

In This Issue:
Age as Opportunity

*For age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself, though in another dress,
And as the evening twilight fades away
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I have always loved this simple poem by Longfellow. I originally came across it way back in 1990 when I used it in my undergraduate leadership class at Ohio State to help emphasize the point that one must actively seek opportunities to lead. Like the stars during the daytime, those leadership opportunities are there, but it just takes more effort to see them.

So it is with age, opportunity, and volunteerism. As a society, we no longer think of retirement as a time to sit in a rocking chair on the front porch watching and waiting for time to pass. Rather, individuals over the age of 65 (“the elderly”, “senior Americans”, “the gray revolution”, etc.) are reinventing and reinvigorating themselves in retirement through second careers, forging new life directions targeted toward issues and causes that are meaningful to them, often as volunteers. As I begin the third year of the second half-century of my life, I am developing a new perspective of and appreciation for the concept of “elderly.” Safrit men tend to live full, long lives (my Dad just celebrated his 93rd birthday) and I only have another few years before retirement becomes an option for me. I am certain that my “elderly years” will evolve as a dynamic combination of paid and volunteer work, and eventually, I too will probably be the recipient of the selfless efforts of volunteers aiding me in my “twilight years”.

This issue of *The International Journal Of Volunteer Administration* approaches volunteerism from two distinctly different perspectives, first, volunteerism targeted to the elderly, and second, engaging the elderly as volunteers. The issue opens with four excellent *Feature Articles*. Carolyn Bird describes the impacts of a program that engages volunteers to help older adults enrolled in Medicare Part D prescription drug programs, or SHIIP (Seniors’ Health Insurance Program). According to the author, “The SHIIP program illustrates how volunteers may be engaged to deliver a complex program to older adults, annually saving sponsoring agencies and program clientele thousands of dollars individually and resulting in multi-million dollar statewide impact”. Suzanne Cook explores volunteerism as a medium for learning during retirement. She discusses important opportunities for volunteer resource managers to bridge volunteerism with lifelong learning in older adults, with important implications for volunteer engagement and retention. Lonneke Roza, Anke Becker, Eva van Baren, and Lucas Meijs approach the concept of volunteering by the elderly as “productive aging”. They conclude that “Older volunteers can offer unique assets to organizations and society through their knowledge and expertise.” Finally, Paula Speevak Sladowski discusses how volunteer organizations can prepare themselves to better engage baby boomers now and be prepared to retain them in volunteerism into their senior adult years. According to the author, “The evolving landscape in the non-profit and voluntary sector and the shifts in the public policy environment add to the complexity that volunteer

organizations are facing. . . . With each generation of senior volunteers, a higher percentage is volunteering but they volunteer fewer hours per year and are often seeking shorter-term volunteer opportunities.” She also offers an excellent *Tools of the Trade* sharing valuable insights gained through a national research study of trends in volunteer resource management in Canada, focusing upon youth, families, baby boomers, and employee-supported volunteers.

Leo Schlosnagle, Tara Karns, and JoNell Strough present an *Ideas That Work* describing the innovative Green Thumbs, Health Joints program that utilizes volunteers to help modify gardening activities using ergonomic tools and raised flower beds with the goal of increasing the involvement of older adults with joint pain. They conclude that “Health promotion programs . . . that facilitate physical activity for older adults with disabilities can be therapeutic.”

From the Annals includes four articles published previously in *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*, all relating directly to the current issue’s focus. “Volunteer Attrition: Lessons Learned from Oregon’s Long-Term Care Ombudsman” by Wayne Nelson, Ellen Netting, Kevin Borders, and Ruth Huber was first published in 2004. “The Impact of the Senior Companion Program on Quality of Life Outcomes for Frail Older Adults” by Donna Rabiner, Scott Scheffler, Elizabeth Koetse, Jennifer Palermo, Elizabeth Ponzi, Sandra Burt, and Lynelle Hampton was published in 2003, while “Serving and Keeping Those Who Serve: Foster Grandparents and Their Own Family Needs” was first published in 1998. The issue closes with “The Leadership Institute for Active Aging: A Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Model” authored by Laura Wilson, Jack Steele, Estina Thompson, and Cathy D’heron and first published in 2002.

I join the entire Editorial Board and Reviewers of *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration* in sharing this issue so that we may all continue to seek for those hard-to-see opportunities offered by and through volunteerism during the twilight years of our lives. I invite and encourage you to come join me in getting up out of the rocking chair and instead rocking the world as a volunteer



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