

# ★ Volunteer Engagement Stars ★

*Stories of Success ★ Greater Washington Region Nonprofits*



**center for nonprofit  
advancement**



*April 2012*

*The Center for Nonprofit Advancement and Volunteer Frontier thank the nonprofits and their leaders who gave generously of their time and insight to participate in this report.*

Arlington Free Clinic, [www.arlingtonfreeclinic.org](http://www.arlingtonfreeclinic.org), Nancy Pallesen, Executive Director

A Wider Circle, [www.awidercircle.org](http://www.awidercircle.org), Mark Bergel, Executive Director

Capital Area Food Bank, [www.capitalareafoodbank.org](http://www.capitalareafoodbank.org), Lynn Brantley, CEO

For Love of Children, [www.floc.org](http://www.floc.org), Tim Payne, Executive Director

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*The Center for Nonprofit Advancement thanks Reed Dewey of Volunteer Frontier who took the lead in interviewing these nonprofit organizations and writing this report.*

*Volunteer Engagement Stars: Nonprofit Stories of Success in the Greater Washington Region*  
By the Center for Nonprofit Advancement and Volunteer Frontier  
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## Forward



Glen O'Gilvie  
CEO, Center for Nonprofit Advancement

I am pleased to introduce the *Volunteer Engagement Stars Report*, a collaboration between the Center for Nonprofit Advancement and Volunteer Frontier. In these challenging economic times, attracting and tapping the region's incredible pool of volunteers can provide nonprofits with the human resources needed to accomplish their missions.

We know many nonprofits in the Washington region are doing amazing work with volunteers. Our hope is that the case studies from these organizations will inspire and challenge nonprofits to continue learning from each other about what works with volunteers.

The report also provides further evidence on how donors, volunteers, clients and our ambassadors are increasingly interchangeable. CEOs in this report tend to look at those who care about our work as stakeholders first, then as volunteers, board members and donors. Indeed, all stakeholders are needed to attract more people to our nonprofit community as active contributors of time, talent and treasures.

An important finding from this report centers on how we engage others. Utilizing volunteers well is about creating a culture which embraces and respects those who serve, while at the same time providing them with meaningful service experiences. While all nonprofits engage volunteers in some way, these stories from our peers provide a fresh look at how nonprofits creatively engage volunteers of all kinds.

I invite you to share this report with others in your office or perhaps use it as a conversation starter for a board or staff meeting. Possible questions might include, "How do we engage volunteers in new ways?," or "Are we doing enough to help volunteers belong and gain ownership in what they do?"

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glen O'Gilvie". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long vertical stroke on the left side.

# **Volunteer Engagement Stars**

*Stories of Success ★ Greater Washington Region Nonprofits*

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## Executive Summary

This report showcases nine Greater Washington nonprofits who utilize volunteers in dynamic ways and return dramatic results. Nonprofit board members, CEOs, senior managers and staff who work with volunteers will find practical approaches to building upon their existing volunteer engagement efforts. The nonprofits featured in this report show that engaging volunteers well can result in a high rate of return. Volunteers at these agencies are saving money on professional services, serving as program leaders, playing key fundraising roles and serving in sustained direct service roles that contribute to the organization's overall mission.

Research has shown that nonprofits have much to gain from leveraging volunteers in new ways, yet many agencies continue to utilize volunteers in traditional direct-service or board member roles. Numerous studies also show that nonprofits still face challenges supporting and retaining volunteers [1]. Nonprofits that rely less on volunteers, or give volunteers a narrow range of volunteer opportunities are less productive and deliver less benefit than nonprofits that tap volunteers in diverse ways [2]. One national study, completed in 2010, showed that nonprofits can achieve up to an 800% return on investment by utilizing skilled volunteers [3].

Each year, almost one third of all volunteers leave the agencies for which they have served [4]. With better approaches to involving volunteers as decision-makers and a concerted effort to utilize volunteer skills, ample evidence exists that nonprofits could greatly benefit from investing in increased volunteer engagement [5].

With the persistent challenges of raising money in a weak economy, the business case for strategic volunteer engagement has never been stronger. Almost 25% of nonprofits have no plans to tap unpaid professionals for assistance with maintaining organizational capacity, yet, nine in ten agencies say they need skilled volunteer help [6]. The choice for some CEOs has been to either hire consultants or to go without. Lack of investment in the organization's people and capacity can lead to a slow decline, resulting in higher rates of staff and volunteer turnover [7].

References are noted on page 36.

## Key Recommendations

Based on the interviews with the nonprofits featured in this report, the following recommendations emerged to help agencies increase effective volunteer engagement.

### **Create An Organizational Culture That Embraces Volunteers**

CEOs and volunteer managers talked about the organization's mission being the unifying force that gets volunteers and staff working together. Agency leaders talked about how embracing volunteers is critical to

achieving their work. This sentiment is conveyed to staff and volunteers on a regular basis. An important theme that continually arose was that volunteers could be considered for almost any task.

### **See Today's Volunteer As Tomorrow's Donor**

Executive directors and their staff said they see volunteering as an effective way to bring on more dedicated stakeholders. Agencies work to educate prospective volunteers about their work through informational group or one-on-one meetings, then seek commitment later if there is a fit. With a broader understanding of the mission, it is believed volunteers will want to give time, money and in-kind contributions through ways that work for them. To this end, two agencies interviewed raised significant money in the first ever "Give to the Max" online giving campaign during the Fall of 2011. Many of their contributors were existing volunteers. With the advent of social media and other inexpensive communications tools, the line between agency stakeholder groups (volunteers, donors, clients, board members, partners) is blurring. Organization leaders expressed that it is advantageous for people to be involved with their agency in numerous ways. Some agencies interviewed already track whether or not volunteers are giving money.

### **Involve the Business Community - Especially in Skilled Volunteering**

While company sponsorships and grants decline, and company based hands-on community engagement increases, building a relationship with businesses of every size is an investment that pays off. Many agencies have received employee time and in-kind contributions totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars.

### **Appeal To the "New Breed" of Volunteer**

Agencies reported that today's volunteers are more interested in having a sense of accomplishment and seeing how their efforts contribute to reaching a common goal. In addition to giving volunteers the big picture, many agencies provided clear feedback and acknowledgement to volunteers for specific contributions that they have made. In addition, volunteers are given ownership and are held accountable for their service commitments.

### **Integrate Volunteering Across the Entire Agency**

Most nonprofits interviewed utilize volunteers wherever it makes sense. From providing skilled volunteer opportunities to leading fundraising initiatives, senior management make it a priority to see how staff can utilize volunteers in different roles. In addition, when agencies apply for grants, agencies write in the overhead costs associated with supporting. In short, volunteers are integral to the business model for meeting the mission in a cost-effective way. Volunteers are also part of the fabric of the organization, not a piece that is added as an extra.

