

VRC invites you to join our fall benefit on **Thursday October 20th, 7:30 PM**

## SINGERS OVER MANHATTAN

Eric Reed Trio with Carla Cook, Sachal Vasandani and Jennifer Sanon

Led by music director Eric Reed and his trio, this will be an evening of vocal delights, showcasing some of the finest young talents on the scene. Gospel-tinged contralto Carla Cook and the Ella Fitzgerald-invoking, yet superbly singular Jennifer Sanon are back, and Sachal Vasandani is looking to make his mark in the "House of Swing."

## BUY A TICKET, SUPPORT VRC

Join us at the spectacular Allen Room of the new Jazz at Lincoln Center, in the Time Warner Building overlooking Columbus Circle

For tickets, call VRC at 212-889-4805

### NEWSLETTER TEAM

#### Editors

Brienne Cliadakis, Alice Greif, and Rutger van den Hurk

#### Reporters

Marjorie Martin and Rutger van den Hurk

#### Photographer

Rutger van den Hurk (except for Bloomberg picture)

#### Graphic Design / Layout

Andrew Fontana

## Mayor Bloomberg salutes volunteers



Mayor Bloomberg and VRC's Executive Director Brienne Cliadakis

On June 14, New York City's non-profit agencies and many of their volunteers were invited to a very special event: a BBQ to celebrate volunteerism on the lawn of Gracie Mansion, the historic home of the Mayor of the City of New York. The event was organized by the Mayor's Volunteer Center and co-sponsored by NYAVA (the New York Association for Volunteer Administration), of which VRC is a member and VRC's Executive Director is a board member.

Over 1,000 NYC volunteers enjoyed the sunny weather, terrific food, drinks and live music from a marvelous Caribbean Steel Band. Mayor Bloomberg attended the event, took photos with volunteers (including our own Executive Director), mingled with volunteers, and gave a speech in which he mentioned the enormous contribution of volunteers to the New York community, observing in his remarks that, to put it simply, "volunteers are the best." We at VRC couldn't agree more!

## A unique source of volunteers

Interviewers at VRC have noticed an increasing number of well-educated people from foreign countries coming into the office seeking volunteer work. They form a distinct category since many of them are not eligible to do paid work in the United States because they are waiting for a green card, or came to New York with their spouse. Others start as volunteers to gain work experience in the US. In many cases, these individuals have had successful, professional careers in their home country, and possess highly valuable skills.

Non-profit organizations in New York can benefit from this unique source of highly qualified volunteers. For example, the American Folk Art Museum worked with a VRC Volunteer from England. She had a strong marketing background and became responsible for a significant share of the museum's marketing activities, for example, she developed new marketing and promotion ideas for the museum. This unique source of volunteers has often proven to be very valuable and reliable.

## Volunteer: Give a Boost to Your Career!

Believe it or not, it is possible to do something good for the community and yourself at the same time. Volunteering can be a great way to learn new skills, to build a network within your field, or to learn about a new field. College students, people looking for a career change, and parents who want to re-enter the work force after raising their children are increasingly aware of the benefits that volunteer work has to offer. Jennifer Meltzer is a perfect example of this. Thanks in part to her volunteer experience, she was accepted at three distinguished schools for social work and is now in the position to choose what best fits her needs.

### Jennifer's story...

Jennifer is a very energetic young woman who came to VRC in August 2004, looking for a place to volunteer with children. During the interview with VRC interviewer Diane Kelly, she realized that she already had some experience with elderly people and that she really liked working with them. The VRC interviewer gave Jennifer three referrals to agencies working with senior citizens. One of those was Search and Care, an agency that helps older people without family or friends nearby to safely maintain their independence.

