

Chapter 9

Volunteerism

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Volunteers and volunteerism are highly prevalent in today's society. In 1991, more than 94 million people aged 18 or older volunteered services worth more than \$176 billion dollars (independent Sector). This represents more than half (51 percent) of the American adult population. Volunteers contributed an average of 4.2 hours per week, up from an average 4.0 hours in 1989. The amount of volunteer time totaled 20.5 billion hours, which represents a slight increase from the 20.4 billion hours contributed in 1989. Married people volunteered more than single people, females volunteered more than males, and volunteering by minorities increased. The fastest growing pool of volunteer resources came from the private sector, and volunteer opportunities were more diverse than ever before.

Although the concepts of "volunteer" and "volunteerism" are extremely familiar to most individuals, they are not defined consistently. Smith (1972) conceptualizes volunteers as individuals who donate their time to help other people directly, particularly in areas of health, welfare, housing, education, recreation, and rehabilitation. Park (1983, p. 118) suggests that "the heart of volunteerism is the countless individual acts of commitment encompassing an endless variety of ... tasks." Although functional definitions of volunteerism are as varied as the volunteers themselves, a unifying concept is the idea that volunteers are not paid for their services. In the Volunteer 2000 Study conducted by the American Red Cross, Smith (1989) defines volunteers as individuals who reach out beyond the confines of their paid employment and of their normal responsibilities to contribute time and service to a not-for-profit cause in the belief that their activity is beneficial to others as well as satisfying to themselves. However, Brudney (1990, p.3) notes that some organizations "allow that [volunteers] may receive partial subsistence remuneration and/or reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses.

Who is an Ohio 4-H Volunteer?

The Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture (1990) defines a 4-H volunteer as any person, adult or teen, in a leadership capacity who contributes time to the promotion, organization, assistance, or leadership a 4-H organization, and is not paid for services rendered. The Ohio 4-H youth development program of Ohio State University Extension defines a 4-H volunteer as:

Anyone who (1) contributes time, energies, or talents to the Ohio 4-H youth development program and (2) is not paid by Ohio State University Extension funds.

This definition emphasizes an active involvement and partnership between Ohio 4-H and individuals identified as volunteers. In perspective, those individuals who contribute financial and/or material resources to Ohio 4-H are recognized as donors or sponsors.

Volunteers, donors, and sponsors are all-important partners with Extension professionals and are vital to the continued success of the Ohio 4-H program.

How Volunteers And Ohio 4-H Benefit Each Other

Volunteers are very effective teachers of 4-H members, parents, and other volunteers.

Volunteers: are most often individuals who talk the same language and share similar life experiences as their learners; speak with an authority that derives from their experience with using the ideas they teach; are usually respected within their communities, and their recommendations carry weight with learners; are perceived to be more easily accessible than professional educators; volunteer to teach subject matter in which they are highly interested and, consequently, teach with enthusiasm; are easier for some learners to relate to than professionals; and inspire confidence and self esteem in their learners.

The educational partnership between Ohio 4-H and volunteers has enormous value not only to the organization and its clientele, but also to the individual volunteer and the community at large (Finley, 1987). Volunteers benefit the Ohio 4-H program in that they extend the educational outreach of the organization to a greater number of youth, parents, and other volunteers. Volunteers generate enthusiasm and interest among learners and create a positive image for 4-H by allowing it to provide immediate information to learners about specific topics. Volunteers relieve Extension professionals of many time-consuming individual requests for specific information, thus allowing the professionals to pursue other organizational needs and objectives. Volunteers enable 4-H programs to cover more subjects to a greater depth and with more continuity.

Ohio 4-H members and their parents, donors and sponsors, and other volunteers benefit from volunteers in that more individuals are able to receive immediate information regarding a specific subject. A greater number of learners are able to develop skills and expertise regarding a particular subject matter area and to employ new ideas and skills because of information received from volunteers. Finally, volunteers enable more learners to achieve satisfaction and pride from their educational endeavors that are shaped by the learner's interactions with volunteers.

