in which there is an expectation of hours for credit—specific projects must be completed or there will be no passing grade.

**We've recently gained some very well educated volunteers, women with professional experience who are staying at home while their children are young. They view volunteer service as a way to keep their skills sharp and a foot in the professional world while engaging in child-related, family-focused endeavors. We value their unique contributions but as one staff member recently put it, "They've become our one-day-a-week bosses." How do we manage the volunteer that wants to manage?**

Training, training, training: it lays the foundation for expectations and boundaries. And prevents problems down the line. Roles must be clearly defined. Once you've provided the training with those roles defined, you have the "permission" to enforce the rules. You might think I'm referring to training the volunteers only, but when I hear of a staff feeling "bossed around" by volunteers, I question if staff has been trained on managing volunteers. Consider that many staff have never had formal training on the art of creating volunteer teams. Some staff assume that the volunteer manager/coordinator is

responsible for training and managing volunteers. Well, maybe, if that is the only staff person with whom the volunteers interact. Remind staff that volunteers are gratuitous employees—they are under the direction of paid staff and do not have the option to do whatever they please. Staff must understand their responsibility to their entire team, paid and non-paid. If the volunteers interact the most with the visitors, maybe those volunteers have some good ideas on visitor/exhibit interaction and maybe staff should listen. This is not a volunteer problem, but a staff not being trained to manage their teams problem.

**Must we do background checks on all volunteers? And how extensive should they be? If we do them on volunteers, do we include board members? One prospective board member was insulted by the request and refused to serve. What's reasonable to ask of any/all volunteers?**

It only takes one lawsuit, one negative story in the newspaper or on TV about someone connected with your museum doing something unacceptable to teach you a very hard lesson about background checks. That being said, if all staff and volunteers are required to have background checks then that means *all* volunteers—and board members are volunteers. It is the responsibility of the board chair and the executive director to relay this information to prospective volunteers.

Some organizations rationalize that they don't need to check the board members since they don't interact with visitors that much. Do the board members have access to the building when visitors are there? Could a board member, who might be wearing a name badge identifying themselves as a trusted person on staff, find themselves in a situation with a child, alone? Even that remote possibility must be considered. If you think that is something that would *never* happen, consider this: Are you absolutely sure no one on your board has anything to hide? A background check generally will give you a defensible position should something unfortunate happen onsite or offsite. It keeps honest people honest and sometimes keeps bad people away. A board member who is insulted about an organization taking necessary steps to protect itself and its visitors is not worth recruiting. To discover the extent to which you need to conduct a background check, be sure to contact your legal counsel and your insurance company. They may make the rule easier to enforce

and any argument an immediate reason for saying, "Thanks, but no thanks."

**We feel like installing a revolving door on our volunteer department. Seems like every time we get a really good volunteer, he/she graduates, leaves for a paying job, or moves on to other greener pastures. This constant churn is wearing staff out. Is high turnover normal among volunteers, or are we doing something wrong?**

Yes, there is always turnover with volunteers. Life happens. In this economy people sometimes have to move to finally get employed. But, museums that have extensive orientation and training programs have fewer problems with dropouts. When volunteers have invested considerable up-front time in training they tend to be more invested in sticking around. Do some exit interviews of people who've left. Find out why they left. No need to make anyone feel bad, just send them an email and tell them you are trying to make the program stronger, do they have any suggestions, why did they leave, would anything have made them stay longer. If you don't ask, you'll never know.

**Realistically, how much commitment can you expect from volunteers—both in terms of length of service and adherence to the schedule? Recently, one retired volunteer called to say she's leaving town for a month for a spur-of-the-moment trip. But it falls right in the middle of our busiest time and she's one of our best and most experienced volunteers. She wants to resume service when she returns. I know this is why people volunteer rather than work, but should we start using contracts or other more prescribed terms of service?**

"Contracts" will turn people away. Sounds like staff is depending on one volunteer *way* too much. What if she died? This boils down again to training, training training...for both staff and volunteers. The more you invest in the success of the training, the more the volunteer will invest in supporting you. In times of high unemployment, parents having to work more than one job to keep the family under a roof, grandparents having to step in and help to raise the kids, it is insane to think you can expect volunteers to work four hours once a week for fifty-two weeks a year. You may set minimum shift expectations, you may ask that people give you notice if they are going to be gone, but these people are volunteers. If you've recruited and trained enough

people, one person leaving at the spur of the moment should not be a big deal.

**A small cluster of volunteers has met and become friends during their service at our museum. They are reliable and skilled but tend to socialize a bit too much on the job. Socializing is part of the appeal of volunteering, but how can we tactfully refocus their attention to the work? I've heard, "Treat them just like you would treat employees," but they really aren't employees. They work for free.**

Volunteers are *gratuitous employees*—they do nothing of their own decision, they are under staff direction. The only difference between a volunteer and a paid staff person is the paperwork. Train the staff to manage the volunteers.

**A local private school has partnered with our museum to serve as a placement site for students who have a minimum service requirement. Even though we interview and select all students who want to volunteer, some of the kids are great and some seem to be just marking time. We don't have enough staff to constantly supervise everyone, so we would like to be able to dismiss or suggest alternative placements for the bad fits. But it feels like firing them. What's a good way to handle this?**

Meet with the school director and discuss what is happening. Teachers fail students all the time when they under-perform. Students need to know the consequences of not doing the work expected of them—in school, in jobs or in volunteer placements. Fire them. Or if it is easier, flunk them. Volunteering at a children's museum isn't the best fit for everyone. If the school requires students to volunteer at the museum, even if the student isn't interested, then that is a problem with the school. Meet with the school staff to make sure students are given options for volunteering. For instance, I certainly would not be thrilled with volunteering as a housecleaner; I'd much rather lead activities for kids. Make me do volunteer housework and I won't be there very long. Any volunteering must be a win-win or it will be a fail-fail.

**It's difficult to build a sense of cohesion among our wildly diverse volunteers. They come on different schedules and from different backgrounds, motivations, skill sets, etc. What are some ways we can build a "volunteer family"?**

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*The 2010 Youth Board of Children's Museum Tucson*

As volunteer managers are gearing up for the Baby Boomer bonanza of new workers and at the same time targeting the civically engaged Gen X'ers, the Children's Museum Tucson (CMT) is thriving with its team of volunteer teens.

The city of Tucson is probably best identified for its population of retirees and university students. According to AARP, when compared to other metropolitan areas, Tucson has the second largest percentage of suburban residents fifty-five to sixty-four years of age and seniors older than seventy-five. Tucson is where everyone's grandma and grandpa have come to retire...or move away from their kids. It is also an incredibly popular destination for seasonal snowbirds, but not from the animal kingdom. "Snowbirds" are the migratory seniors who leave their frost-bitten east coast homes during the winter to enjoy Arizona's milder weather.

For the past decade, the Corporation for National and Community Service has been working to capitalize on Baby Boomers in the volunteer world. Dr. Erwin Tan, director of Senior Corps recently described America's 77 million Baby Boomers as "a resource of extraordinary proportions—the largest, healthiest, best-educated generation in history." While CMT has put some eggs into this basket, the returns are just not there. Recruiting at senior volunteer fairs, advertising in *RSVP* and the local senior center newsletters only brings us one or two seniors per year.