At Search and Care Jennifer's contribution was much appreciated, and she immediately started working three to four days a week. Jennifer started out by escorting elderly people to wherever they needed to go. She liked working with the elderly so much that Jennifer soon decided to go to graduate school in social work. At about this time, another opportunity came her way: to fill in for three months for a case manager who had to take medical leave. This was an excellent opportunity to get more experience; Jennifer gladly accepted the offer. She started working three days a week as a volunteer case manager and had to make home visits to clients, evaluate their needs, and provide them with information and counseling. In addition, she had to attend meetings, which helped her to learn about other agencies and build her own network of professionals in the field. This valuable experience made her an excellent candidate for graduate school.

### Make your volunteer experience work

Jennifer applied for a graduate program in social work at three schools, Columbia University, Hunter College, and Fordham University, and was accepted by all three. Jennifer feels that without her volunteer experience, her chances of admission would have been much slimmer. Not only do the schools value volunteer work, but also — and more importantly — Search and Care could provide Jennifer with a strong and compelling letter of recommendation. And, when Jennifer had to write the personal essay for her application, her colleagues were a terrific resource about what to include.

In August this year, Jennifer started at Hunter College in the 'Case Work Program'. Hunter has a very strong reputation in the social work field and several staff members of Search and Care also received their degrees from Hunter. Jennifer will have to work three days a week as part of the education program. Unfortunately this means that Jennifer will stop volunteering at Search and Care, but she hopes to return in the summer.

Jennifer was really able to utilize her desire to volunteer to help her explore fields that might be of professional interest to her. Then, once she started volunteering, she leveraged her volunteer experience into a strong professional opportunity. All the while, she filled a much needed role assisting a vulnerable population in living independently and with dignity.

## VRC volunteers are worth millions of dollars!

According to the Independent Sector, a coalition of non-profit organizations, in 2004 the value of volunteer time in the United States was \$17.55 per hour. This was estimated using the average wage of non-management and non-agricultural workers as determined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and adding 12% to estimate fringe benefits. But the value of volunteer time in New York is even higher. In 2002, the last year that state-by-state numbers were available, the value of volunteer time in New York was worth 128.5% of the average value in the United States. If this figure is still accurate, the New York value of volunteer time could be an estimated \$22.55.

Those statistics should make you stop and think. In 2004, the Volunteer Referral Center referred nearly a thousand volunteers. Assuming on average they volunteered three hours a week that would mean they represent a weekly value of \$67,750, and a yearly value of \$3,517,800! This once again shows how beneficial the work of VRC's volunteers is to the New York community and non-profit sector.

### NEW VOLUNTEER AT VRC

VRC is pleased to welcome **Sheila Marshall** as our newest volunteer interviewer. Sheila recently retired as an attorney at LeBoeuf, Lamb, Greene, & MacRae, LLP, an international law firm headquartered in New York City that also provides legal advice to VRC's Board. Sheila handled some human resources issues for LeBoeuf so she is well positioned to join VRC as an interviewer. She has also agreed to assist VRC with legal questions.

## Dilemmas of an interviewer – An interviewer's Diary

In my still limited experience with VRC, I have had difficulty in evaluating clients who are seeking referral to work with children. The dilemma I sometimes face is an ethical one where a client's age, personal background, or prior work experience may influence the selection of an agency appropriate for referral. For example, if a client appears unkempt or is a heavy smoker, should these characteristics influence the type of referral? Or, in a situation where a mature man has very limited work experience, should the interviewer probe into the reasons why he has not worked full-time most of his adult life? An interviewer might not question a woman with a short employment history, assuming she had been a homemaker. So, should a man be questioned in this area? To what extent is probing appropriate?

The most recent dilemma I experienced was with a mature gentleman who was seeking a volunteer opportunity with an agency where he would receive experience working with children. He had no previous experience with children, however he was enrolled in a program at a community college to become a teaching assistant in the public school system. I had some reservations as a result of his presentation and the fact that his heavy smoking was very noticeable to me. We discussed the importance of setting an example and being presentable when working with children as well as the difficulty in placing a heavy smoker in contact with children. My client was very receptive to these observations and told me he had tried many times to overcome his addiction, but without success. Also he said he would seek further help. What can you do in this situation, where you have reservations? In the end, I made referrals to two tutorial agencies where I knew there would be a thorough background check.

