

**In This Issue:**  
**“It Takes an Entire Village: Volunteerism and Community Development”**

Most of us have heard the phrase, “It takes an entire village to raise a child.” (In fact, the phrase has become so commonplace during the past decade to have become almost cliché.) However, behind these nine simple words lies a monumental idea: every community citizen has some role to play, either biologically, physically, socially or culturally, in ensuring that each youth in the community has a positive and nurturing journey into adulthood.

Communities are not unlike children. They are born; mature (while often experiencing growing pangs) into vibrant self-sustaining entities; age; and sometimes (unfortunately) die. The most successful, positive and sustainable communities are those in which all members share in the community’s biological, physical, social and cultural responsibilities necessary to maintain that community. As such, the community’s members organize themselves into institutions that focus upon specific aspects of the community’s development. We broadly speak of two major sectors of such organizations: businesses and industries (the for-profit sector); and government, mutual-benefit and commonweal organizations (the non-profit sector). But within the past three decades, communities around the world have come to rely more and more upon an emerging third sector of human society to contribute actively to positive community development, the volunteer sector.

The issue opens with two *Feature Articles* highlighting critical roles that volunteers play in holistic community development. Mark Brennan emphasizes the paramount importance of volunteers in initiating, implementing, and monitoring community development efforts. According to the author, “Volunteers are at the core of effective community development and are routinely the catalysts behind successful efforts.” Lynne Borden and Daniel Perkins discuss more specific roles volunteers play at various levels of community-based development efforts in serving as critical links between formal community-focused organizations and the clients the organizations seek to serve. “Volunteers offer community-based organizations one way to expand their influence without the addition of paid staff. Given the financial limitations facing community-based organizations, volunteers can truly enhance and strengthen the work of the organization.”

William Woodrum’s insightful *Commentary* discusses the need for a major paradigm shift by many community-development professionals regarding (what he perceives) is a disregard for, and lack of focus upon, volunteerism and volunteer involvement. According to the author, “this lack of focus on volunteerism’s role in community and economic development has limited the efficacy of professionals in the field.” Using the Main Street Project as an example (an economic development program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation), the author concludes that ultimately, community-development “. . . is about building the people who build the group, and a specific focus in this area is volunteer development.”

*From The JOVA Annals* features five excellent articles focused upon the volume’s theme, yet published previously in *The Journal of Volunteer Administration* (The JOVA): “African-American Participation in Mainstream Greater Richmond Voluntary Organizations: A Report From The Field,” by Nelson Wikstrom, Ph.D. (originally published in 1995); “Assessing Impacts on Volunteers who Participate in Collaborative Efforts to Manage Environmental Disputes,” by

Loretta Singletary, Marilyn Smith and George C. Hill (first published in 2003); “Where a Bar of Soap Can Make a Difference: Family Planning Volunteers in Uganda Express Their Needs,” by Annette Flaherty and Walter Kipp (published originally in 2004); and, “Volunteerism and Community Development: A Comparison of Factors Shaping Volunteer Behavior in Irish and American Communities,” by Mark A. Brennan and “Community Volunteers: The Front Line of Disaster Response,” by M.A. Brennan, Rosemary V. Barnett, and Courtney G. Flint (both published originally in 2005).

We hope this issue of *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration* will provide the reader with insights and aspirations as we think globally to better mobilize volunteers so as to act locally to strengthen and develop vibrantly thriving communities.

R. Dale Safrit, Ed.D.  
Editor-In-Chief