University of Arizona students number more than 38,000 within Tucson's population, which exceeds 520,000. A bit like the snowbirds, this sizable group of enthusiastic eighteen to twenty-somethings also enjoys a somewhat seasonal fluctuation. They are very reliable during the school semester but disappear during the summer and inconveniently during spring and winter breaks as well.

During my four years as the volunteer coordinator, the museum has reached out to these two major Tucson demographics within our city, with minimal success. However, when we post volunteer opportunities online, in high school newspapers and through school counselors and teachers,

## Tucson Teens Volunteering ...and Not Just 'cuz Mom Said So

Jennifer Phillips, Children's Museum Tucson

teens apply by the dozens and donate 90 percent of CMT's 400-600 volunteer hours per month. These students really appreciate the playful work environment and creative nature of their duties. Their orientation and on-the-job training is completed rather quickly. Staff have wondered if perhaps the museum's informal, somewhat "free-wheelin'" workplace is more unsettling for senior volunteers who may prefer structure and formality.

We welcome a diversified volunteer pool, but the largest and most consistent portion of our volunteers is local teenagers. Approximately 85-90 percent of CMT volunteer staff are high school students between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. Another 5-10 percent are college students with the small remainder being older or retired adults. In 2010, the museum's entire volunteer program contributed more than 4,000 hours, of which 3,600 hours came from teens from eleven different high schools in the Tucson Metro area. These students, who have a class, school, scholarship or club service requirement or want the experience for their resumes or college applications, enable the museum to offer a multitude of activities, programs and events on its annual calendar. While about half of them want to volunteer "just for fun," especially about one month into summer vacation when cabin fever sets

...when we post volunteer opportunities online, in high school newspapers and through school counselors and teachers, teens apply by the dozens and donate 90 percent of CMT's 400-600 volunteer hours per month. These students really appreciate the playful work environment and creative nature of their duties.

in, we also accept referrals from juvenile or traffic courts on a case-by-case basis (nonviolent crimes only and none involving drugs or alcohol).

In 2010, annual volunteers averaged between one and 321.5 hours per teen. Hours are tracked on a museum timesheet and can be used to verify time for school paperwork or letters of recommendation. Volunteers facilitate

scheduled arts and crafts activities, help with birthday parties, work at special events and monitor/clean the galleries. They contribute enough work and time as two full time employees or four additional part timers. What a huge help!

Teen volunteers are also an important part of the behind-the-scenes museum work. There is a lot of preparation that goes into activities, parties and events, and they do a lot of it. If we need 100 teddy bear masks, volunteers will count, copy, cut and tie on the elastic—then facilitate the craft later with visitors.

All of these young eyes, ears and hands are utilized on the front line as well. Teen volunteers enable us to provide a safer environment in the galleries. Continuously present in the museum, they perform gallery walkthroughs every fifteen minutes that include a safety check, visitor check, gallery resetting, exhibit check and restock. Our most zealous individuals take it as a personal challenge to find something wrong each time and then fix it before anyone else does. This can apply to exhibits—or visitors—behaving badly. They can answer most questions and give directions or general guidance. They are encouraged to help interpret exhibits, explaining or demonstrating interactives as needed to young visitors. They only need to be told once that engaging in *play* is their most important role—although they do need the occasional reminder that their play should include the visitors, too.

Teen volunteers must submit a complete application which includes three references, availability and background questions. Only the top applicants are followed up with interviews in which questions are designed to allow applicants to show their personalities and experiences working with young chil-

dren. While we can teach a volunteer how to do a craft project, it is impossible to teach how to be naturally outgoing. Each volunteer is individually interviewed and toured through the museum before being hired. During the tour, opportunities are given to see if they will proactively tidy up a gallery or say "Hi!" to visitors and coworkers. It is one thing to hear them say they can fulfill all of the duties, it is quite another to see them actually do it. If this process goes well, they are invited to sign up for a mentoring shift and are buddied up for this first work day. (Mentors are established volunteers or Discovery Guides.) Any issues or infractions are addressed by the manager on duty, recorded on a "Volunteer Reminder Form," signed by the volunteer and manager and reported to the volunteer coordinator. Any volunteer who receives three "VRMs" in their file is reevaluated and possibly dismissed.

CMT's Youth Board (YB) is a unique branch of the Youth Volunteer Program. As specified in the museum's bylaws, the Youth Board is composed of two youth representatives who also participate on CMT's board of directors, board officers and members who have shown interest and commitment to the museum beyond regular volunteering. They have maintained a presence at the museum for a length of time beyond any requirement, mentored new volunteers, are allowed to perform daily duties with minimal or no supervision and can be trusted to represent CMT independently on or off museum grounds. This group of students, which has varied over the years between four and ten individuals, elects officers, meets monthly and organizes fundraisers and community projects. Supervised by the volunteer coordinator, they also report to the board of directors and to each other. The officers approve agendas, run the meetings, post minutes and staff their own events—with most of this communication and scheduling taking place on Facebook.

Prior to YB adoption of park clean-up chores, museum grounds were considered part of the larger and surrounding Armory Park and were usually cleaned by working inmates. In 2009, the Youth Board petitioned for the park to be divided and the museum grounds given to them. They succeeded and have done monthly park clean ups ever since. When CMT holds a special event that requires the museum mascot, they organize it. When Tucson's Parade of Lights needs a museum float, they create and enter one. They facilitate fundraising, vote on purchases, budget their expenses and currently have

more than \$1,500 in their treasury. Together with staff they decide on trainings or workshops that would benefit the group. These have included topics such as emergency response, public speaking, leadership 101 and most recently, balloon twisting.

CMT's current Volunteer Program has evolved after many years of trial and error, revisiting options and evaluating procedures. Perhaps because the training process was too long or the school year time commitment was too demanding, formal docent positions were abandoned in favor of volunteer program guides. The museum used to accept youth volunteers starting at age thirteen but raised the minimum age to fifteen three years ago. We believe the average fifteen-year-old has the maturity and self-confidence that is necessary. Additionally, the age of our young visitors can range between zero and twelve and a three-year age difference between visitor and volunteer helps distinguish boundaries and roles. Raising the minimum age also helped narrow in on the students who have their own transportation or are allowed to use public transportation or get rides from friends.

CMT has attracted more community college and university students in recent years through internship opportunities posted on the schools' Joblink Web sites. Internships require a longer time commitment (usually one school semester), are in a specific department relevant to their major and are supervised by the department director. The student usually receives credit hours and a letter of recommendation upon completion. Interns undergo a lengthier application process that includes interviews with the directors. Projects or duties are mutually determined and carry specific deadlines. Most interns spend the majority of their time in the office or work on projects from home rather than time spending time on the museum floor.

While volunteer options and local community resources may differ elsewhere, Children's Museum Tucson is happy with its exceptional and enthusiastic team of teen volunteers. Although some volunteer managers might pause at the thought of managing a crew of teenagers, our experience has been positive. We encourage other museums considering adding or expanding a teen volunteer program to consider the value they can add to the museum.

