

Training Busy Staff to Succeed with Volunteers: The 55-Minute Training Series

Betty Stallings (2007). Philadelphia, PA: Energize Inc. (Advanced Review copy: 345 pages plus PowerPoint slides. Electronic Form ISBN: 0-940576-43-0).

“New and improved” certainly describes the latest edition of Betty Stallings’ *Training Busy Staff to Succeed with Volunteers: The 55-Minute training Series*. This updated resource, available in electronic format only, takes this standard training tool for administrators of volunteer programs to a new level of utility.

Available as either a complete training series, or as single training modules, the text features lesson plans and full sets of handouts to complement the lessons. Each module includes an introduction to the topic, learning objectives and general notes for the trainer, a presentation overview, presentation script (including suggested timeframes), thumbnail views of slides, suggestions for additional activities, suggested resources, and a full set of handouts needed for the module. Professionally designed PowerPoint slides visually support the training sessions, and are provided for each module. The 12 separate modules included in the resource series are: 1) Designing Positions for Volunteers, 2) Volunteer Recruitment, 3) Interviewing Volunteers, 4) Volunteer Motivation, 5) Supervising Volunteers, 6) Orienting and Training Volunteers, 7) Delegating to Volunteers, 8) Mutual Performance Reviews, 9) Handling Volunteer Performance Problems, 10) Volunteer Program Evaluation, 11) Risk Management in Volunteer Programs, and 12) Volunteer Recognition.

Each module provides materials in a succinct and thorough format that translate into (as the series title suggests)

a 55-minute workshops focused topic. Expansion activities allow for creating more in-depth training sessions in which additional time might be devoted to each topic. Materials are designed ideally to provide basic, introductory information for each topic; thus, the resources are ideally targeted to new administrators of volunteer programs or staff members for whom concepts of the management of volunteers are new.

One very helpful component of this new resource is the introductory section included with the purchase of the full series. This material covers general information on adult learning and tips for preparing and using visuals in training, and also includes a needs assessment tool to assist a trainer in determining the needs of the learners for whom training sessions might be planned. These tips and techniques provide good, basic preparatory information and resources for designing appropriate trainings to meet the expressed needs of targeted participants, and serve as valuable resources for those who are not experienced adult educators.

While the materials are very useful, some concerns exist with issues of format and access (again, NOT the quality of the information). As with any electronic document, after investing the initial fee for purchasing the materials and downloading the actual document (the advanced review copy was sent as a pdf file), the buyer is then faced with the cost of printing a large quantity of text pages (345 in the advance review document). The PowerPoint slides are included as a wonderful resource, but

can create compatibility issues with varying formats of the software used to access them (here at the university, we are locked into Windows 2003). Again, this is not unique to this resource, but is certainly an issue for some who may have access to limited computer resources. An initial "Software Requirements" page or notice would benefit the user greatly. Finally, the pages are numbered in each of the 12 modules for purchase as separate units. Thus, when the entire series is purchased and printed, the page numbering is confusing in that the same numbering is repeated for each of the 12 individual

modules, so when consolidated as a single holistic document, the identification of unique modules requires a little patience. The problem is easily fixed with binder dividers for the printed text, but can be disconcerting at first glance.

Overall, this is truly a valuable addition to any volunteer administration library. The 12 modules stand-alone for training, or may be combined into a series for multiple day training. It is certainly worth the \$69 purchase price, and I know that I will be using this material repeatedly in the coming years.

About the Reviewer

Harriett C. Edwards, Ed.D. is an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist in Continuing Volunteer Education in the Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family & Consumer Sciences at North Carolina State University. Her research is focused upon episodic volunteerism and teens as volunteers, and she currently provides leadership to a special initiative supporting youth in military families with deployed parents.