



The Four Rs of Volunteering, Part I

by Barbara Sparks, *Arizona Community Association Journal*

We are a nation of volunteers (109 million in 1998, the latest statistics) and yet I hear repeatedly that associations are fighting apathy. So how do you garner some of those volunteer hours for your association?

Finding good volunteers and keeping them can be broken down to four “R’s”: Recognize, Recruit, Respect, Recognize.

Recognize why people volunteer:

Why people volunteer has been the subject of many college theses and studies. Recent statistical information reveals that compassion, interest in the group, and to gain new perspectives are the top reasons for volunteering. Studies break it down more specifically into seven defined reasons.

- Altruism: A desire to help others.
- Socialization: A desire to group affiliation and friends.
- Materialism: A desire to tangible rewards that result in services—money, skills, and job.
- Purpose: A desire for intangible rewards—satisfaction, reaching goals, and making a contribution.
- Self-Esteem: A desire to achieve recognition.
- Autonomy: A desire to make decisions, set goals, and be independent in thought and action.
- Self-Actualization: A desire to express creativity, be original, and to have personal growth and development.

Generally speaking, if you recognize and match the why and motivation with the right volunteer experience, the result is good job performance and success for the volunteer and the association. What are your motivations?

A study completed by David McClelland and John Atkinson suggests that people have three separate motivational needs. A person may be a combination, but one need is typically more dominant.

The affiliation-motivated person is a people-person who needs personal interaction and likes to be involved in group

projects. This person needs to be liked, wants to keep people happy, and seeks social opportunities. Consider this person for involvement in the social activities of the association.

The achievement-motivated person is goal-oriented. They need specific goals to work toward. This person works well alone but needs feedback. They are focused, sticking to tasks until completed, and like to solve problems. They want responsibility and need tangible rewards. The achievement-motivated person would be a great individual to work on a larger project for the community.

The power-oriented person wants to make an impact and influence others. Power-oriented people can work alone or in a group. They respond to the needs of people or programs. They are self-starting and enjoy teaching others. They will also respond to titles that denote authority and they will seek and accept a position of authority and responsibility. Many times, the association president will be in this category.

Knowing why people do not volunteer may give as much insight as to why they do volunteer. The most common reasons are a full personal schedule, lack of interest, no one asked them (more on this later), and health reasons. With this in mind what would it take to encourage volunteerism? This is important: the same study says that short-term assignments, volunteering with friends or in a group, and training actually promote volunteerism.

Recruit:

- I have asked board members what they are doing to recruit volunteers and discovered that they expected the volunteers to knock on their door. The process does not often work that way. The “Giving and Volunteering in the United States 1999 Report,” taken by the Gallup Organization, reported that nine out of ten volunteered when asked. So

THE FOUR R'S OF VOLUNTEERING

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start asking, but be strategic in your methods.

- Make working with your association attractive with a very open business attitude that is inclusive and fun. This does not diminish the business nature—who wants to work with grumpy people?
- Keep your members informed and, if you need volunteers, do not be afraid to ask! The best way is in simple, one-on-one conversations. If you recruit volunteers for a program you believe in, your enthusiasm will show and you are more likely to bring others aboard. Other recruiting ideas you may consider are requests in an association newsletter, announcements on your Web page, invitation to participate at social gatherings, and networking through friends and colleagues.
- Create an asset map of your association. As a board, make it a point to find out the various skills and talents of those in your community and if they might consider volunteering. Then make an “asset map”—a list of the varied professions and talents your community holds. Armed with that list, you will know the right person to recruit when a specific skill is needed. You may find a CPA who would become the treasurer or offer financial advice if asked.
- Think outside the box when recruiting. A mother or father who works all day and has children to care for at night might not be able to commit to lengthy meetings. However, they may be willing to produce a flyer after the children are in bed or donate from their business. And consider outlining a specific short-term task for volunteers. Often people will volunteer when they know there is a specific end to the volunteer experience.

A verbal request or invitation for volunteers is the best way to obtain help and should contain three elements:

- Your invitation should state the need, with facts to strengthen the request. Do not use guilt. The person who volunteers because of guilt will not stay the course.
- State what the volunteer can do to help—a real job. Think in terms of providing an opportunity instead of asking for a favor. Provide the potential volunteer with expectations and skills required in a written job description. Tell the truth and be specific and clear. This will help assure that you find the right fit, and it shows that the board is running the association like a business.

Learning to acquire, nurture, and effectively use community-minded residents is the key to a successful volunteer work environment and productive association.

Sources: Family Community Leadership Arizona and Points of Light Foundation, Volunteer Statistics website.

Five Questions About Expansive Soils, Answered

by Troy Isaacson, Esq., *B.B. Quarterly*

Expansive soil causes more damage annually than earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods combined. Avoid serious impact on your home by learning the answers to these five questions:

1. What is Expansive Soil?

Nearly all clay soils swell when they get wet and shrink when they get dry. Clay soil that swells to extremes is called “expansive soil.” The swelling can occur over a long period of time—weeks, months or even years. Therefore, even if the source of wetting is removed, heaving can occur for a long time afterwards.

2. What problems does it cause?

Swelling will initially occur near the outer edges of a building. The result is a phenomenon called “edge lift.” As landscaping matures water lessens on the outer edges and concentrates under the center of the building. This results in “center lift” to the building. Over time, the lifting at the edges and center of a structure can cause severe geotechnical distress.

3. What are some symptoms of Expansive Soil?

Usual symptoms include doors that will not close properly or stick when they are opened, cabinet doors that will not stay shut, windows that are hard to open and close, diagonal cracks in the wall at the corners of doors and windows—both inside and outside the building, and unlevel floors. Other indicators are gaps above the kitchen cabinets, gaps between the garage door and the concrete driveway on either side, and spaces at the corners of fascia trim. Slab cracks greater than 1/4 inch and cracks in perimeter walls are also indicators of geotechnical distress.