The individual volunteer benefits by having the opportunity to pursue an interest and consequently gain new information, develop new skills, or enhance existing knowledge. Volunteers develop leadership and social skills as they interact with learners and other volunteers. They develop personal pride and self-satisfaction as they help learners, and gain status and satisfaction from becoming recognized experts in a specific subject. Volunteers continue to develop their knowledge of a subject matter area, often gaining considerable expertise from the experience of teaching the subject matter to others (for some, the teaching experience is like attending college and majoring in a subject). Consequently, when a volunteer shares their skills and knowledge with a learner, the learning experience is intensified for both volunteer and learner alike, and more new knowledge is retained and internalized.

Finally, Ohio communities benefit from the contributions of 4-H volunteers in that the information provided by volunteers helps individuals and their families improve their homes, businesses, and neighborhoods. Greater enthusiasm and rapport develop within communities when volunteers share their enthusiasm for new information and practices, thus encouraging others to become interested in a subject. Furthermore, local sources of knowledge and recognition of outstanding volunteers can contribute to overall community pride.

4-H Volunteer Roles

Volunteers work with Extension professionals in fulfilling several general yet important roles in managing Ohio 4-H youth development programs. These include:

- ▶ teaching and sharing information with 4-H members and their families,
- ▶ teaching and sharing information with other 4-H volunteers,
- ▶ providing logistical support (e.g., writing newsletters, answering telephones, answering questions and requests for information, etc.),
- ▶ providing clerical support (e.g., writing newsletters, answering telephones, answering questions and requests for information, etc.),
- ▶ developing new resources (i.e., identifying and cultivating potential 4-H sponsors and donors),
- ▶ allocating existing resources (i.e., administering budgets, recommending spending priorities, etc.),
- ▶ assisting with administrative responsibilities (e.g., completing reports, making promotional presentations, etc.),
- ▶ developing programs (e.g., identifying needs, establishing objectives, identifying strategies, securing resources, conducting evaluations, and reporting results), and
- ▶ assisting with futuring and strategic planning (i.e., identifying future needs, recognizing emerging trends, establishing long-range goals, etc.).

In examining these general roles, the important word to remember is partnerships. In many youth organizations, a “top-down” philosophy is followed in which professionals at the “top” of the organizational pyramid are perceived to “control” the functions of middle managers and other volunteers who, in turn, “control” the activities of youth and their parents.

However, Ohio 4-H emphasizes a “bottom-up” philosophy that places youth and their parents in a position of foremost importance in the organization. Professionals function to “uplift” and support middle managers and other volunteers as they, in turn support young people and their parents with 4-H educational programs. Indeed, Extension professionals and 4-H volunteers must develop strong partnerships, based upon mutual respect and trust, if 4-H is to continue to be the premier non-formal youth development organization in Ohio.

Types of Ohio 4-H Volunteers

There are six specific types of Ohio 4-H volunteers.

A **club advisor** is any individual who works with a 4-H community or project club that involves two or more youth who meet regularly to conduct club business, plan the club program, and enroll individually or as a group in one or more 4-H projects. More specifically, there are three types of 4-H club advisors. An **organizational advisor** serves as the primary communications and information liaison between the county 4-H professional and the club’s members, their parents, and other advisors in the club. A **project advisor** assists 4-H members with their projects. An **activity advisor** works with members in planning and conducting club activities. However, all of these advisors work together as a team in supporting the members of a 4-H club and their parents.

A **middle manager** is any individual who serves in a coordination role between professional extension staff and other volunteers, parents, or members. There are three types of 4-H middle managers: **key leaders** who serve as experts in particular subject matter areas or with specific activities and events; **master volunteers** who teach subject matter to other volunteers or parents; and **committee members** who assist professional extension staff in planning, implementing, and evaluating county 4-H educational programs.

A **school enrichment volunteer** is any individual (including a classroom teacher) who works with a short-term 4-H program, offered during regular school hours, to enrich the formal classroom curriculum. A school enrichment program focuses on hands-on experiences, provides real life applications of knowledge gained, increases member understanding of difficult concepts, and encourages the development of student members as young adults.