### **Invest In Volunteers for the Future Pay-Off**

While considerable time can be required to train volunteers, agencies interviewed showed how such efforts translate to increased services and cost effective operations. This training also provided a higher volunteer retention rate. The groups interviewed did not assume new volunteers understood what they do. In agency orientations, a lot of time was spent at a basic and emotional level to help volunteers connect with the importance of the work and mission of the organization.

### **Find the Best Fit For Volunteers and the Agency**

Agencies try to be flexible with those willing to serve, providing a personal touch rather than treating volunteers like they are being “processed” by an HR Department. Investing the time to get to know prospective volunteers can pay off in placements that will last. Sometimes understanding a candidate’s skills and motivations results in an entirely new volunteer project or assignment. That said, featured organizations try to utilize volunteers only when volunteers are really needed and are the most cost-effective option.

### **Save Money Through Skilled Volunteers**

Most agencies said they are always looking for skilled volunteers to help with graphic design, marketing, writing, editing, fundraising, IT, social media outreach, research and many other areas. Many agencies have also set up “ambassador” programs which utilize skilled volunteers in a variety of ways, including acting as a spokesperson.

### **Utilize Interns and Volunteers with Stipends**

Most agencies have numerous volunteers in this category who provide long-term sustained service. Interns from universities and colleges are integrated into agencies and are treated as part of the staff. AmeriCorps members and others from service or faith organizations volunteer for a small stipend. When agencies invest in these kinds of volunteers and give them ownership, the volunteers deliver amazing results.

## Leveraging Professional Volunteers To The Max

### Arlington Free Clinic

**Website:** www.arlingtonfreeclinic.org

**Staff:** 15 full-time; 16 part-time

**Volunteers:** 720 total; 580 ongoing

**Number of volunteer hours:** 23,295

**Value of volunteer service:** \$1,181,121

**Agency Budget:** \$2,500,000

**Number of clients served/year:** 1,676 (10,653 onsite medical visits; 17,148 prescriptions filled)

**Mission:** Provides free, high-quality medical care to low-income uninsured Arlington County adults

**Service Area:** Arlington County, Virginia



### Volunteer Engagement Highlights:

- A volunteer to staff ratio of 20 to 1 allows the Clinic to provide more than \$3.7 million in professional services (just the clinic program).
- A volunteer retention rate of 80% helps avoid costly recruitment and training costs.
- A board member took the lead in recruiting other volunteers to run the Clinic's annual gala. The most recent event raised more than \$458,075 and continues to be the Clinic's single most successful fundraising event. The event is still run by volunteers, but now with staff support.

It is hard to believe the Arlington Free Clinic started in the current executive director's basement. The goal of the organization in 1994 was to address the pressing needs of those without means to pay for healthcare. Today, the Clinic's new facility has an upscale, contemporary feel to it with cheerful volunteer greeters ready to welcome visitors.

"There's really nothing better than working with volunteers," said Nancy Pallesen, the founding executive director of the Clinic and one of the 2011 Washingtonians of the Year as awarded by *Washingtonian Magazine*.

After Nancy worked with volunteers to get the Arlington Free Clinic off the ground, the group started providing services to low-income clients at such a growing rate that an expert in the healthcare funding field told her there was no way she would be able to sustain the Clinic's long-term viability without becoming a federally qualified health care center.

"Well, it's been 17 years since I was given that advice and today the reason we're still here is because we're a volunteer driven organization – from our board members, to our doctors and nurses, to those who support our operations and welcome our patients," said Pallesen.



Volunteer Director Lee Miller sits on the senior management team. She said about half of the staff previously have been volunteers.

“People who are applying for jobs here who haven’t been volunteers with us are told right up front in job interviews that this is a volunteer-based organization where staff are here to support the work of volunteers,” said Miller. “Nancy’s leadership as the executive director is key to ensuring that effectively engaging volunteers is core to who we are.”

The Clinic engages volunteers in diverse ways ranging from tapping hundreds of medical professional who see clients to non-medical volunteers who fundraise. When a client walks through the doors of the Clinic, they are usually served entirely by volunteers.

“From the reception function, to office visits and procedures to being served in the pharmacy, our volunteers run the show,” said Miller. “We’re here to support them.”

The staff leadership team of seven people is comprised both of clinical and administrative staff who effectively work with volunteers in all aspects of their work. Many volunteers have had numerous positions at the clinic, which keeps things challenging and fresh for those who serve.

Volunteers work hand in glove with staff. The staff continually seek advice and opinions from board members and other volunteers regarding programming and administration. For example, the finance committee is comprised of an equal mix of board and non-board volunteers along with two senior staff members. Because of their combined talent and experience, the Clinic’s financial management has received awards for excellence. Another example of volunteer dedication dates back a few years. A physician who was a member of the board was concerned that the Clinic didn’t have any mental health services, yet both medical volunteers and staff saw patients who could benefit from this counseling. The staff reached out to a local foundation for funding and the board member recruited fellow psychiatrists and mental health professionals to provide these services for free.

*“There’s really nothing better than working with volunteers.”*

*Nancy Pallesen  
Executive Director*

The Clinic has a variety of leadership tiers. These opportunities range from being on the board to serving on a community council whose members contribute numerous free professional services. Professional volunteers with many areas of expertise have saved the Clinic several hundred thousand dollars during the last ten years. Volunteers on the board and in other leadership positions are encouraged to work at the clinic to better understand the nature of the work and the clients served.

“As the volunteer director, I work to pay attention to what volunteers are motivated to do, but I need to balance their interests with our very specific needs,” said Miller.

The clinic has established such a good reputation with volunteers that sometimes there simply are no positions for non-medical volunteers.

Once the clinic brings on volunteers, they often stay for many years. One person started out as a community service volunteer through the courts. This person got so invested in their volunteer experience that they stayed on after fulfilling the required hours of service. This person went on to hold fundraisers and engage younger people with the Clinic. Another volunteer served as a physician and also volunteered to help the clinic understand the possible implications of healthcare reform on its operations.

**Parting advice from the Arlington Free Clinic:**

- Use the talents of volunteers in ways that are meaningful for them or you'll lose the volunteer.
- Provide adequate orientation and training. This is key to effectively engaging volunteers.
- Respect and recognize the contributions of volunteers in a variety of ways.
- Develop a relationship with each volunteer. Get to know them!

## Volunteers Join a Movement to End Poverty

### A Wider Circle

**Website:** www.awidercircle.org

**Staff:** 17 full-time; 3 part-time

**Volunteers:** 11,000 total; 125 ongoing

**Number of volunteer hours:** 30,000 hours

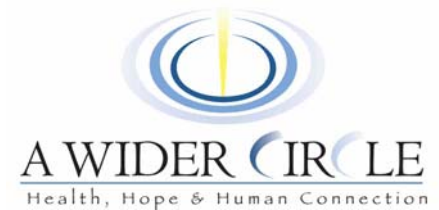
**Value of volunteer service:** \$669,600

**Agency Budget:** \$1,150,000

**Number of clients served/year:** 23,000

**Mission:** To help children and adults lift themselves out of poverty.

**Service Area:** Montgomery and Prince George's counties in Maryland and the District of Columbia



### Volunteer Engagement Highlights:

- Civic, faith and other volunteer groups contributed more than \$50,000 in the last year.
- The contributions of interns are valued at more than \$261,000 for the year.
- An inspiring message, vision and call to action has helped grow the organization to one of the larger agencies serving low-income people in Montgomery County.