4. How can Expansive Soil problems be avoided?

There are several ways to avoid foundation movement due to expansive soils. Here are a few:

- **Stabilize Moisture Conditions**

One of the most important actions is to ensure that the soil moisture conditions remain relatively constant. Thus, a well-planned, conservative landscape watering program is a simple but important way of controlling differential soils movement.

- **Avoid Flooding**

Avoid watering shrubs, bushes or flowers planted close to the foundation by “flooding” the planting bed. Trees

should not be planted close to the perimeter of the building.

- **Maintain Positive Water Flow**

Positive water flow away from the building foundation should be maintained to ensure that water readily flows away from the building and does not pond adjacent to or against the building. Care should be taken to ensure that roof runoff water is discharged through downspouts sufficiently distant from the building.

5. What should I do if I suspect Expansive Soil damage?

If you feel uncomfortable with any of the cracking or other soil-movement-related types of damages, the best solution is to ask a registered professional structural or geotechnical engineer to look at the damage. Not all engineers perform damage investigations, but some specialize in such investigations. If the engineer you contact does not perform damage investigation, you should ask him for the name of an engineer who does.

Fit To Print

SPREAD THE WORD WITH A GREAT COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

by Lisa Gschwandtner, *Upward Directions*

If you don't already have a community newsletter, you should. Not only is it one of the easiest and most direct ways to keep your residents informed about meetings, events, projects, and changes to rules and regulations, it can also provide opportunities to enhance community spirit and involvement. Who wouldn't love to see photographs of their friends and neighbors doing the limbo at the most recent block party?

Okay, so having a community newsletter is a great idea. But, who's going to produce it? Who's going to write it? Who's going to edit it? Who's going to distribute it?

Slow down, there. First of all, there's no need to bite off more than you can chew. A newsletter doesn't have to be a four-color, 12-page, professionally printed affair. On the contrary, especially if you're just getting started, it's better to keep things simple.

Any Volunteers?

Before you get to page one, you've got to recruit some help. If you don't have an administrative employee who can set deadlines, gather materials, and proofread copy, then try to find a resident with some publishing experience who might be willing to volunteer. A graphic designer,

editor, or journalist should be familiar with what it takes to get a newsletter up and running, but even a volunteer with no experience is better than no one at all. If the adults in your community don't have the time, try turning to teenagers who work on their school yearbook or newspaper.

Initially, your main editorial focus probably will revolve around keeping residents informed about changes and upcoming events. Your write-up of the latest reserve study, for example, doesn't have to be an investigative report; simply explain the who, what, when, where, why, and how, and you'll leave yourself with plenty of room to grow when the occasion demands it. Eventually, you should include articles that feature the lives and achievements of your residents, and consider adding a manager's or board president's column.

Tap a volunteer from each committee well in advance to submit information on any important dates, projects, or disruptions that will affect that community. The newsletter should be a collaborative effort—if you spread the workload among many, it will be much easier to establish a routine. Remember to give appropriate credit and bylines. Use a calendar to keep track of such semi-annual projects as HVAC inspections or maintenance checks, and make sure to schedule regular and repeated reminders in the newsletter.

Designer Details

When laying out copy, a three-column grid is typical for most newsletters. Choose one or possibly two fonts, like Times, Garamond, or Century, and stick to them. Don't get too cutesy by bolding, italicizing, shadowing, or underlining copy. Instead, rely on photographs and graphics to attract your reader's eye. But beware—too many visuals can be distracting. And that includes color. Blues and greens are easier on the eyes than shades of yellow and red.

Readers will be more inclined to read your newsletter if they're able to recognize it immediately from issue to issue, so once you have a set design, be consistent. Use the same fonts, grid, and mast for each issue.

Any professional designer or printer should be able to give you advice about how many pages and what type of paper stock you'll want to use. Smaller newsletters are often four to eight pages long, printed on 8 1/2 x 11-inch pages. But larger publications can exceed 24 pages on broadsheet or tabloid newspaper format.

No matter what your publication looks like, remember that it's a voice for the community, by the community. Keep them informed and entertained, and they'll keep coming back for more.

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Hiring Independent Contractors

Many Associations have had questions relating to hiring independent contractors. If the Association is evaluating hiring an independent contractor, it should keep some general principles in mind.

First, the Association should find out whether the contractor is sufficiently insured. The purpose of insurance is to protect the Association from any liability that the contractor may create. Additionally, if the contractor does not carry workers' compensation insurance, the Association could possibly see itself dragged into a suit for any injury suffered by any employees or the contractor. If the Association has a difficult time finding a contractor who is adequately insured, it may try to work with neighboring subdivisions to see if it can work out a contract with a contractor who is already performing work for other subdivisions in the area. If the Association is not able to find a contractor with adequate insurance who is willing to perform the work, the Association needs to ensure that it has proper coverage itself.

If the Association must use a contractor without in-

surance, it can have the contractor sign a waiver form, claiming that it will not hold the Association liable for any damages that the contractor suffers, and claiming that the contractor will indemnify the Association for any property damage or personal injury caused by the contractor. However, although the waiver may be valid to the extent that the Association does not act recklessly, the indemnification portion is only worth as much as the person is worth. If the contractor has no money, he will not be able to pay to indemnify the Association and pay its costs of defense. That is why the insurance carried by the Association is so important.

In summary, the best action for the Association is to hire contractors who are insured and who carry workers' compensation and unemployment compensation. However, if the Association is unable to hire such a contractor, it should ensure that it has proper insurance coverage to cover the types of liability that may arise by discussing the matter with its insurance carrier.