*Jennifer Phillips is the education and volunteer coordinator at the Children's Museum Tucson. She has been at CMT since 2004 when she started out as a Discovery Guide. Phillips is a graduate of the University of Arizona.*



University High School student & Children's Museum Tucson volunteer and Youth Board member, 2008–present

*James as museum mascot Morris gets a hug. (To see James out of costume, see photo on page 6, back row, second from left.)*

- Started volunteering in the eighth grade, now a junior in high school. Tries to volunteer four hours on Saturdays at least three times/month, year round.
- Began volunteering because the National Junior Honors Society required thirty hours of volunteer work but continued because he enjoys it and it adds to his college resume.

- Primary responsibilities include resetting museum exhibits, preparing art supplies for craft activities—and then running them—and party preparation. Also part of the Youth Board, a group of volunteers who help raise money for events such as the Parade of Lights. Finally, occasionally plays the museum's mascot, Morris. "Once while I was Morris, a small child became frightened and began to cry. Luckily, the parents came to help, as most of them do, and there were no serious issues."
- Favorite part of volunteering is spending time with friends while working. "At the museum I have learned a few amusing skills such as how to make balloon animals and work a popcorn machine but more importantly volunteering has let me develop my social skills with parents, children and other volunteers."
- Most surprising thing he has learned about the museum? "When I was younger I used to think that the museum was a special kind of place that only certain people could get into. It surprised me to learn how accessible it was to families of all parts of the social and racial spectrum. Another, equally surprising thing I learned was about the volunteers—we are all different and come from schools all around Tucson but due to the limited age range we all can get along nicely."
- How has volunteering affected his world view? "Honestly, I am a pessimist at heart and volunteering at the museum gives me a sense of purpose. I feel like I can help influence kids in a positive manner and that makes me think maybe the younger generation can turn out better than this one."
- "A shout-out to anyone thinking about volunteering: please do, it makes a big difference and is needed everywhere."



**Leticia, Preschool Teacher, and Amber, Student at Ball State University. Volunteers, The Children's Museum of Indianapolis 2003–present**

#### Leticia

- Began volunteering several times a month with her two children when they were in middle school. For the last several years, she and Amber try to do two Sundays a month. “We volunteered because we were members and the kids really enjoyed it. I begin my work in *Dinosphere* greeting visitors, then moving to the public lab to sift for micro fossils with the children and then wind up my shift in the Dino art gallery. My favorite part is interacting with the children.”
- “I have learned that people are amazing when they apply themselves.” She does not like to see parents on cell phones instead of interacting with their kids. Her most difficult task is dealing with parents who demand that their child be center stage.
- “Volunteering has changed me.” As a Girl Scout Leader for thirteen years and a Boy Scout adult volunteer for six years, she has gotten a lot of personal satisfaction from the many relationships she has developed. “My Girl Scout troop spent a lot of time traveling—most recently to London, Paris and Lucerne, Switzerland—and I have found people are basically nice and good all over.”
- Plans to continue volunteering at the museum for as long as possible because of the “wonderful staff and the friendly atmosphere.”

#### Amber

- Began volunteering with her mom when she was 11. “She signed me up to volunteer with her. We’d been members for years, so it was really exciting to actually be volunteering there.” She started out working with visitors and recently began working in the Paleo Lab at *Dinosphere* helping to prep fossils.
- Her favorite part of volunteering are the questions little kids pose about dinosaurs. “They ask questions I never would have even thought about.”
- Volunteers at Dellwood Day Camp (a Girl Scout camp) in the summer.
- The most unusual task she has dealt with as a volunteer was fixing a duckbill dinosaur toe bone. “Part of the bone was chipped, so I had to reconstruct it out of putty and then paint the putty to make it match the rest of the fossil.”

## Benchmarking: Strength in Numbers

Debbie Young, The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis

Like all museum staff, volunteer administrators want to continuously improve their programs and the ways in which they work with volunteers. Creating a consortium of like-minded museums or programs with which to benchmark, no matter the size or location of the institutions, affords each organization the opportunity to improve by learning from each other, gaining new insights from outside points of view and exploring how to use the benchmarking process as a tool to help make each museum better.

The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis (TCM) launched an institution-wide benchmarking process several years ago. The museum’s board of trustees and president/CEO believed that only through this type of focused measurement could the museum quantify its reputation as the “biggest and best” children’s museum in the world. Inspired by Jim Collins’ book *Good to Great*, individual departments were charged with researching other museums to find like programs based on similarities. Volunteer Services was one of three departments selected to serve as guinea pigs to pilot the effort (the Facilities and Development departments were the other two). TCM’s Volunteer Services department consists of two full-time and two part-time staff who manage 400 to 450 adult, family, corporate and youth volunteers as well as sixty interns per year.

Department heads were given additional training to fully understand the concept and process of benchmarking as it related to their individual programs. As part of the training, the department heads focused on how to determine appropriate and meaningful metrics with which to measure their departments.

Initially, Volunteer Services framed their consortium invitations to other museums’ volunteer departments as a way to join together in the quest for continuous improvement, a process in which the program, the staff, the staff volunteer supervisors and the volunteers would measure status quo in order to go forward. At first, the word “benchmark” felt intimidating to the Volunteer Services staff who were concerned that it might be similarly off-putting to staff in other organizations. Volunteer Services, a department of mission-minded folks, started with continuous improvement and worked its way into the true process of benchmarking—developing metrics in which the col-

lective programs could be measured.

After researching other museums’ from across the country with similar successful volunteer programs (progressive, well-managed, responsive to institutional/audience needs, diverse), the director of Volunteer Services invited fifteen organizations to a three-day gathering at TCM. Among the ten institutions participating were: Monterey Bay Aquarium, Birmingham Museum of Art, Museum of Science and Industry, National Museum of the USAF, Indianapolis Zoo, Wave Foundation/Newport Aquarium and the Cincinnati Zoo/Botanical Garden.

Armed with a list of department-specific, measurable metrics developed by the department director, the group began to determine ways in which the entire consortium could measure themselves individually and collectively. It was incredibly challenging, at first, because determinations had to be made as to like practices, best practices and program components that could be measured. Questions arose, such as, did every program include similar aged volunteers? Did each program have family volunteers, uniforms, recruitment techniques or care about the ethnicity or diverse backgrounds of their volunteer corps? Each organization had to determine which metrics they cared most about, the time frame for collecting/reporting data and then, together, develop a survey instrument that would best serve the entire consortium.

The consortium ultimately decided on a three-part benchmarking process. The process involved utilizing Likert Scale surveys to assess: a) the satisfaction of the volunteers with their work and with the volunteer program, b) the satisfaction of the paid staff supervisors with the volunteers and with the volunteer program and c) a baseline/demographic administrative profile for each participating organization. Each survey consisted of seven to fifteen questions with answer choices ranging from *very satisfied*, *somewhat satisfied*, *neutral*, *somewhat dissatisfied* to *very dissatisfied*. In the volunteer and staff supervisor satisfaction survey, for example, one question read, “Overall, how satisfied are you with the current volunteer program in this institution?” For the administrative survey, questions involved numbers of volunteers, and paid staff, ages, diversity, etc. Composite scores to each question were

reported as percentages, i.e. 75 percent of the volunteers are *very satisfied* with volunteer communication.