A Wider Circle's offices and warehouse feel more like visiting a political campaign office than a social service agency. Interns, volunteers and staff are on the phones, working on computers and moving quickly from place to place.

"I believe that we'll be able to end poverty because of volunteerism," said founding Executive Director Mark Bergel.

He ran A Wider Circle for the first three years using no paid staff, a dynamic board, and volunteer power. Bergel said that A Wider Circle encourages people to join a movement to end poverty.

The organization tackles poverty in a number of ways. It provides basic items to families who are transitioning out of shelters or living without everyday necessities. They furnish the homes of more than 1,000 children and adults every month, all free of charge. One part of their work involves going into low-income schools and shelters to lead educational workshops on topics ranging from healthy self-esteem and stress management to resume writing and financial planning. Many of the skills are taught by volunteers.

"Staff and volunteers are trained to engage everyone who walks through our doors on understanding poverty and how they can help," said Anne Thompson, who's served on the board, and is the current Deputy Director. "A Wider Circle is very focused on ending poverty, and we believe that community awareness and engagement

is possible in many ways. When people come to help us in the warehouse, either as part of a group or individually, a good half hour out of three hours is spent talking about the challenges of poverty and how A Wider Circle and all of us can address critical human needs.”

“It’s about giving your time, stuff and money. If you understand our work, our hope is that you’ll end up giving all three!” explains Bergel who justifies why A Wider Circle’s invests in educating volunteers about poverty.

The organization has built a culture where staff and volunteers work together in a near seamless manner. Perhaps this is because it was “volunteers” who started the organization. As recently as three years ago, there were Americorps’ members who served in full-time, staff-like roles. Bergel, a volunteer executive director until the organization could provide a salary, said that it was board members, Americorps members, interns and other volunteers who really built the organization. When Americorps positions were no longer available, it did not stop operations.

“We were ready to bring on staff positions and continue utilizing our strong intern network to help us run our operations,” said Bergel. He continued by stating the growth of the organization required having full-time staff with experience in building a social movement. With all the education and outreach to the community, A Wider Circle has been able to build an e-mail list of more than 7,000 along with a solid and diverse contributor base.

*“It’s about giving your time, stuff and money. If you understand our work, our hope is that you’ll end up giving all three!”*

*Mark Bergel  
Executive Director*

Even though Thompson is the deputy director, she has been handling all volunteer inquiries that come in via the “volunteer” e-mail address.

“The belief at A Wider Circle is that everyone, no matter what their age, can help,” said Thompson. “We’ve had kindergartners helping us out.”

While the organization has grown a good deal in recent years, Bergel works to keep things “organic.” This means that while there are definite volunteer roles that can be filled, A Wider Circle is always on the lookout for the talents people can bring. For example, the volunteer bookkeeper needed to resign after many years of service

“I had no idea what we were going to do and we had no money to hire someone,” said Bergel. “Out of the blue I got a call the very same day from a woman who asked me if we needed a volunteer bookkeeper!”

#### **Parting advice from A Wider Circle:**

- Provide a thorough introduction to your issue so volunteers understand the spirit and energy behind the work.

- Develop volunteers as leaders of other volunteers to leverage the work. Interns can be great leaders and capacity builders.
- Invest in educating, supporting, empowering and following up with volunteers.
- Make volunteers and the public, central to the team rather than having them work around the edges.

## Getting the Job Done Through Broad and Deep Community Support

### Capital Area Food Bank

**Website:** www.capitalareafood.org

**Staff:** 83 full-time; 11 part-time; 5 temporary

**Volunteers:** 15,569 total; 135 ongoing (volunteers that come at least once a month)

**Number of volunteer hours:** 72,229

**Value of volunteer service:** \$1.8 million

**Agency Budget:** \$24 million

**Number of clients served/year:** 480,000 (700 nonprofit partners)

**Mission:** To feed those who suffer from hunger in the Washington, DC metropolitan area by acquiring food and distributing it through our network of member agencies; and to educate, empower and enlighten the community about the issues of hunger and nutrition

**Service Area:** Washington, DC metropolitan area



### Volunteer Engagement Highlights:

- This year companies provided more than \$228,000 in professional services to the Food Bank. In addition, 145 individual skilled volunteers have provided nearly 1,400 hours of service valued at \$36,000.
- A capital campaign for a new District of Columbia warehouse resulted in raising more than \$42 million with considerable help from a core group of volunteer leaders and board members.
- Volunteers work at an agency sponsored farm raising produce for low-income people. Ongoing volunteers benefit by getting a share of the food when it is ready for harvest.

The Capital Area Food Bank's District of Columbia based warehouse (they also have a warehouse in Virginia) is relatively small for an organization that provides food to more than 700 partner agencies. Like the food, staff are squeezed tightly into work spaces in the second floor offices. There is relief in the air as the Food Bank will soon be moving into its new warehouse and office space, complete with a room equipped especially for volunteers. This is important because last year, volunteers sorted more than one million pounds of food and packed more than 50,000 bags of food for those in need.

"Volunteers bring expertise and passion to the Food Bank which is profound," said Capital Area Food Bank CEO Lynn Brantley. "We have very dedicated volunteers who can be trusted just as much as any of our employees."

The Food Bank provides a great experience for hundreds of groups and thousands of individuals each year by allowing volunteers to make a concrete difference through sorting and packing food in the warehouse. Even

for a volunteer who helps out just once, Food Bank staff and volunteers take the opportunity to educate the captive audience about local hunger issues and how their service is making a difference. Brantley sums it up by saying, “Volunteers save us \$1.8 million in labor costs and we get to educate a lot of people about hunger issues.” While many people visit the Food Bank as episodic volunteers, some dedicate considerable time in a more in-depth and sustained way.

Volunteer Programs Manager Nicole Durant is responsible for working across all departments to help identify where volunteers are needed.

“We’re a big operation,” said Durant. “Sometimes it’s hard to keep track of all the ways people are involved.”

One program the Food Bank has been expanding is its Ambassador Volunteers. These are long-term volunteers that provide their skills and expertise in many ways. Within this group are twenty “Food Bank Leaders” who are promoting the organization and educating people on hunger issues at public events, food stores and other venues. Weekend Leaders help coordinate large groups at the warehouses.

Durant said, “There is a staff person on hand, but it’s certainly a lot of responsibility to coordinate these large groups who often have no idea what to do when they arrive.”