VRC has a dual responsibility, both to the client and to our agencies. An appropriate referral thus requires a delicate balance between the needs of the agency and the needs of the client. Both their needs have to go hand in hand. People come to VRC from many walks of life, diverse cultural backgrounds, a wide age span, and a variety of motivations. Many are in transitional phases of life and are seeking direction. For some it may be to fulfill an obligation or to reintegrate into society. Putting these varied components together makes the process of referral a complex task. As an interviewer, I try to serve both the agency and the volunteer. I believe the best way is to guide the volunteer in selection and to be upfront in discussing any problems that may arise in referral. Though not always easy, it does make my job interesting.

Marjorie Martin

## WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

After a long, hot summer we are beginning our 16th year at our Madison Avenue location. So far, 2005 has been a great year for us. In the first eight months, we conducted 608 interviews, an increase of over a hundred compared to the same period the year before. As a result, the number of referrals to our agencies also increased. In addition, we added 17 new agencies in 2005.

Also very successful was our spring benefit, "Forbidden Broadway". Everyone who attended had a great laugh at the spoofs of noted Broadway shows. We raised over \$13,000 net and would especially like to thank the benefit chairs, Kathleen Leisure and Pat Allen, as well as the rest of the committee and contributors who helped to make this benefit such a success.

On October 20th, we are having another exciting benefit at the Allen Room of the new Jazz at Lincoln Center. The Allen Room is a unique and fantastic space with a 50-foot glass wall overlooking Columbus Circle and Central Park. The legendary Eric Reed will be performing with his trio and three talented vocalists. We do hope that you will join us. If you have not yet been to Jazz at Lincoln Center, this is a great opportunity to help VRC and get a glimpse of this new and dazzling space at the same time!

This issue of our newsletter highlights one of our volunteers and introduces a new column, "Diary of an Interviewer" in which we hear about VRC's work from the other side of the table. Marjorie Martin talks about her challenges as an interviewer. This should provide a new and interesting perspective on our work.

Again, I thank everyone who has been involved with VRC. You are very important to us!

With warm regards,

Nancy Carr  
President



VRC President Nancy Carr



Clockwise starting top left: Brienne Ciadakis and Laura Reid; Carolyn Brod; Alice Greif and Nancy Carr; Robin Withington and Roberta Hodgson; Joan Metcalf; Sheila Marshall.

## VRC celebrates its Volunteers!

To recognize VRC's volunteers and celebrate their importance to the organization, VRC's President, Nancy Carr, invited VRC staff to her home for a luncheon on June 6th. In addition to many staff members, former volunteers and many members of the VRC board were present. Since VRC is an almost all-volunteer agency, recognizing the people who make it happen was a terrific way to celebrate before many of the volunteers departed for summer vacation!

## New agencies welcome volunteers

VRC is always thrilled when a new agency registers and we can expand our offerings with new and exciting volunteer positions. We would like to welcome the following new agencies that recently joined us:

- Battery Drumline
- Bryant Park Reading Room
- Cerebral Palsy Associations of NYS
- Doll & Toy Museum of NYC
- "Four one-legged men" Project
- Friends and Relatives of the Institutionalized Aged (FRIA)
- Human Rights First
- International Rescue Committee
- Legal Services for NYC
- Mount Sinai Medical Center
- Museum of Arts & Design
- National Hemophilia Foundation
- Neighborhood Defender Service
- Phoenix House
- Project Reach Youth
- Urban Justice Center
- YM & YWHA of Washington Heights and Inwood

Call 212-889-4805 for an appointment  
Or visit our website at [www.volunteer-referral.org](http://www.volunteer-referral.org)

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE—VOLUNTEER!**



Bridging Volunteers and Agencies  
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