Four years later, with three years of empirical data and analysis, and another year’s data soon to be collected, the group has learned a great deal. Based on the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the volunteers and paid staff supervisors, organizations have worked to change communication procedures, training and orientation protocol, placement and recruitment techniques. The members of the consortium have acknowledged results, successes and challenges to the survey participants. Reports and data have been shared with boards and executive and management teams. It has been surprising how close the comparison numbers were for the entire consortium even though the individual organizations rated higher or lower in certain categories. If comparisons were lower in certain data categories, they sometimes proved to be areas for improvement. Or, they could just be the result of a temporary condition, such as building construction/renovation hindering access to the museum or office quarters which then contributed to a challenging work environment for all.

Across the board, the results have proven to be invaluable to each consortium member’s organization and its volunteer program. In some instances, this individual department-focused benchmarking effort has created tools that the entire organization has adopted. With institutional support for

#### Volunteer Q & A

*continued from page 5*

Some people will never be part of the broader family, they aren’t there for that. But most people welcome the chance for enrichment. At one science museum where I worked, a volunteer committee arranged a monthly in-service enrichment with guest speakers from the science community outside the museum. It was so wildly popular that reservations were needed! After the lecture, they’d have some coffee and cookies and an informal get-together. Others just love the idea of a blog where they can comment and exchange stories of what happened to them on the floor that day. Just don’t force interaction on them. Ask a few volunteers if they’d be interested in exploring ways to get everyone together, let them try a few outreach events. Build something into the budget so you can provide snacks, maybe an honorarium for a guest speaker.

**An inordinate amount of learning happens through determining what data to measure and how and when to measure it. Change is good, learning from others is valuable and the benchmark process is a great way to learn, grow, validate and improve a volunteer program.**

the process, gathering and measuring the information and sharing the results—whether “good, bad or ugly”—has helped each organization make data-driven decisions, streamline operations, tweak content and program logistics, plan strategically, and better gauge expectation, value and outcomes. Results of the process are shared with each organization’s constituents, department heads and board members contributing to increased accountability, credibility and awareness among everyone connected with the organization.

Now self-declared experts in benchmarking, the consortium members have come to depend on their colleagues and relish the now one- to two-day annual gatherings. The group spends uninterrupted time reviewing and discussing the most recent reports and outcomes. The yearly agenda always includes time for volunteer administrators to constructively and confidentially share successes, failures and/or challenges from the prior year with an audience of their peers who can support one another and assist in finding solutions or offer counsel or accom-

Plan some getaways to another museum in the area where you can all go together. Get the volunteers involved and you may be surprised at what ideas you’ll receive.

**We have a range of volunteers—from high school students to retired professionals. Is it possible to create one effective training program that meets everyone’s needs? It seems like working with/training a retired science teacher is a lot different than working with/training a high school sophomore.**

A general lay of the land orientation/visitor service basic training works well for everyone. But in working with high school students, for example, exhibit content is handled by the staff while the teen volunteer coordinator can do some more intensive group training with them. In my experience, it was sometimes more grueling to train a retired science teacher how to facilitate exhibits than a teenager. Teens pretty

lades. Sometimes the annual gathering includes ways in which the group can further benefit from individual volunteer program changes, such as new mentoring programs, or simply learn new ways of doing business, such as recruiting volunteers through social media sites.

Benchmarking for volunteer programs does not have to be painful or expensive. Small, medium or large organizations can benefit from the exercise irrespective of the scale of the effort. If the task seems overwhelming, an organization could explore one simple comparison to just one other organization and perhaps build from there. Choose an area of the work that you consider to be especially important, such as training or recognition. Utilize technology to communicate, explore a short list of metrics that are important to both (all) organizations and begin to collect data. An inordinate amount of learning happens through determining what data to measure and how and when to measure it. Change is good, learning from others is valuable and the benchmark process is a great way to learn, grow, validate and improve a volunteer program.

*Debbie Young has served as the director of volunteer services and The Power of Children Awards administrator at The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis for ten years. Prior to this, she worked for the Indianapolis Public Broadcasting Station. Young currently serves on the national board of the American Association for Museum Volunteers (AAMV).*

much volunteer during the same shift times. At the beginning and end of the shifts the teen coordinator can do a short “enrichment,” touching on info for their shift and at the end lead a reflection time for the kids to talk about what happened during their shift. Training moments occur just about every day. In fact, all volunteers would benefit from this sort of daily interaction. We all learn best from the experiences of each other. What better way than to meet quickly at the beginning of the shift to hear what will go on and then at the end of the shift for what did go on and what we learned from our day. Content can work well for everyone...teens just need a little extra guidance to reinforce what they’re learning.

*Hale is the author of “Help! I Don’t Have a Successful Volunteer Program! Advice from a Real Live, Former Professional Science Museum Volunteer Program Administrator.” She may be reached at mkh1480@mac.com.*

Retired Teacher / Volunteer  
Minnesota Children's Museum  
2010–present

• After this former teacher moved to the Twin Cities, she found an online volunteer clearinghouse that matched people with volunteer opportunities. MCM had a wide variety of options, from working with children (which she missed!) to behind-the-scenes work.

• Leads weekly half-hour Storytime and works in volunteer office doing everything from data entry, to filing, to answering phones, to special projects. Works at special events such as summer festivals, the Halloween party, Head Start Family Nights and Prep Parties preparing materials for use in exhibits and programs.

• “The people I have met here are amazing, not just the children but their parents and grandparents. Everyone is here to be happy and have fun. It is a celebration of little people but I love seeing the adults as free and uninhibited as their children. I have never been treated as ‘just a volunteer.’ I feel welcomed, appreciated and this has given me that people-contact I so missed when I retired.”

• Surprised at how professional volunteerism has become. “You apply, provide references, interview and are offered a position as if it were a real job. And then you need to commit to a schedule and trainings. A lot is invested in creating a good volunteer but I think it makes the volunteer feel important, valued and committed.”

• Before volunteering at MCM, didn't even know children's museums existed! As a teacher, she worked primarily with older students. Is amazed at what MCM offers, especially serving preschool children who don't have many options even though they are in their prime learning years. Is impressed with the learning-from-play philosophy and how thoughtfully it is carried throughout the building. Surprised at the efforts the museum makes to serve all families.

• Her trickiest job was being a witch at the Halloween party. “It can be a real juggling act scaring the 4-year-old just enough while at the same time being a ‘good’ witch for the 14-month-old.”

• “I think a lot more about the needs of nonprofit organizations now, especially in these economic times. They have to be so much more creative and flexible in dealing with lost revenue and yet still offer the product and/or services as before, which drives the need to use volunteers more often and more effectively and still maintain the balance with an expert, professional staff. I think this is a real strength of the Minnesota Children's Museum.”