A **special emphasis volunteer** is any individual who works with a short-term 4-H group to offer a series of hands-on activities designed to meet the interests and needs of the youth within their community. This is the most flexible of the 4-H groups, because it can be offered to various numbers of young people in a variety of settings and on a multitude of topics. In many communities, 4-H special emphasis groups meet in schools, community centers, or churches. They focus on one or more topics through activities such as after-school programs, juvenile diversion programs, sports clinics, etc. Special emphasis groups can also be organized by individual volunteers as small, informal gatherings that meet in homes or local businesses. These groups typically attract youth

from surrounding 4-H clubs or within the community by focusing on a particular area of specialty, such as woodworking, aquariums, cultural arts, foods, clowning, photography, computers, etc.

A **committee member** is any individual who contributes time, energies, or talents to any 4-H sponsored committee.

A **youth volunteer** is any young person with the emotional maturity and leadership ability necessary to function in any of the above volunteer roles.

Written job descriptions for each of these specific types of volunteers may be found in the *Ohio 4-H B.L.A.S.T.!* notebook, Module 2, pages 24-43.

4-H Volunteer Management

Boyce (1971) suggests a leadership development model that correlates closely with the basic components of a volunteer development program outlined above. The model's components include identification, selection, orientation, training, utilization, recognition, and evaluation of leadership opportunities. As applied to volunteer development programs, these components are as follows:

- ▶ **Identifying** volunteer opportunities within the organization and developing appropriate written job descriptions for the opportunities;
- ▶ **Selecting** (recruiting) individual(s) best qualified (i.e., with appropriate knowledge, attitudes, and skills) for the volunteer opportunity;
- ▶ **Orienting** the individual(s) to both the total organization and the specific volunteer responsibility;
- ▶ **Training** the individual(s) in developing additional knowledge, attitudes, and skills that will enable them to be successful in fulfilling their volunteer responsibility;
- ▶ **Using** the volunteer's knowledge, attitudes, and skills in contributing to the success and growth of the organization;
- ▶ **Recognizing** the volunteer for the positive contributions they make to the organization; and
- ▶ **Evaluating** the individual's performance as a volunteer.

The I.S.O.T.U.R.E. model has three important benefits when applied to volunteer development programs. First, the model is practical. Although based on leadership development theory, the I.S.O.T.U.R.E. model focuses on the pragmatic aspects of working with volunteers on a day-to-day basis. Second, the I.S.O.T.U.R.E. model is easily understood by professional volunteer administrators, middle managers, and other

volunteers. The model's components are described in terms that are familiar to all of us, professional and volunteer alike. And, third, the I.S.O.T.U.R.E. model is universal in its application. The concepts of identifying, selecting, orienting, training, using, recognizing, and evaluating volunteers are equally applicable and valid for all volunteer organizations regardless of geographic location and organizational purpose, structure, and size.

For detailed information and specific resources regarding volunteer management, refer to the *Ohio 4-H B.L.A.S.T.!* notebook.

Supporting Ohio 4-H Volunteers: Developmental Opportunities

Every Year

Two statewide volunteer development opportunities are available each year for all Ohio 4-H volunteers.

The State 4-H Volunteer Recognition Luncheon

The State 4-H Volunteer Recognition Luncheon recognizes all individuals who serve as 4-H volunteers including club advisors, school enrichment volunteers, special emphasis volunteers, middle managers (key leaders or master volunteers), committee members, and youth volunteers. A meaningful ceremony provides group recognition for all 5-, 10-, 15-, 20-, 25-, 30-, and 35-year volunteers in attendance; individual recognition is provided for all 40-, 45-, 50-, 55-, and 60-year volunteers. The meal, a souvenir memento, a recognition certificate, and a clover pin, tray, or other appropriate token are provided for each volunteer in attendance.

