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Volunteer Management In the Leisure Service Curriculum

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(Editor-generated) Abstract

This article addresses the use of volunteers in public leisure service organizations to maintain and enhance recreation and parks programs. The author examines why volunteerism is an important area in leisure services; suggests steps which can be used in developing a volunteer management course as a part of the leisure service curriculum; and outlines objectives, course content methodology, and evaluation of a volunteer management course.

(Editor-generated) Key Words: volunteerism, leisure

In a time of inflation and shrinking budgets combined with an increase in the demands for leisure opportunities, professionals in public leisure service organizations are seeking ways to maintain and enhance current recreation and park programs. One of the ways to accomplish this is the increased use of volunteers.

Philosophically, utilizing volunteers, particularly in leisure programs, has a double pay-off. Volunteers provide assistance to the leisure service organization and volunteering is also an activity which can meet the free-time or leisure needs of individuals. Providing opportunities for people to volunteer is creating an additional recreation service. For this double pay-off to occur, it is imperative that volunteers be managed effectively. The intent of this article is: 1) to examine why volunteerism is an important area in leisure services; 2) to

suggest steps which can be used in developing a volunteer management course as a part of the leisure service curriculum; and 3) to outline the objectives, course content methodology, and evaluation of a volunteer management course.

Volunteerism in Leisure Services

Persons who have studied volunteer management realize that basically the same skills are required in managing paid personnel as in managing volunteers. However, for many students and professionals in human or leisure service fields, it is useful and necessary to specifically apply management theory directly to volunteer administration.

Volunteerism is considered an important aspect of most social service agencies. Leisure services have traditionally used a number of volunteers in various capacities, such as Little League coaches, youth club leaders,

advisory committees, and in nursing homes to mention only a few. The number of volunteers is continually increasing. Two approaches may be used in coordinating volunteers.

Although some leisure service programs employ full-time volunteer coordinators or administrators, in many cases the coordination of volunteers within a particular recreation or park unit is the responsibility of the professional in charge of that unit. While there are merits to either approach, many times the leisure professional who spends a majority of time coordinating volunteers is not fully trained in how to be effective in managing these "unpaid" staff.

People generally volunteer during free time or leisure time. This time spent volunteering has been viewed as a constructive use of leisure (Henderson, 1979). Service to others is suggested to be at the top of the hierarchy of leisure time use (Jensen, 1977). The similarities between volunteerism and leisure may be a useful relationship to illustrate for both the leisure service provider and for others involved in managing volunteers. The following is a list of the attributes that might be in common to both volunteerism and leisure. Volunteerism and leisure both:

- are chosen voluntarily;
- address higher level needs (i.e., self-esteem, self-actualization);
- usually occur during non-work time;
- are engaged in for their own sake and not for extrinsic reward;
- make life meaningful and well-rounded;
- contribute to an individual's personal growth.

Granted, there are additional reasons for volunteering, such as serving others and career exploration, but these attributes listed above suggest the similarities between leisure and volunteering.

In studying both volunteerism and leisure from a professional standpoint, it is obvious that they are merging interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary subjects. Pure research related to either topic is in the neophyte stages as both are phenomenon that are reviewed and discussed mainly as aspects of the contemporary American lifestyle. That is not to say that both have not been around since the beginning of civilization, but neither has merited extensive study until the last half of this century. In a sense, the concepts of volunteerism and also of leisure have "come of age."

The interdisciplinary aspects of volunteerism and leisure enable them to have a meaningful emphasis in today's society. With the increased complexity of social and technological change, the search for personal meaning and identity, and the changing nature of work, achievement, and consumption, volunteerism and leisure in a holistic framework provide meaning in today's society. The holism suggests that all elements of life are interrelated. Aspects of leisure can be found in work, school, and religion, as well as in volunteerism. Thus, the need to manage volunteers optimally for the sake of the individual volunteer is becoming more apparent.

Considerations for Volunteer Management

Volunteers today, compared to volunteers of the past, have an important combination of better skills, higher education, more experience, increased leisure, and a desire to use all of these

capacities. Certainly, the persons who supervise these volunteers should also have better management skill, a broader education regarding people and society, and more understanding of the importance of volunteerism and leisure. Many professional degree programs are beginning to design course work that includes volunteer administration (Schwartz, 1978). Most curriculums in leisure studies are designed to train and educate professionals to be supervisors, managers, and administrators. Personnel administration courses or units may or may not include volunteers. More emphasis is needed on "how to work with volunteers" as an aspect of the professional education program and as a part of the continuing professional education program of all human service professions, especially the leisure service fields.