Work with Me Here  
*continued from page 2*

a champion (volunteer manager) to facilitate the process. A barrier could be a poorly performing volunteer who doesn't generate results of value greater than the amount of time he/she requires in management. A short-term win could be sharing positive visitor comments about volunteers or promoting a social media project completed by volunteers. Finally, Kotter says to “never let up” and make it stick. This means replicating the change within other areas of the organization, moving beyond the original early adopters into the majority. To make it stick requires ongoing measurement and communication of the success and impact of volunteerism. A volunteer management professional can initiate these and other change management techniques more effectively in a centralized management system; in a decentralized system they will most likely be neglected in favor of immediate program needs.

#### Building Volunteerism

Once an organization is primed and ready for change, there are specific opportunities that can be implemented—and pitfalls that can be avoided—in the effort to create a culture that supports volunteerism.

• **Use position descriptions.** Like any paid position, after a museum's needs are determined, list responsibilities, qualifications and boundaries for volunteer positions. Communicate expectations with volunteers and museum staff who supervise them. Establish commitment levels to define the amount of time that volunteers are expected to give. Based on the museum's return-on-investment ratio, if a volunteer needs three hours of training, how much time do they need to serve in order to provide a positive return? MCM requires about forty-five hours of service for a volunteer position that requires three hours of training.

• **Terminate ineffective or unproductive volunteers.** Nothing demotivates staff like wasting time on a volunteer who doesn't meet expectations. An application process helps find the right people with the right skills and places them in right positions to use them. Through a phone interview, MCM staff determines what type of position an applicant is interested in and then whether they have the experience required for those positions. For example, a volunteer in MCM's Curiosity Center art classroom must have had previous classroom and customer service experience along with positive references.

• **Don't accept volunteers that don't match your needs.** When in doubt, set short-term trial periods for volunteers about whom you are unsure. Train them and manage them to succeed, but terminate them if they're unable to meet expectations. At MCM, training is developed and delivered by program managers who are experts on the types of behaviors expected from volunteers (as well as paid staff). Yes, you can fire volunteers and you should after performance management steps fail to make an individual worth an organization's investment in him or her.

• **Incentivize the utilization of volunteers.** Reward staff for time spent managing volunteers. If one program manager uses volunteers and another doesn't, they shouldn't be recognized or evaluated equally for delivering programs. For example, when budgeting for programs, the amount allocated for each should reward managers for cost-effectively using volunteers. Performance reviews should recognize employees for engaging volunteers in their area of responsibility.

• **Don't replace staff with volunteers.** Instead, shift paid staff members' responsibilities from doing to leading. For example, if three paid staff deliver programs, plan to offer more programming led by volunteers and assign paid staff to train and manage those volunteers. It's not ethical to use volunteers and then lay off employees. Providing front-line staff with the opportunity to lead volunteers and thereby grooming them for potential staff leadership positions is a great benefit of increased volunteerism. Volunteers build a museum's capacity for service and can offer additional opportunities to visitors.

Even with professional volunteer management in place and a well planned change management process, the most important factor in creating an organizational culture that embraces volunteerism (or any process improvement initiative for that matter) is that the organizational leadership models and reinforces behaviors that support the change. Many museums say they're committed to community engagement, and executive directors announce “we love our volunteers,” but how do museum staff actually behave? Do museum leaders invest in professional volunteer management? Do they work with volunteers who report directly to them? When leaders work directly with volunteers, they gain a deeper understanding of the benefits of volunteerism and make decisions for the organization based on those

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## Reinventing the Internship Program

Diane Poff, Please Touch Museum®

**Volunteers are defined as individuals who donate their time to advance a particular cause and are additionally motivated to gain knowledge, professional connections, real-life/work experiences. Usually, interns are donating their time for similar reasons but they have greater expectations that the experience will count academically and professionally.**

**A**trend continues to grow out of the economic crisis: students seeking internships to make professional connections and build their resumes in preparation for the search for full-time employment. Many businesses and organizations have noticed this trend and have created internship opportunities within their organizations. Internships help students gain experience in their field; at the same time, organizations gain valuable help for a minimal cost.

Please Touch Museum® (PTM) has benefited from the work of numerous interns but to date has never implemented a structured program. Prior to coming to PTM, I had completed a four-month paid internship in 2008 during my senior year of college at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Because of that experience, I was asked to assess, update and manage PTM's unpaid internship program as one of many tasks assigned to me in my role as executive assistant. Over the past several months, I have evaluated every aspect of the museum's current internship program and have begun implementing changes that will lay the groundwork for an improved program both for the museum and for interns.

One of my favorite parts of the Kennedy Center internship were the biweekly lectures given to the interns by the center's vice presidents. Every vice president spoke to the internship class, composed of six to ten people each year, about their positions and how they came to the center. In addition, each one provided career advancement advice through question-and-answer sessions. These small gatherings not only helped me understand more about all of the organization's departments, but were inspirational—one of the vice presidents started at the Kennedy Center as an intern and worked his way up to vice president.

The entire Kennedy Center staff was open to informal interviews with any of the interns. An intern friend and I met with the vice president of institutional affairs to learn more about her position and her life. Hearing this accomplished woman talk, with pic-

tures of many of the world's important leaders hanging in her office, was a profound experience that motivated me to work even harder to reach my goals.

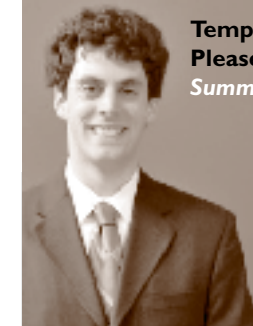
Another memorable aspect of the internship was the camaraderie among the interns. Many of us ate lunch together and even spent time hanging out after work. Several years later, I remain friends with a few of the interns. During the internship, I was required to write a journal entry once a week about my experiences. Although at first I did not enjoy this mandatory writing assignment, these entries documented and later helped me explain my internship tasks during subsequent job interviews.

#### Interns vs. Volunteers

As I began evaluating PTM's existing internship program, the first misconception I encountered was that many of my colleagues viewed an intern as a volunteer. Up until now, PTM's internship and volunteer programs were managed as one entity. The handbook, application and even the orientation packet were the same for both volunteers and interns because in fact some of their duties were similar. In order for all museum staff to understand the difference between these two very different types of unpaid workers, the organization needed to separate them into two distinct programs.

Volunteers are defined as individuals who donate their time to advance a particular cause and are additionally motivated to gain knowledge, professional connections, real-life/work experiences. Usually, interns are donating their time for similar reasons but they have greater expectations that the experience will count academically and professionally. These differences should be clearly understood by staff at all levels to eliminate confusion between the two programs. Program managers should actively involve interns in meaningful long-term projects. Interns often have specific skill sets that museum departments need. Museums should take advantage of these interns and leverage the talents of these burgeoning professionals. Yet in any good internship pro-

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Temple University Student &  
Please Touch Museum Intern  
Summer 2011

• Worked about twenty hours/week in the finance department, supervised by CFO Michael Armento, on forecasting for fiscal year 2012.

• Built an FY2012 budget-request template, reconciled FY2011 accounts payable/receivable and organized museum operation metrics for PTM.

• Volunteered extra time to play for the museum's softball team.