The goals of the Luncheon include:

- ▶ To recognize the contributions to Ohio youth by 4-H volunteers (i.e., club advisors, school enrichment volunteers, special emphasis volunteers, middle managers, committee members, and youth volunteers) serving. Meaningful recognition of this service is a basic human need and contributes to increased volunteer recruitment, retention, and participation; and
- ▶ To recognize the current year's inductees into the Ohio 4-H Hall of Fame (for Hall of Fame nomination information, please refer to the Ohio 4-H Awards packet).

Names of eligible volunteers should be submitted on the current computerized registration program for statewide 4-H events in June of each year. Separate letters will be mailed to county offices in: (1) May of each year (a reminder of the deadline for submitting volunteer names); and (2) August of each year (asking for guest/media/Extension professional reservations to the luncheon; all reservation names and subsequent expenses must be received the State 4-H Office in early September). For

specific dates, deadlines, and other registration information, please refer to the *State 4-H Events and Opportunities Handbook*.

The North Central Regional 4-H Leaders' Forum

The annual North Central Regional 4-H Leaders' Forum provides the opportunity for adult Ohio 4-H volunteers to learn and interact with volunteers from the other North Central states to further develop their personal knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations as volunteers in the Ohio 4-H Program. A different state in the north Central Region (e.g., Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) host the annual Forum, usually in November.

The goals of Ohio's participation in the Forum are:

- ▶ To provide expanded educational opportunities for individuals to develop their knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations as volunteers with the Ohio 4-H program.
- ▶ To provide structured opportunities for Ohio 4-H volunteer delegates to develop their leadership knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations;
- ▶ To provide structured opportunities for Ohio 4-H volunteer delegates to interact with 4-H volunteers from the twelve other states in the North Central Region; and
- ▶ To encourage and promote peer learning and social interactions among Ohio 4-H delegates to the North Central Regional 4-H Leaders' Forum.

The Forum is open to all adult Ohio 4-H volunteers (i.e., club advisors, school enrichment volunteers, special emphasis volunteers, middle managers, and committee members). Delegates to previous regional Forums should be encouraged to recruit and secure the participation of other Ohio 4-H volunteers who have not participated in previous regional Forums.

Pre-registration information and a deposit of \$150 (per person) is due in the State 4-H Office in early June. Total costs vary from year to year but include Forum registration, administrative fee, travel, insurance, and lodging. All requested registration information and fee balance is due in the State 4-H Office in late October. Specific information concerning the current year's Forum is forwarded to counties immediately upon receipt from the host state.

The State 4-H Office corresponds directly with pre-registered delegates. Ohio 4-H volunteers' participation in the forum is coordinated by and through the State 4-H Office (travel, rooming arrangements, insurance, etc.).

Except in "hardship cases" approved by the State 4-H Office in advance (e.g., health/medical limitations, extreme conflicts with work place schedules, etc.) delegates must travel to and from the Forum in State 4-H Office sponsored transportation (i.e.,

chartered passenger bus, leased van, etc.) operated by a driver authorized by Ohio State University (i.e., Extension professional, contracted bus driver, etc.). Two Volunteer Coordinators (one Senior Coordinator who served as Junior Coordinator the previous year, and one Junior Coordinator to be selected each year) assist the contact person in the State 4-H Office in coordinating Ohio's participation in the Forum. The Volunteer Coordinator Forum program expenses (e.g., Forum registration, transportation, insurance, etc.) are paid by Ohio 4-H. Additionally, all pre- and post-Forum related expenses (appropriate travel, telephone, etc.) are reimbursed by the State 4-H Office. Any volunteer planning to attend the Forum may apply for the junior Volunteer Coordinator position.

Further information concerning this volunteer development opportunity (volunteer coordinator job description, Forum theme, location, workshops expenses, etc.) may be found in the *State 4-H Events and Opportunities Handbook*.

Odd Numbered Years

(i.e., 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, etc.)

The Ohio 4-H Volunteer Forum

The Ohio 4-H Volunteer Forum is held in odd numbered years, usually the last weekend in February. (Please note: this date normally corresponds to the annual Plowboy Prom sponsored by the Ohio State University Collegiate 4-H Club.) The Volunteer Forum seeks to promote and cultivate a volunteer team philosophy, and will provide Ohio 4-H club advisors, school enrichment volunteers, special emphasis volunteers, committee members, middle managers, and youth volunteers with outstanding opportunities to develop their knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations in the various aspects of their contributions to Ohio 4-H.