Brantley said that volunteering has come in many different ways. If someone calls to offer a professional skill like graphic design, copywriting, web design or other needed consulting role, chances are the Food Bank will find a job for them. Deloitte Consulting, for example, did a comprehensive “missing meals” study that detailed underserved communities. Deloitte contributed 169 hours of consulting time to a project which could easily be worth more than \$25,000. The furniture consulting company Gilbane, Inc. donated \$3,500 of their time to help the Food Bank select the best furniture for their new office space. The law firm DLA Piper has contributed more than \$101,000 in legal fees during the last fiscal year and a group of their employees volunteer at the warehouse monthly. Little, the architectural consulting firm, contributed more than \$100,000 of interior design consultation for the new Washington, DC facility.

*“Volunteers bring expertise and passion to the Food Bank which is profound.”*

*Lynn Brantley  
CEO*

Another dynamic utilization of volunteers comes with the Clagett Farm program, “From the Ground Up.” This joint effort of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Capital Area Food Bank brings sustainably grown, fresh produce to Washington, DC metro area communities. Half of Clagett Farm’s annual yield is sold through Community Supported Agriculture. The other half of the produce is made accessible to low-income individuals. Many of the volunteers who work at the farm also get a share of produce. In addition, groups and individuals volunteer their time at the farm. Last year 574 people volunteered at the farm, providing 6,018 hours of service.

Moving forward, Brantley and Durant talk about working to increase the number of long-term volunteers involved with the Food Bank.

“Whether it’s recruiting chefs or nutritionists to lead our Nutrition Education Program or finding volunteers who can lead tours, help with fundraising or plan events with our development department, we think we’ll be able to attract the committed talent we’re looking for,” said Durant.

**Parting advice from the Capital Area Food Bank:**

- Have a good vetting process for bringing on volunteers.
- Set realistic expectations for volunteer assignments.
- Work to convince senior managers that they can trust volunteers to be reliable. Encourage staff to start with one volunteer and build from there.



## Helping Volunteers Connect With The Big Picture

### For Love of Children (FLOC)

**Website:** www.floc.org

**Staff:** 26 full-time (including 9 corps members; 2 part-time)

**Volunteers:** 497 total; 354 ongoing

**Number of volunteer hours:** 18,854

**Value of volunteer service:** \$364,308

**Agency Budget:** \$1.6 million

**Number of clients served/year:** Over 540

**Mission:** Provides educational services beyond the classroom to help students succeed from first grade through college and career. FLOC brings together students, volunteers, families, and community partners in proven programs that teach, empower and transform.

**Service Area:** District of Columbia and West Virginia



### Volunteer Engagement Highlights:

- FLOC supporters gave \$86,974 online as part of the November 9 *Give to the Max Day*. FLOC finished first for the amount of money raised by a single organization.
- A staff presentation called *Volunteer Management 101* was created by the recruitment and outreach manager to train line staff on how to work with volunteers.
- Through hybrid volunteer-staff role positions, FLOC leverages 11 full-time volunteers in partnership with numerous public and private organizations who provide internships.

Unless you go on a tour of the main tutoring space of FLOC's Adams Morgan location, you would never know that the first two floors of the building are packed four times a week with more than 50 kids and 50 tutors totaling more than 250 tutor-student pairs. Four other tutoring locations exist across the District of Columbia, catering to over 200 additional students. FLOC's Executive Director Tim Payne started as a tutor. He was hired as a staffer in 2001 and held a number of positions that involved coordinating volunteers.

"I'm very aware of the importance and value of our volunteers," said Payne. "They are our human capital, which is our most valuable asset."

Like most organizations, FLOC used to have all prospective volunteers fill out a form, and then go straight to curriculum training. A number of years ago they decided to try another "on boarding process" which they have found works much better.

“We now have a more in-depth and longer orientation that helps people learn about the big picture of what FLOC is working to accomplish,” said Payne. “We want prospective volunteers to emotionally connect to our work and for them to see how our approach is really making a difference in the lives of the kids we serve.”

At the end of the orientation, FLOC even invites volunteers to become donors. The new program is working, volunteer retention rose from 30% in the past to 45% this year.

FLOC’s Scholars Program taps volunteer facilitators who draw from their own experience to develop and present workshops for middle and high-school students. Recruitment and Outreach Manager Elizabeth Metz said, “These workshops used to be exclusively run by staff but we realized after a while that we had a great pool of talented volunteers.”

She explained that they had volunteers with the skills needed to lead sessions that equip students with approaches for educational and career success. While the program is still new, the goal is that volunteers will be encouraged to design their own workshops culminating in a service-learning project where the kids volunteer as well.

FLOC gives their interns and AmeriCorps members a great deal of responsibility and ownership in their work. They run education programs, support tutors and help in numerous other ways. FLOC is fortunate to have nine Americorps and two VISTA members, in addition to seven interns who work with staff members to keep the programs running smoothly. In addition to government funded Americorps volunteers, interns come from a variety of sources including: the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Public Allies, Loretto Volunteers, Notre Dame volunteers, and the Mennonite Voluntary Service. In recent years the organization has looked to interns and corps members who are more of a hybrid between a volunteer and a staff person.

*“They [volunteers] are our human capital...our most valuable asset.”*

*Tim Payne  
Executive Director*

FLOC provides 80 hours of training to new AmeriCorps members, interns and staff.

Metz said, “It’s this kind of investment in volunteers and staff that helps FLOC serve as many kids as we’re able to serve.”

Throughout all of the programs that engage volunteers, FLOC has built in a strong feedback component to make sure volunteers are heard. This interaction helps provide refinements to existing programs. Metz recently developed her own Volunteer Management 101 presentation geared to staff since so many of them work directly with volunteers. The staff response has been quite favorable.

FLOC is currently in the process of creating a new role for volunteers called the “FLOC Ambassador.” This opportunity will engage volunteers in the expanding FLOC network of supporters and volunteers. The position

will serve as the organization's voice in the community. At volunteer orientations, new supporters are encouraged to start thinking about how else they can contribute to the organization. Ambassadors will represent FLOC at community events or host a "FLOC 101" session at their workplaces or churches.

Metz said, "The program can really help us to gain added community support and will allow us to further engage a great pool of prospective volunteers."

In addition to direct volunteer involvement, FLOC has been successful in getting businesses to volunteer their staff expertise in areas such as IT, philanthropy, marketing strategy and customer relationship management. FLOC has also tapped a company called Terpsys to design its new website which was valued at more than \$60,000. Volunteer tutors have also made valuable contributions. When reviewing a prospective volunteer's application, a staff member noticed a volunteer had his own communications firm. Though he was offering his time as a tutor, FLOC asked for his help with his professional expertise. Eventually the volunteer took FLOC on as a pro-bono client, working with them on redeveloping their mission statement, writing copy for a new brochure, writing press releases and consulting on communication strategy.