If a college or university offers a major in volunteer administration, then students in various helping professions can take advantage of some course work that relates directly to volunteer administration. In colleges and universities where no formal major exists, there are two alternatives. Volunteer administration could be handled as an integral aspect of personnel management within a specific course such as park administration; or a separate course could be developed for persons interested in specifically exploring volunteer management, such as a course entitled "Volunteer Programs in Leisure Services" taught by the author. Whichever approach is taken, volunteerism and volunteer management is an aspect of human service, as well as other social service areas, must develop curriculum which incorporate volunteers as one integral part of their philosophy and organization.

Marlene Wilson (1976) stated, "A good manager is an enabler of human resources." Whether a professional works with paid staff or with volunteers, that individual is a manager. A manager is someone who works with and through others to reach organizational goals.

Managers of volunteers have the same kind of tasks and responsibilities as do paid staff. Myths exist about volunteers that suggest that volunteers are much different than paid staff. Some people think you can't manage volunteers because you have no money with which to "bargain." Others think using volunteers is like admitting inadequacy on the part of the professional. Some professionals feel threatened by volunteers. These misconceptions and others can be discussed and dispelled if they are addressed in preparation classes and planned experiences designed for persons who will be professional administrators involved with volunteers.

Designing a Volunteer Management Course

Developing a course, a curriculum, a portion of a course, or a training session on volunteer management requires the consideration of several additional points. Tyler (1975) has suggested a method that may be helpful when applied to outlining a volunteer management program or course. Tyler assumes the educational program should be based on the needs of the learners and the objectives are based on the organization of learning experiences. In addition, he suggests curriculum or program development is a step-wise process. The four questions Tyler says should be asked in curriculum development are: 1) what educational purposes (objectives) should be sought;

2) what educational experiences (course content) are likely to attain these purposes; 3) how can these educational experiences be effectively organized (method of teaching); and 4) how can we determine whether these purposes are attained (evaluation). Based on these four steps in Tyler's model, aspects of volunteer management as a course or as a major component of a leisure service or human service curriculum will be discussed.

Objectives

The source of the objectives or the course purposes is based upon what the student or learner needs and is interested in, what is required in the field of volunteer management, societal problems, and the subject area itself. In this case, the learner is whomever the volunteer management program is addressing, either college recreation, park or leisure students or the professional who is seeking additional continuing professional education.

Objectives are the basis for organizing learning experiences. Objectives address what "should be" in the management of volunteers. These objectives can be very broad in nature or more narrowly defined. Some educators and teachers have the opportunity to work side by side with their learners or students to determine the particular needs of students. In other cases, the empirical knowledge available and previous experiences of the educator may provide the basis for determining which objectives should be sought. Choosing educational objectives relates to how the student should think, feel, and/or act as a result of the learning. A list of broad objectives that apply to a volunteer management course might include the following:

- The student will identify trends in the history and philosophy of volunteerism and relate these to the delivery of leisure services.
- The student will apply management concepts to administration of volunteer services recreation and leisure service agencies.
- The student will discuss and analyze techniques of recruiting, training, supervising, and evaluating volunteers.
- The student will investigate methods of working with voluntary advisory boards and committees and the use of community resources.
- The student will design volunteer job descriptions that can be used in leisure services.
- The student will practice skills such as proposal writing, communication, and leadership techniques that are needed for effective and efficient volunteer management.
- The student will develop problem-solving techniques as related to volunteer management.
- The student will appreciate the role volunteers play in human and leisure service agencies.

In choosing objectives, the educator should ask the following questions: Can the objectives result from learning?; Are the objectives feasible?; Are the objectives or purposes educationally attainable?; Will there be opportunities to use this learning?; Are the objectives consistent?; Will the attainment of objective result in new or changed behaviors? Analyzing the objectives is a way to assure that the objectives are going to relate to the needs identified and to the area of volunteer management.