• While volunteering at the nonprofit Tree House Books, he met museum CEO Laura Foster and learned about the PTM internship. Although he had never visited the museum as a child, many of his friends and family had. He wanted to gain experience at a nonprofit where he could “really get his hands dirty.”

• Favorite part of the internship? “The people were absolutely phenomenal. I was welcomed with open arms and everyone was happy to help me finish my tasks and show me the ropes within the museum. I looked forward to coming in everyday. Every time I told someone about my internship, they got excited because PTM was a part of their childhood.” He was motivated to work to keep the mission going.

• Through the internship, Cetlin learned to “never be discouraged or lose confidence in a mission. The people I worked with in the executive suite showed me the satisfaction that comes from hard work. Seeing the happiness—and the struggles—that led to achievements taught me that working hard will get me someplace in life.”

• The most surprising thing he learned about the children and families who visit PTM? “The diversity is unbelievable, and the satisfaction and pride parents saw when their children visited the Supermarket or Wonderland brightened my day each time. The family demographics or how many people were in a group didn't matter. The effect was the same: the children had a blast, and the parents were itching to jump in there with them!”

• The most unusual task he tackled was being pulled from his usual spot in the back of the house one day to work the ticket counter. “Fun!”

• His next internship will be at a for-profit to learn in a corporate setting before he looks for a job after college.

• The museum and the Business Honors Student Association at Temple University's Fox School of Business are now working together to develop an internship program. “I hope this catches on and other students gain the same great experiences I had at PTM.”

change due to new manufacturing equipment. Volunteer impact measurements may be the percentage of employees involved in the program, the number of involved employees from different divisions and levels of the corporation, the number of volunteer events, the total number of employee hours contributed to the program, employee satisfaction with their volunteer experiences and their employer, the number and types of employee leadership opportunities and the nonprofit's program success. The nonprofit's volunteer program manager needs to keep careful records of who volunteered and how much time they contributed and report this information back to the corporate employee volunteer manager on a timely basis. The corporate employee volunteer manager is challenged to improve employee participation numbers every year. The strongest correlation between volunteer program success and corporate strategy is generally seen in the results of annual employee engagement surveys. It goes back to the idea an engaged employee is happy and a happy employee is a productive employee.

Some corporations—particularly those that require employees to volunteer—direct employees to include their volunteer experiences as part of their annual corporate objectives. In most cases, an employee chooses an organization to support and his/her annual objective may include the number of volunteer hours devoted to the organization and the type of volunteer activity (i.e. leading a team development activity). In this situation, the nonprofit may be asked to report on the number of hours the volunteer worked and comment on the employee's results. A thank-you letter to the employee, with a copy to the corporate employee volunteer manager, is one way this information can be relayed back to the organization. Occasionally, the employee's manager may directly ask for some feedback.

### What Do Corporate Volunteer Employees Want?

A corporation's employee volunteer program is constantly evolving, and changes are often made at the request of employees who are given a stronger voice in identifying where the corporation should focus its volunteer efforts. Similar to employee contribution councils that identify where the corporate financial donations should go, many corporations have employee volunteer coun-

**From the corporate perspective, measuring volunteer impact is not as easy as measuring the impact of a productivity change due to new manufacturing equipment. Volunteer impact measurements may be the percentage of employees involved in the program, the number of involved employees from different divisions and levels of the corporation, the number of volunteer events, the total number of employee hours contributed to the program, employee satisfaction with their volunteer experiences and their employer, the number and types of employee leadership opportunities and the nonprofit's program success.**

cils consisting of employees from all levels of the organization. At Crayola, the volunteer council identifies at least one corporate sponsored event per month and members of the council take turns being event champions. The champion works with the corporate employee volunteer manager to recruit employees for the event, attends the event and reports the results. You can be sure that the employee council will not want to return to an event or an organization if a past experience was poor. In these situations, corporate leadership will follow the bottom-up recommendations.

Working with "once and done" volunteers is different than working with volunteers who make an ongoing commitment. But there are basics for either type of volunteer. Don't take corporate volunteers for granted. Be ready when they arrive and use their time wisely. Greet and engage them while they are working for you. All volunteers need a brief orientation, including a run-down of the basic facility amenities (bathrooms, parking, break space). Let them know beforehand if they need to wear special clothing, for instance, if all personnel are required to wear closed-toed shoes when working on the exhibit floor.

One-time volunteers need to understand their jobs, where to find supplies and who to talk to if there is a problem. Check in on them periodically. Talk to them. The informal conversations during their work time give you great opportunities to recruit other volunteers. Distribute packets of information about your organization as the group leaves and give them the opportunity to sign up for more information about your orga-

nization. If possible, take pictures of them working and keep records of who came and the time they spent with you. At the end of the project or the day, be sure to send the corporate employee volunteer manager the photos and the results of the day. That information will be used in their year-end report.

In addition to organizing teams, the corporate employee volunteer manager can help recruit volunteers for ongoing opportunities that may be available for one or two people, for example, a membership assistant. Armed with a good job description, including skills needed, hours and the duration of the assignment, the corporate employee volunteer manager will work with the human resource department to promote this opportunity. Working with volunteers who make a longer commitment usually requires a more in-depth orientation. That's the time to explain how the organization works, introduce the volunteer to other staff and volunteers and provide specific training for their work. Assigning the new volunteer a buddy, an experienced volunteer or staff member to help the volunteer for a shift or two, is one way to strengthen the relationship between the volunteer and your organization. When working with volunteers who may be in leadership positions at their day jobs, don't assume knowledge. For example, don't expect them to understand how to read nonprofit financial reports. Often, they need to understand how nonprofit financial reports differ from for-profit corporate reports.

### Corporate Volunteer Program Trends

What is new in corporate volunteer programs? In addition to aligning volunteer programs with corporate strategy and tracking/measuring results, some other key trends identified in a recent Points of Light Foundation Workplace Volunteering brief include the following: 1) skills-based volunteering; 2) rebranding corporate volunteering; and 3) disaster-response volunteering.

#### • Skills-Based Volunteering

In the past, employee volunteers looked for activities that were different from the work they did as professionals. Today, employees prefer volunteer activities that leverage and strengthen their current skills—a corporate CFO serving as a board treasurer or a Web designer contributing skills to develop a museum's Web site. Skills-based volunteer efforts can further be subdivided into three areas: general skills; board and committee leadership; and pro-bono expertise.

General skills volunteering runs the

gamut from once and done activities, such as a group of mechanics assisting with the installation of an exhibit, to ongoing volunteer activities, such as clerical assistance for a membership program.

When looking for board leadership, cast the corporate net wide. It is natural to want to recruit the highest level corporate executive for a nonprofit board. But it is wise to look beyond the top corporate executive and work with the employee volunteer manager to identify a young, up-and-coming professional to sit on a board or board committee. Including a CEO on the board roster may appear prestigious, but how much support and time can you count on from the average CEO? It is often better to find a lower level professional who has personal interest in the organization's cause, someone who will spend personal time and contribute personal resources—in addition to the support the employee's corporation will still supply to the organization. The museum's volunteer program manager should develop a profile of the skill sets needed to strengthen the board and share that information with the corporation's employee volunteer manager. Be honest about the expected time and financial commitment. The corporation's volunteer program manager must then be clear with the employee about how the corporation will help cover a board member's financial obligations including a board member's annual donation, membership and event attendance.