Payne said with a small smile, "Once people get to know us, we don't want there to be any way to exit. We strive to always have people stay involved with FLOC."

**Parting advice from For Love of Children:**

- Show volunteers that you value their service in multiple ways.
- Give and get feedback from volunteers; build a relationship with them.
- Be strategic in how you utilize volunteers. Not all volunteering makes sense.
- Hold volunteers to a high standard. Let them know they need to be accountable for their commitments.

## Engaging Many Volunteers with Few Staff

### Hospice Caring, Inc.

**Website:** www.hospicecaring.org

**Staff:** 4 full-time; 4 part-time

**Volunteers:** more than 390 total; 200 ongoing

**Number of volunteer hours:** 29,469

**Value of volunteer service:** \$736,725

**Agency Budget:** \$590,350

**Number of clients served/year:** 1,800+

**Mission:** To provide caring, compassionate, practical and high-quality, non-medical support services, without charge, to every Montgomery County adult or child who is facing a life-threatening illness or is grieving the death of a family member or loved one.

**Service Area:** Montgomery County, Maryland



### Volunteer Engagement Highlights:

- More than 50% of Hospice Caring's fiscal year 2011 funding has been raised through special events. Volunteers take on leadership roles at many events and are crucial to the success of fundraisers.
- Administrative volunteers are essential to the day-to-day operations, saving the organization \$208,000 a year.
- Hospice Caring has an estimated volunteer retention rate of 82% with many bereavement support group facilitators serving for 10 years or more.
- Hospice Caring saves an estimated \$10,000 annually due to small business and professional service volunteers (legal, accounting, printing, psychologist donates services).

For more than 20 years, volunteers have earned Hospice Caring its reputation for outstanding service and care. "The Cottage," which is located a short distance from I-270 in Gaithersburg, Maryland is the location of Hospice Caring offices and client meeting space. It feels more like visiting a friend's home than a place that provides critical services for those with terminal illness or those impacted by the death of a loved one.

"Right from the beginning volunteers have been central to Hospice Caring's existence and have helped shape how we serve the community," said Executive Director Jeannette Mendonca. "The annual report even reflects the importance of volunteers, as 300 volunteers are recognized before the donors.

Hospice Caring works closely with every hospital and medical hospice in Montgomery County. Mendonca adds, "We recognize that one-on-one caring and peer support offer a unique service that has made all the difference to those we've helped during times of loss."

With a volunteer-to-staff ratio of 47 to 1, Hospice Caring engages volunteers in numerous roles, including as caregivers, group facilitators, caregiver coordinators, event coordinators and in administrative roles. Penny Gladhill, who helped start the organization believes, “When you give a volunteer an important job or responsibility, they take ownership in it, which is very motivating.”

Gladhill, who is now the director of training and development, explains that she places the needs of volunteers upfront, which may be counter-intuitive to some.

“Volunteers come first,” said Gladhill. “We figure out what gifts (talents and skills) people have to give that will work for them, then how they might help Hospice Caring.”

At Hospice Caring, respect for the individual, whether they be a volunteer or a staff member, is key to the organizational culture.

Four volunteer caregiver coordinators perform a vital role in supporting more than 115 caregivers. These caregivers helped more than 130 patients with terminal illnesses in the last year. Hospice Caring puts its volunteers in leadership positions in ways that many other nonprofits do not.

“With the right training and support, volunteers can take on positions of great responsibility and leadership,” said Mendonca.

Volunteer leaders are just as prevalent in administrative and events roles.

Director of Administrative and Event Volunteers Madeleine Carmichael explains, “We usually have a number of lead volunteers for each event or project. Those leaders will work with anywhere from 30 to 150 volunteers to realize a successful event.”

*“With the right training and support, volunteers can take on positions of great responsibility and leadership.”*

*Jeannette Mendonca  
Executive Director*

At Hospice Caring, staff and volunteers work together in a non-hierarchical structure. The leadership strives to keep staff and volunteers mission focused. Carmichael said the organization believes in “cultivating the environment, among all administrative and event volunteers that staff and volunteers are all team members, working together toward one goal.”

Hospice Caring trains prospective caregiver volunteers, and then decides if they are a good fit for the position. Those interested in being a caregiver or facilitating a bereavement group must first go through a three-day training session.

“We find that after the training session, people who aren’t right for doing this kind of work self select out,” said Gladhill.

Since the training session is very interactive, Hospice Caring staff get to know prospective volunteers well. “Rarely, but sometimes, we have people who want to volunteer with our clients but we believe it’s not a good match,” explains Gladhill. “We’ll then steer them to other roles where they can contribute.”

Other services that volunteer leaders provide include working with Montgomery County Public School counselors in order to bring the Hospice Caring *Good Grief Clubs* to children in grades K-12 and facilitating adult bereavement support groups that assist more than 197 clients. In every situation, volunteers in such roles are fully trained and vetted to ensure they are ready for the challenges of the assignment.

**Parting advice from Hospice Caring:**

- Share your mission and core values with volunteers at the beginning. This will align your full team to focus on organization goals.
- Promote an interactive environment between staff and volunteers.
- Determine and value the individual volunteers’ strengths to fully utilize their skills and interests.
- Remember gratitude: share lunchtime with your volunteers; hold a volunteer appreciation event; thank them every day.

## Finding the Best Fit, One Volunteer at a Time

### Iona Senior Services

**Website:** www.iona.org

**Staff:** 22 full-time; 12 part-time

**Volunteers:** 580 total; 150 ongoing

**Number of volunteer hours:** 550-850 (depending on the month)

**Value of volunteer service:** \$13,750- \$21,250 (per month)

**Agency Budget:** \$3,000,792

**Number of clients served/year:** 1,400 through direct services, 10,000 through education and information programs

**Mission:** Supports people as they experience the challenges and opportunities of aging. Educates, advocates and provides community-based programs and services to help people age well and live well. Work with the community to celebrate, value, respect and protect the contributions of every individual.

**Service Area:** Primarily the District of Columbia and close in Montgomery County, Maryland



### Volunteer Engagement Highlights:

- Weekend meals delivery program taps more than 150 volunteers and 12 team leaders per month in service to frail elderly. Two hundred meals delivered to 100 clients each Saturday are valued at more than \$30,000 a year.
- A pro-bono specialist volunteer assisted Iona on grant preparation and special event coordination. In collaboration with Iona staff, she wrote a successful proposal that resulted in securing a team of eight MBA pro-bono specialists, that will provide work valued at \$120,000.
- Interns delivered over \$18,000 in professional and administrative labor over the last year.

While Iona started out in a small house on church grounds, it now occupies a large, relatively new building specifically designed for the organization. Walking through the entrance feels more like entering a community center than a senior services agency. Classes and programs surround a central reception desk and lounge area. An adult day health center is active in one wing of the building.