Course Content

To a great extent, the volunteer management course content will be dependent upon the philosophy of learning. Generally, there are two kinds of learning: training and education. Training is the kind of learning in which the total pattern is given and learner follows exactly that which is taught. In future situations, the same learned pattern is used. Education, on the other hand, is the emphasis on trying to teach problem solving and alternative ways of thinking. Education extends beyond the time something is taught. Education emphasizes that learning is dynamic and not just repeated patterns. In general, the learning needed for volunteer administration can be a combination of both education and training emphasis. Aspects of administrative procedures and some specific techniques taught are considered training elements. The skills needed for human services require problem-solving skills which encompass the realm of education.

Any kind of learning takes place only when an individual learner or student relates to an experience. The course content of volunteer management should include opportunities to explore skills, knowledge, values or attitudes, and concepts.

Examples of topics which might be explored in a core volunteer management course might include: What is volunteerism?; Trends/history of volunteers; Volunteerism and leisure; Volunteerism and the women's movement; Voluntary Action Centers and other volunteer and community organizations; Roles of volunteer coordinators/managers; Goal setting/objective writing; Organizational behavior; Needs assessment; Using job descriptions; Recruiting volunteers;

Placing volunteers; Motivating volunteers; Supervising volunteers; Orientating and training volunteers; Communication; Legal aspects of volunteerism; Group processes; Problem solving; Rewarding/recognizing volunteers; Working with paid and unpaid staff; Volunteers in leisure activities; Proposal writing; Volunteer boards and committees; Evaluating volunteer programs; Record keeping; and, the future of volunteerism

These learning experiences should evoke the desired behavior (i.e., better volunteer management), give the learner an active involvement, deal with the content of volunteer management, and give the learner an opportunity for achievement and satisfaction.

Organizing Educational Methods

The course content is of little benefit until it is organized into directed learning experiences. This involves the development of specific and general methods for teaching and learning. The criteria for this organization is integrated, sequenced experiences. An example of a specific sequential learning experience would be having students read about leadership styles, discuss these in class, role play the style, and, finally have students write a reaction to their own analysis of a personal leadership style.

In addition to the traditional educational approaches of reading written materials, lectures, tests and class discussions, there are a number of educational methods that may be used in a volunteer management course. These include:

- Guest speakers who are volunteer coordinators/managers.

- Students actually volunteering in the community in conjunction with the class.
- Students interviewing human or leisure service professionals in the community in regard to the volunteer manager's roles.
- Writing a volunteer handbook or manual as an individual or group project.
- Role play interviewing/orienting sessions in class.
- Using case studies for problem solving discussions.
- Each student write a case study of a situation which might happen in volunteer management.
- Write and/or analyze volunteer job description.
- Analyze personal communication skills via a short paper.
- Write a grant proposal (as a group or individual) for funding a volunteer program in an agency – include statement of the problem, objectives, plans, budget, method of evaluation.
- Write a program proposal for using volunteers in a human leisure service agency (including philosophy of volunteering, objectives, recruitment techniques, job description, a training plan, record-keeping system, evaluation techniques).
- Design a recruitment brochure or poster.
- Develop 100 ways to recognize and reward volunteers.
- Visit a human or leisure service agency and analyze their board and/or committee structure.
- Analyze the component of effective training by attending volunteer training meetings.
- Students write a written evaluation of their potential as volunteer coordinator.

- Because volunteer management involves both broad and specific skills, the methods used in the course should provide opportunities for broadening and deepening the subject matter. These experiences should provide both specific and general information and address both real and abstract concepts. A variety of methods are necessary because managing volunteer experiences requires an interdisciplinary approach with a variety of skills and expertise required.

Evaluation

The last aspect in the course development is evaluation. Evaluation is the process of determining the value or worth of something relative to the given purposes or objectives. Evaluations generally includes examining the behavior changes using some kind of collection method, relating the changes to the stated objectives, and making judgments about the overall value of the course.

Evaluation methods might include knowledge tests, evaluation of specific skills, observation of skills, noted attitude changes, or by written or oral evaluation of specific individual and class projects.

Summary

Volunteer programs in leisure service agencies, as well as in other human services, can extend, enhance, and expand current services. In addition, when volunteers are humanistically managed, the volunteering itself becomes more rewarding and important to the individual. Volunteering can provide a meaningful use of leisure. Loeser (1974) stated, "There is a real danger that people will fritter away the new time of the mechanics of living, on

busy work, on activities that waste time without increasing the happiness of either the individual or the group in society.” Volunteer managers in any human service have the responsibility of facilitating volunteers to increase the happiness of the individual and the society. Good volunteer management developed through a leisure service curriculum can provide for the growth of individuals as well as organizations.

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