Skills-based volunteering is a natural for securing *pro bono* expertise in areas like IT, human resources or marketing. To achieve maximum success, develop a project concept with a clear goal, needed skill set, timeline and resource list and share it with the employee volunteer manager. A well-defined project makes recruiting easier, and the experience will be better for the volunteer. Once the volunteer is recruited, be sure the organization is ready to start the project.

Another advantage to pro-bono help is that employee volunteers may be able to secure some of the resources, such as technical equipment. An employee may know that their corporation is about to upgrade its phone system and can help secure the older but perfectly fine system for your organization. Or an HR volunteer may be able to let museum staff attend some of the corporate training sessions usually offered only to employees.

#### • Rebranding Corporate Volunteering

The traditional employee volunteer is a middle-aged female driven by compas-

**The real key to securing corporate employee volunteers is developing a relationship with the corporation's employee volunteer manager and then with its employee volunteers. Brainstorm ideas with the employee volunteer manager that meet your museum's needs and those of the corporation. Be sure to understand the process for requesting volunteers and follow it.**

sion—not that there's anything wrong with that. But to achieve wider participation, take a look at how volunteer opportunities are communicated. What is the mix of volunteer jobs available at an institution and how can they best be described to appeal to the broad spectrum of corporate employees? Millennials, driven by a sense of adventure, are looking to find meaning in their lives. Generation Xers are looking to strengthen and share their skills. On the other end of the age spectrum, some corporations extend volunteer invitations to recent retirees, looking for new ways to become engaged in the community. Large corporations may have special interest employee groups, such as Latino or women's leadership groups. Do you have opportunities that may be of special interest to one of those groups? Engaging corporate employees in a museum diversity program may fill a similar corporate goal. A discussion with the corporate employee volunteer manager may help an organization attract volunteers of all kinds to its programs.

#### • Disaster-Response Volunteering

The museum world has been affected by many natural disasters. A key to securing corporate volunteer assistance when a disaster strikes is to approach local corporations *before* something happens. Ask the corporate employee volunteer manager to set up a meeting with its disaster-planning team. Approached as a pro-bono project, perhaps the team can help review or develop an organization's disaster plan. Some corporations, like Bank of America, have integrated employee volunteering into their corporate disaster response plan. Starting a conversation before something happens may mean an organization is top of mind should it need disaster help.

#### Relationships: the Keys to Success

The real key to securing corporate employee volunteers is developing a relation-

ship with the corporation's employee volunteer manager and then with its employee volunteers. Brainstorm ideas with the employee volunteer manager that meet your museum's needs and those of the corporation. Be sure to understand the process for requesting volunteers and follow it.

Stay in touch with the program manager—send reports, photos and any PR about the volunteer experiences. Never hesitate to discuss a project or volunteer problem with the corporate employee volunteer manager, who may be able to help resolve the issue.

Develop relationships with the employee volunteer team members. Many corporations have Dollars for Doers and matching gifts programs. While matching gifts is tied to an employee's financial contribution, dollars for doers is tied to the time an employee gives to an organization. Employees often forget about these benefits so remind them to check on their eligibility.

Say thank you. A little recognition and some genuine words of thanks go a long way to securing future volunteers. It's the best way to transform a volunteer into a museum ambassador.

*Mary Ellyn Voden has more than fourteen years experience in museums, including Betty Brinn Children's Museum (Milwaukee), Children's Museum of Houston and The Milwaukee Public Museum. Recently, she retired from Crayola, LLC, where she was director of public affairs and staffing and retained oversight of The Crayola Factory.*

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immediate experiences.

Does the museum's strategic plan include community engagement? Is volunteerism included in the highest level of planning? Strategic goals for community engagement can't be met without the necessary tactical planning and then action.

Since a culture that includes volunteerism is the most important factor in determining an organization's ability to engage the community, and since leadership has the greatest influence on organizational culture, someone needs to influence an organization's leaders that volunteerism is worth the investment. A volunteer management professional is perfect for this job. Measuring the impact of volunteer activities can be difficult and is often overlooked, but resources are available to aid in the process. Energize Inc., an international training and consulting firm, specializes in volunteerism with information about program evaluation online. The HandsOn Network is another source offering resources for evaluation and providing a volunteer matching service in many local communities.

There are more people in your community who want to get involved with your museum than you have the capacity to engage. But in order to capitalize on this potential pool of resources, most organizations need a cultural shift that starts at the top, places greater value on community engagement through volunteerism and utilizes management practices to make the transition more effective.

*Jay Haapala is the volunteer services program manager at the Minnesota Children's Museum and also has worked in visitor services. He is currently serving as president of the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration.*

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gram a museum managers should remember that however skilled, interns are students who require educational guidance, not just supervision.

#### Finding and Hiring the Best Interns

In PTM's traditional internship program, the human resource department hired interns whenever a manager requested one rather than adhering to a formalized timeline for the internship process. The museum now starts its search for interns before the beginning of each college semester. If managers need an intern for the semester, they must fill out a requisition form by a certain deadline. This helps the museum attract more qualified candidates who want to do an internship for school credit and encourages managers to proactively develop internship projects.

An essential part of a successful internship program is finding qualified applicants. In reviewing the intern job descriptions, I made a few minor template changes, formatting sentences as bullet points, for example, which made the descriptions more pleasing to the eye. At first, I posted all the internships on the museum's Web site, the city's Cultural Alliance Web site, [www.Non-ProfitJobMarket.org](http://www.Non-ProfitJobMarket.org), Philly Campus, all the colleges and universities in the area that had online intern/job listings and a few other Philadelphia-based job boards. I noticed the majority of the applicants came via the city's cultural alliance job bank page. Now, new intern listings will be posted first to our Web site and to the cultural alliance job bank page. If we don't receive enough qualified candidates from these two sites, we will then proceed to post on other job boards.

#### The New, Improved Internship Program

Conversations with past PTM interns and with friends who recently completed internships at a variety of museums reveal two primary, recurring complaints: interns didn't have enough interaction with fellow museum interns and they didn't have opportunities to learn about the museum's other departments. Conversations also revealed that interns who have positive experiences are great advertisements for future interns. One of PTM's past interns had a great experience and has since recommended the museum's program to many of his friends, a few of whom have applied and are awaiting the correct fit for their interests.

The new Please Touch Museum internship program will provide a career-oriented, well-rounded educational experience about children's museums. Interns will work fifteen to twenty hours a week in a particular department but also will have the opportunity to interact with each other while learning about the museum. At the start of an internship, interns will shadow a gallery floor staff member to learn about the museum guests' experience. In the future, I hope to include a breakfast with a short welcoming message from PTM's president and CEO. Interns will be encouraged to request an informational interview with any willing member of the museum staff to learn more about jobs of particular interest to them. Interns will be encouraged see the museum's theater show, take an educational historic tour of PTM's magnificent building and visit partner museums for the purpose of meeting other interns.