The goals of the Volunteer Forum include:

- ▶ To communicate accurate, pragmatic, research-based information and materials concerning 4-H youth development to Ohio 4-H volunteers;
- ▶ To provide quality, in-depth opportunities for Ohio 4-H volunteers to develop necessary skills and abilities in serving as club advisors, committee members, middle managers (key leaders and master volunteers), school enrichment volunteers, special emphasis volunteers, youth volunteers, resource leaders and/or program advocates;
- ▶ To provide opportunities for positive interaction, communication and sharing among Ohio 4-H volunteers in both formal and informal situations;
- ▶ To increase 4-H volunteers' awareness of all aspects of the Ohio 4-H program;
- ▶ To provide opportunities to expand Ohio 4-H volunteers' knowledge, skills and interests in working with youth; and

- ▶ To identify materials and personnel available for 4-H volunteers to use in helping Ohio youth develop their full potential.

A camera-ready registration flyer is mailed to counties in late November. The Forum Registration Form and appropriate fees are due in the State 4-H Office in early February 5. Costs vary but include meals, supplemental insurance, and appropriate Forum materials. Further information regarding the Volunteer Forum may be found in the *Ohio 4-H Events and Opportunities Handbook*.

Even Numbered Years

(i.e., 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, etc.)

Ohio 4-H Master Volunteer and Key Leader Forums

Master Volunteer and Key Leader Forums help experienced volunteers develop the leadership, teaching, and subject matter skills necessary to assist in planning, implementing, and evaluating Ohio 4-H opportunities in specific subject matter/program areas. Forum participants agree to return to respective counties/districts and partner with salaried Extension professionals to teach 4-H members, parents, and/or other volunteers. (For specific 4-H Master Volunteer and Key Leader job descriptions, refer to the *Ohio 4-H B.L.A.S.T.! notebook*, Module 2, pages 38-41.)

The goals of the Forum include:

- ▶ To identify and support volunteers who desire to teach 4-H members parents, an/or other volunteers in specific subject matter/program areas;
- ▶ To provide interested volunteers with the training necessary to teach specific subject matter;
- ▶ To multiply the educational outreach of 4-H youth development educational programs; and
- ▶ To support salaried 4-H professionals in working with volunteers, parents, and youth.

The focuses of Master Volunteer and Key Leader Forums vary depending upon current subject matter needs and emphasis. Specific information regarding planned Forums may be found in the *Ohio 4-H Events and Opportunities Handbook*.

The Ohio 4-H Volunteer Involvement Policy

Please See Appendix M

The Ohio State University Extension Youth Protection Policy

O.S.U. Extension worked closely with the Ohio Department of Human Services – Child Care Division and the Ohio State Attorney General’s office to develop the Ohio State University Youth Protection Policy that became effective on August 5, 1992. The Policy outlines expected professional guidelines and volunteer Standards of Behavior related to working directly with youth, identifies training resources for identifying incidence of child abuse, and includes recommended organizational procedures for reported suspected incidence of child abuse.

By far, the majority of other national non-formal youth development organizations (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the American Scouting Association, YWCA and YMCA) have already initiated similar policies within the past five years. Boy Scouts, for example, charges potential volunteers a non-refundable fee to cover the expense of a required background check, and requires extensive information of potential scout leaders through a volunteer application form.

The Policy outlines the responsibilities and roles of Extension professionals and volunteers in providing the safest possible environment for youth involved in Extension programs. All Extension professionals must sign and submit to their immediate supervisor an Agreement form; all Extension volunteers must indicate that they will abide by the Youth Protection Policy by signing and having on file in the county Extension office the O.S.U. Extension/Ohio 4-H Volunteer Standards of Behavior.

The actual Ohio State University Extension Youth Protection Policy is included in the Appendix.