Iona Executive Director Sally White has worked with Iona for most of her professional career and has served in the top staff leadership position for close to three years.

White said, "At Iona, we believe there is no job too big for a volunteer... We're always trying to think outside the box on how to better engage volunteers."

As an example, Iona is currently working with other city leaders to build the *DC Senior Advocacy Coalition*. This is a project where volunteer leaders will be responsible for advocating on senior issues. Iona will be

partnering with AARP DC this spring to hold an advocacy training workshop for area residents interested in being more engaged in the political process. Volunteer leaders will be the co-facilitators of the breakout groups and model how to be a community activist.

Iona has found that people approach volunteering differently than they did years ago.

“Many of those who give us time are looking for meaningful experiences with clients or challenging professional opportunities rather than purely administrative jobs,” said White. “People volunteer to build relationships that are rewarding.”

While the value of volunteers is unquestioned, it has not always been easy to find funding to support the staff required for a strong volunteer program. Iona invests general funds into supporting volunteers and when possible writes the costs of volunteer administration into grant applications. Iona values volunteers to such a degree that the Director of Community Engagement Lylie Fisher sits on the senior management team. The job incorporates many complementary functions including working on partnerships with nonprofits and recruiting pro-bono consultants, interns, and volunteers.

“Iona benefits through these supportive relationships and continues to grow as a community resource organization because we work hard to utilize all kinds of volunteers where we can,” said Fisher.

Fisher practices what she preaches regarding the leveraging of volunteers. Fisher even utilizes skilled volunteers to assist her with recruiting volunteers and interns. When prospective volunteers call Iona, they likely will first have contact with a volunteer leader who determines if they are looking for an administrative or professional opportunity. Thanks to this volunteer intake person, Fisher can focus most of her attention on meeting with volunteers who want program or skilled volunteering assignments.

*“At Iona, we believe there is no job too big for a volunteer.”*

*Sally White  
Executive Director*

“I’m really a matchmaker,” said Fisher. “I invest a good deal of time getting to know prospective volunteers so I can find a good fit.”

Fisher calls this “un-packaging,” as she digs deeper into understanding prospective volunteers, their skills and motivations. Staff work together to determine where there are needs for volunteers. In one situation, Iona had a backlog of clients that wanted to see a social worker, but staff were already swamped.

“We had a volunteer who’d been a recruiter for the Peace Corps screen intern applications,” said Fisher. This allowed us to bring on three more social work interns to assist the staff social workers with doing client nutritional risk assessments.”

In another example Fisher recruited a professional who had retired after managing numerous educational programs for federal judges. He saw the volunteer page of Iona’s website that has a header called “Specialist



Pro-bono Volunteer.” The summary explains that volunteers in this area help with marketing, communications, business development and financial planning. After an interview, Fisher matched this man with Iona’s Meg Artley, the director of development. She needed someone to lead and energize Iona’s relationships with area churches and synagogues.

“It’s been a terrific success with this volunteer. He has made great strides in raising awareness of what clergy and their congregations need as well as and a better understanding of how Iona can help,” said Artley.

To increase the chances of success with new volunteers, Fisher counsels staff to take a whole-person approach and utilize them well. She shows staff that with the right support, volunteers will be more productive. “For some staff, I’ll be a mentor and get them to start with just one volunteer and take it from there,” said Fisher, adding, “I’m now at the point where I’ve got staff asking me for volunteers to work with them in new ways because they’re seeing success with others.”

**Parting advice from Iona:**

- Create a culture where volunteers are respected and seen as part of the team.
- Work to understand and “un-package” those who want to volunteer with your agency.
- Make sure expectations and outcomes are clear for volunteer assignments.
- Tap interns from nearby universities.
- Build relationships with volunteers, recognizing them both informally and formally.

## Attention To Detail Nets Dedicated Volunteers

### Little Lights Urban Ministries

**Website:** www.littlelights.org

**Staff:** 12 full-time; 19 part-time

**Volunteers:** 450 total, 134 ongoing

**Number of volunteer hours:** More than 11,100

**Value of volunteer service:** \$366,000.

**Agency Budget:** \$663,000

**Number of clients served/ year:** More than 150

**Mission:** Empowers underserved youth and families to reach their potential - spiritually, socially and intellectually through academics, life skills, the arts and discipleship

**Service Area:** Ward 6 (Capitol Hill area), District of Columbia



### Volunteer Engagement Highlights:

- Employs a full-time volunteer coordinator who works closely with program and development staff to maximize volunteer contributions.
- Seven-hundred twenty-six friends and volunteers gave Little Lights nearly \$38,000 as part of the Fall, 2011 *Give to the Max* Campaign.
- Achieves a 50% volunteer retention rate among young professionals.

The semi-detached building for Little Lights is modest from the outside, however, what goes on inside touches the lives of many.

"I want volunteering with us to be a life changing experience for volunteers and the kids they help," said Little Lights Urban Ministries Executive Director Steve Park.

The place feels comfortable. On the walls, the children's artwork hangs along with pictures of the volunteers who regularly help the children with their homework. Upstairs, numerous interns and staff work in cramped quarters, four or more to a room.

"Volunteers are integral to the work we do. We invest in volunteers to give us the quality programs that yield success for those we serve," said Park. "Before we even know who you are, or what you want to do, we want people to feel welcome. It's part of our culture of hospitality."

Volunteers help in a variety of ways including administering after school tutoring, fun activities on weekends, and helping out with special events. Volunteers have also helped with facility renovations.

As the full time volunteer coordinator, Tiffany Gibson's central role is recruiting, screening, orienting and training volunteers in collaboration with other staff.

"I see myself as a bridge between the program staff and the development staff," said Gibson.

As Little Lights grew, staff realized that there needed to be a more systematic approach to coordinating volunteers.

"We are now more streamlined in how we bring in volunteers, support them and communicate with them, but we still work with volunteers in a very individual way," Gibson said.

Prior to becoming a volunteer with Little Lights, there is a 4.5 hour new volunteer orientation which provides the philosophy of Little Lights, reviews all the programs and provides a section on anti-racism.

"We feel it's really important that volunteers have the big picture about what we're doing right from the beginning," said Park. "Even though we have specific volunteer opportunities, we take each prospective volunteer on a case-by-case basis. We're looking for a good fit, and sometimes the best thing is not to bring on a volunteer. Every volunteer has to further our work and provide a net positive contribution."

Eighty percent of Little Lights volunteers are under 35 and dedicated to their professional careers.

"We know our volunteers are busy, so we value their time and make it work for them," Gibson said.

Little Lights is able to achieve a 50% volunteer retention rate across all programs because they give volunteers great feedback. All volunteers have a staff manager who sends out a weekly e-mail.

"Volunteers want to see that they are making a difference. That's why after every semester we ask volunteers to complete an online feedback form," said Gibson.