To further enhance the program, interns will be asked to email the supervising director a short journal entry about their internship experience at the end each month. Brief monthly meetings with each intern will allow the director to answer internship career development questions. The journal entries and the meetings will help the museum evaluate its internship program and help the interns remember the details of projects they have completed for future resume-writing and job interviews. Formal exit interviews will be conducted at the conclusion of each internship to receive more feedback on how to improve the program.

Evaluating, updating and managing the museum's internship program is a big project with a long timeline. The goal of laying the groundwork for a successful and valuable program will help students move forward in their professional careers and gain experiences they will always remember. A well-run program also taps creative young talent and benefits the museum in delivering great experiences for its audiences.

*Diane Poff is the executive assistant & intern coordinator at Please Touch Museum. Prior to working at the museum, Poff worked in the education department at the Philadelphia Orchestra and was an intern at the National Symphony Orchestra's Education Department at The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Poff graduated from Shenandoah University with a B.S. in Arts Management.*

Technology and multimedia are ubiquitous in the 21st century. With smart phones, apps, interactive white boards, tablets and handheld games already in many homes, classrooms, libraries and museums, most people have access to technological devices of some sort. When Stepping Stones Museum for Children began planning the use of technology in its expanded building, it did so in response to a larger need within the community: a local and accessible framework in which to engage children in meaningful global discussions.

In an increasingly diverse and complex world, it is essential that children have the opportunity to build the life skills required to be literate and responsible global citizens. The globalization of business, the advances in technology and the availability of travel increasingly require people to work and function on a global scale. Young people must become globally competent, possessing strong knowledge of geography and the ability to communicate across cultures. Stepping Stones made an early commitment to foster 21st century skills and to spark curiosity, imagination and interest while using the latest technology. The Multimedia Global Connections Initiative brings together state-of-the-art technology, educational programs and strategic partnerships to prepare participants for the opportunities of an increasingly interconnected world.

#### Multimedia Gallery

Though technology is omnipresent in the lives of museum visitors, its use is frequently undirected, solitary or commercially driven. Ideally, technology provides a gateway to ideas, places and people—a means to an end, not the end itself. In museums, its use is certainly not new. Rather, it goes back a hundred years, from newsreel footage, to films of artists at work, to travelogues about remote places, to the IMAX film, which first hit the screen at the Osaka World's Fair in 1970. Each venture was promoted to expand the impact of the museum experience. In its unique capacity within the community, Stepping Stones Museum introduces a new layer of content and connection through technology in its Multimedia Gallery.



### Stepping Stones Museum for Children (Norwalk, CT)

#### MULTIMEDIA GLOBAL CONNECTIONS INITIATIVE



*Members of Cambodia's Children of Bassac Dance Troupe traveled to Norwalk to perform on the modular stage of Stepping Stones' Multimedia Gallery as a result of their participation in the museum's YESS program.*

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The gallery is the centerpiece of the initiative. Media and technology specialists worked with the building's architect to create a multipurpose space that allows for child-driven exploration, performance and global social exchange through state-of-the-art technology. The gallery features a modular stage for creative dramatic performances and an eighteen-by-thirty-three-foot immersive screen upon which high-fidelity images of

**The 2011 Promising Practice Award recognizes practices in children's museums that prepare children to become global citizens.**

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children's artwork, film projects, inventions and live video conferences are projected and accompanied by a 5.1 surround soundscape. Videoconferencing can be in high-definition through the use of multiple cameras in the gallery and by using sophisticated equipment such as the TANDBERG Codec C40, which connects to multiple sites. It can also be done through Skype, linking the gallery's programs and participants to anyone in the world with a Webcam and Internet connection.

#### Programs and Partners

With its strong foundation of relevant technology, the gallery comes to life through programs and partnerships and enhances the museum's existing Around the World Program, which annually transports visitors to twelve different parts of the globe, highlighting various cultures and people. In the new Multimedia Gallery, visitors now experience media presentations, photographs and artwork for each monthly destination and can share moments of discovery.

Stepping Stones started hosting live cultural exchanges in the gallery with longtime partner Creative Connections, a Norwalk-based cultural exchange organization. Youth, ages twelve to eighteen, from the museum's Youth Enrichment at Stepping Stones (YESS) program participate in Creative Connection's ArtLink program each year. In 2010, they worked with a class of children from the rainforest in Paso Caballos, Guatemala, to create artwork about a specific global topic. Through two video conferences, they then connected to discuss their artwork and their lives. In 2011, YESS participants partnered with students from Cambodia in a similar culture and art exchange. Instead of a videoconference, the YESS participants met their exchange partners in-person when the Cambodian students came to Norwalk to perform in the gallery.

Stepping Stones has conducted its own global exchange programs with general museum visitors including live connections with a museum staff member traveling in Ecuador, local youth traveling in Nicaragua and with the Reef HQ Aquarium in Queensland, Australia. These exchanges al-



**VOLUNTEERS**

lowed museum visitors to experience the people of Ecuador, the rainforests of Nicaragua and the largest living coral reef aquarium in the world guided by a live underwater diver in a real-time Australian reef tour.

In 2010 the museum began exploring ways to integrate live presentations and creative dramatics with carefully designed and crafted media. Stepping Stones engaged Christopher Eaves, an accomplished performer and multimedia producer to use content from the museum's *Rainforest Adventure* traveling exhibit and input from the ArtLink exchange with Guatemala. He then created *Canopy—A Rainforest Odyssey*, a unique theatrical production that combined traditional acting with projected images to follow the life-cycle of a tropical rainforest leaf that contained a substance destined to become the cure for a disease.

The museum's second theatrical production, *Global Energy—The Musical*, is based on relevant concepts including energy, conservation and the importance of protecting ecologically important lands and waters. Done in collaboration with Child's Play Touring Theatre (CPTT) from Chicago,



*Performer/multimedia producer Christopher Eaves used content from the museum's Rainforest Adventure exhibit to create a unique theatrical production on the Multimedia Gallery's modular stage backed by an eighteen-by-thirty-three-foot immersive screen.*

Illinois, this project uses children's writing to examine the question: How large is our capacity for understanding and for the exchange of our ideas? Founded in 1978, CPTT was the first theater company to exclusively perform stories and poems written by young authors. Children participating in a Children's Museum of Jordan (Amman) writing program along with children from across Connecticut contributed text for the production. Through videoconferencing, Stepping Stones is working to bring a live

performance to the Jordanian children.

A local high school, The Center for Global Studies (CGS), an inter-district, international studies magnet school that focuses upon Arabic, Chinese and Japanese languages, histories and cultures, is partnering with the museum to develop cultural programming for museum visitors and students in the YESS program. This partnership will allow Stepping Stones to conduct a future global exchange with these students when they travel to China, Japan and countries within the Middle East.

As more and more visitors and organizations have access to technology, it's important to remember that the power comes not from the device itself but from using it to connect to concepts, communities and cultures in our own backyards and around the world. The Multimedia Global Connections Initiative has created a culture of connectivity in the museum's community, with a lasting framework with which to promote global understanding and grow globally literate citizens. 🍌

—Kevin Carter, chief operating officer & Hyla Crane, director of education