Volunteers who work one-on-one with a kid also get a de-briefing with a staff member after each tutoring session to talk about successes and challenges. In short, volunteers are part of the Little Lights team and help the kids succeed. There are two volunteer appreciation events each year and a more formalized monthly volunteer newsletter.

*"We want our volunteers to have the freedom to be creative in their positions and have ownership in what they're doing."*

*Steve Park  
Executive Director*

While Little Lights has 12 full-time staff members, it still seeks out volunteer leaders who can take a program and run with it. An example of this is Camp Hope, where 15-20 kids who have done well over the academic year are rewarded with a four-night camping experience during spring break. The camp was the brainchild of a high school volunteer. She worked with another adult volunteer to make the camp a reality. Ten years later, the adult volunteer is still leading this program and is responsible for finding a site, training volunteers, and even helping fundraise.

Volunteer leaders are also engaged with the Saturday Urban Drop-In Program, where kids can have fun in a safe, supervised place. Little Lights has one staff person who checks the kids in and is on call should problems arise in the building. Volunteers though, really call the shots once the kids have arrived.

“We want our volunteers to have the freedom to be creative in their positions and have ownership in what they’re doing,” said Park.

**Parting advice from Little Lights:**

- Having a good volunteer program takes resources.
- Work to build a sense of community for everyone including clients, volunteers, and staff.
- Provide feedback to volunteers and make sure they are heard.
- To find leader volunteers, look for those where you already have a quality relationship with and who are dedicated.

## Entrusting Volunteer Leaders with Home Rehabilitation

### Rebuilding Together Montgomery County

**Website:** www.RebuildingTogetherMC.org

**Staff:** 5 full-time; 2 AmeriCorps Members

**Volunteers:** 1,500 total

**Number of volunteer hours:** 12,000 hours

**Value of volunteer service:** \$500,000

**Agency Budget:** \$1.2 million

**Number of clients served/year:** 235

**Mission:** Bringing volunteers and communities together to improve the homes and lives of low-income homeowners

**Service Area:** Montgomery County, Maryland



### Volunteer Engagement Highlights:

- Delivered to the community \$1.3 million in market value repairs during the past year while only charging \$791,000 in program expenses. This was done by leveraging volunteer labor and donated materials.
- Those in the skilled trades donated more than \$377,000 of labor to help low-income home owners and nonprofits.
- Mobilized more than 43,000 volunteers who have given nearly \$9 million in market value labor during the last 22 years.

Rebuilding Together Montgomery County is an affiliate of the national organization Rebuilding Together. Since the beginning, the model across the United States has been to tap a broad spectrum of volunteer leaders, skilled trades professionals and episodic volunteers to help rehabilitate the homes of low-income homeowners and often on non-profits facilities as well. The agency has a number of volunteer leadership positions that carry a great deal of responsibility.

“A successful project often ensures that our volunteers will become more engaged and take on more responsibility down the road,” said Executive Director Susan Hawfield.

She adds that the kind of work they do would not be possible by simply hiring standard contractors. Volunteers make it possible to undertake multiple home repairs quickly which allows the homeowner’s life to be disrupted as little as possible during the work.

House Captains are the backbone of most “rehab” projects. These volunteers need advanced project management skills and the ability to coordinate other volunteers and skilled trades persons. Volunteers take ownership and are in charge of these very involved home repairs.

Area Coordinators are another key volunteer leadership position. With as many as 30 homes being rehabilitated in the month of April, the staff does not have the capacity to oversee sites. Five volunteer Area Coordinators take the lead in helping the House Captains with a wide variety of logistical support. Area coordinators work to find more volunteers to help with the technical aspects of home repair.

“Without leader volunteers, our project day work would be impossible. They expand the capacity and effectiveness of our organization,” said Hawfield.

The Ambassador volunteer is the agency liaison with homeowner. They work with the family from the planning stage through rebuilding day. On the rebuilding day, the homeowner can be a little nervous when 20 or more volunteers appear at the front door. The Ambassador is the advocate for the homeowner. Weeks before volunteers arrive, the Ambassador helps the home owner communicate with the House Captain and helps the homeowner with house preparation.

“It requires someone who’s really good with people and who helps the homeowner feel comfortable with the work that’s being done,” said Hawfield. “Our Ambassadors make sure homeowners understand how the work will proceed in a way that’s supportive and based on a trusting relationship.”

Through the national office, two AmeriCorps Members work for one year on a full-time basis with Rebuilding Together Montgomery County in order to help build capacity.

“Because they have longer-term assignments, Americorps members are able to take on specific projects like leading our handyman program and our energy efficiency program,” said Hawfield.

*“Without leader volunteers, our project day work would be impossible.”*

*Susan Hawfield  
Executive Director*

A number of businesses in Montgomery County have found a partnership with Rebuilding Together accomplishes many goals. These companies make a real difference in the community and also involve their employees in a volunteer experience that helps with team building, moral and instilling pride for the company.

Hawfield said, “It’s great seeing a CEO of a large corporation being directed by one of his or her employees. The tables are turned. The CEO doesn’t have the expertise in this setting.”

Hawfield concluded by saying how tangible the volunteer work is, adding, “People understand and see exactly how they are impacting the recipient.”

Over the last couple years, there has been a lot of talk about how nonprofits should retain more skilled volunteers. Rebuilding Together has been recruiting and placing skilled volunteers for years. They are the skilled trades professionals who do plumbing, electrical, HVAC and carpentry.

“These trades persons work hard all week, then volunteer with us,” said Hawfield. “We treat them like gold and we’re lucky that many of them come back year after year.”

Hawfield believes a diverse and able board of directors has been essential to the organization’s success. The board has a strong compliment of business experts such as bankers, lawyers, a CPA, insurance agent and a marketing person. There is even an occupational therapist on the board. They help make sure home repairs are safe and responsive to homeowners thus allowing them to age-in-place.

**Parting advice from Rebuilding Together Montgomery County:**

- Work to make your mission resonate with volunteers.
- Make volunteering as tangible and results-oriented as possible.
- Make sure your volunteers, particularly volunteer leaders, understand the big picture and how the organization is making a difference to those you serve.

**Note:** The Washington region is served by other Rebuilding Togethers in Arlington, Fairfax, Falls Church, Alexandria and Washington, D.C.

## Giving Up Control Nets Increased Volunteer Engagement

### Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA)

**Website:** www.waba.org

**Staff:** 10 full-time; 2 part-time

**Volunteers:** 515 total; 53 ongoing

**Number of volunteer hours:** 6,600 (estimate)

**Value of volunteer service:** \$211,200

**Agency Budget:** \$800,000

**Number of clients served/year:** 4,000 members

**Mission:** To create a healthy, more livable region by promoting bicycling for fun, fitness, and affordable transportation; advocating for better bicycling conditions and transportation choices for a healthier environment, and educating children, adults and motorists about safe bicycling.

**Service Area:** entire Washington region



### Volunteer Engagement Highlights:

- Volunteers and staff attended 450 public meetings, taught bike safety to more than 700 adults and students in 13 DC elementary schools. Another 2,000 children in Maryland received bike safety education.
- An estimated \$10,000 a year is saved by having volunteer nights where 20 or more people help WABA. Volunteers build a stronger connection to WABA and also benefit from a fun, social experience with like minded people.
- Interns have provided \$5,000 in staff level assistance over the last year. Two current staff members started out as WABA interns.

The WABA offices in Adams Morgan have the feeling of a high tech start-up company. Staff and volunteers are busy at work on database projects, writing the newsletter and gearing up for the spring. With a joint focus of bike advocacy and educational programs, there are many ways volunteers are involved.

“We find that when people come to us looking to volunteer, they usually are already pretty passionate about bikes and often have ideas of how they’d like to contribute,” said Executive Director Shane Farthing.

WABA does not have a volunteer coordinator but makes sure staff know how to work effectively with volunteers. Since a number of current staff members used to be volunteers, the culture of respecting and appreciating volunteers remains central to getting the work done.



One of WABA's biggest volunteer programs is the Bike Ambassadors Program. Volunteers are engaged as educators and bike enthusiasts, working to bring better bicycling to area residents. They attend and speak at community events, interact with community members and act as bicycle role models.

"The idea is that once we provide volunteers with a core training program and ways to get involved, they can be advocates, educators and even do their own events without direct oversight from WABA," said Daniel Hoagland who runs the program.

Part of WABA's success is in setting clear expectations concerning when volunteers are representing WABA and when they are doing their own project.

Farthing said, "We want Bike Ambassadors to feel empowered and take ownership when they volunteer, but we also have a Volunteer Code of Conduct that spells out our expectations, especially when they are acting as a WABA representative."

"We've got one guy who works at Georgetown University who is what we call our Georgetown WABA Liaison. He takes the lead in putting together five or six events a year and works closely with staff to pull it off," said Hoagland.

The response from Georgetown students has been impressive and Hoagland said he couldn't have ever gotten as far without this volunteer leader.

When it comes to measuring the outputs of volunteers, Farthing said, "I'm more interested in fulfilling our mission by making volunteering integral to it." This means that when he or his staff write a grant application or contract, they'll often include how they'll utilize volunteers.

*"We're seeing that with social media, the lines are blurring between who's a follower, volunteer or contributor."*

"Grants are so competitive that showing how we leverage our work with volunteers has helped us get funding," said Farthing.

*Shane Farthing  
Executive Director*

Volunteer involvement ebbs and flows with WABA, with the winter months being slower. When projects or events come up, WABA has a volunteer list of more than 1,000 people who can be contacted.

"We find that people move around and volunteer for different things, so we push out opportunities to this list of people who'll actually do something for us," explains Farthing. WABA also has an e-mail list of over 40,000 people and a membership of 4,000. Like many nonprofits, WABA has dedicated office volunteers who assist in the administrative work of membership processing. They utilize volunteers as marshals for all their community bike rides and as bike valets for large local and national events, including their event on the National Mall.

While WABA membership is important, the group is most interested in getting people involved.

“We find that folks volunteer for us – and contribute their time - yet sometimes they’re not joining as WABA dues paying members,” said Farthing.

A few years ago WABA decided to recognize volunteer time by giving complimentary WABA memberships to anyone who volunteers three or more times.

“It sends a message to our volunteers that they are valued when they help us out,” said Membership Coordinator Jenn Bress.

Social media has worked well for WABA. Their 3,750 Facebook Fans and 1,250 Twitter followers are a good start to getting more people interested, engaged and eventually volunteering. WABA’s “blanket approach” is to put their messages and needs out there on multiple social media platforms to engage more people.

“We’re seeing that with social media, the lines are blurring between who’s a follower, volunteer, or contributor,” said Farthing, adding, “It’s really about a cycle of engagement, with one point of involvement eventually supporting the other areas.”

**Parting advice from the WABA:**

- Recognize that some people look for ways to show leadership, while others look to contribute by fitting into an existing structure. Provide opportunities for both.
- Always communicate to volunteers about the connection between what they are doing and what difference it is making.
- Show funders how your agency leverages volunteers to cost-effectively provide services

## **Volunteer Engagement Resources**

### **The New Volunteer Workforce** (free download)

By David Eisner, Robert T. Grimm Jr., Shannon Maynard, & Susannah Washburn (2009)

Stanford Social Innovation Review

[http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the\\_new\\_volunteer\\_workforce/](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the_new_volunteer_workforce/)

### **CEOs Who Lead the Way: 12 Key Actions of Volunteer Program Champions** (free download)

By Betty Stallings

<http://www.energizeinc.com/store/5-219-E-1>

### **From the Top Down - The Executive Role in Successful Volunteer Involvement**

(book for sale – paperback or downloadable book)

By Susan Ellis (updated, 2010)

<http://www.energizeinc.com/store/1-102-E-3>

### **Leading the Way to Successful Volunteer Involvement: Practical Tools for Busy Executives**

(for sale - paperback or downloadable book)

By Betty Stallings (2010)

<http://www.bettystallings.com/books/leadingtheway.htm>

### **Volunteer Engagement Self-Assessment Tool** (free download)

By Reed Dewey

[www.volunteerfrontier.com](http://www.volunteerfrontier.com)

### **Boomer Volunteer Engagement: Collaborate Today, Thrive Tomorrow**

(for sale - paperback or downloadable book. Free download of templates and forms.)

by Jill Friedman Fixler and Sandie Eichberg, with Gail Lorenz, CVA

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/nonprofits/boomerbook/>

### **Professional Development**

The Center for Nonprofit Advancement's Learning and Leadership Institute offers courses for all levels of staff.

Visit the website for upcoming courses (discounted registration for Center members)

<http://www.nonprofitlearning.org>

### **Video Resource**

Watch Greater Washington region experts discuss how to effectively engage and leverage volunteers on the television program *Connections*

<http://www.nonprofitadvancement.org/connections-volunteerism>

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6. *Deloitte Volunteer Impact Survey*, Deloitte, LLP, 2009.
7. *The New Volunteer Workforce*, David Eisner, Robert T. Grimm Jr., Shannon Maynard, & Susannah Washburn, Stanford Social Innovation Review (2009).

## Report Methodology

Organizations featured for this report were selected using a variety of approaches. The main method used was to identify nonprofits that already have been recognized as “one of the best” nonprofits by the *Catalogue for Philanthropy of Greater Washington*. Organization websites were then reviewed for the level and content of volunteer engagement activities. In addition, the *Center for Nonprofit Advancement* provided a list of member agencies for consideration. The writer also considered nonprofits he knew from his professional experience. All organizations selected first participated in a screening phone interview, and if selected, participated in an on-site interview with the Executive Director/CEO and the lead staff person responsible for volunteer engagement.



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