



Bridging Volunteers and Agencies

VOLUNTEERING NEWS

Bridging Volunteers and Agencies

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Spring 2005

ON APRIL 17TH

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VRC's Referral - A Perfect Match! Dynamic Couple Wins Volunteer of the Year Awards

Volunteering offers a wide range of experiences and opportunities as the Volunteer Referral Center (VRC) well knows. By interviewing each volunteer individually, VRC has matched thousands of volunteers to the non-profit world, bringing New Yorkers' talents to life. Among them are husband and wife volunteer award winners, John Entrada and Genny Javellana, of the All Stars Project. John was the Volunteer of the Year 2003 and Genny won the Volunteer Recognition Award in 2004.

Nothing highlights VRC's efforts more than volunteers like John and his wife, Genny. Having met at Fairleigh Dickinson College while getting their MBAs, Genny and John married and began careers in the business world. They had talked about wanting to spend time together exploring their creative and artistic interests, and they particularly wanted to work with kids. One morning John heard a commercial on WBGO JAZZ radio station endorsing VRC and they decided to pay the center a visit. The VRC interviewer patiently listened to their ideas and suggested All Stars Project, among other non-profit organizations. Soon after, All Stars invited John and Genny to an orientation.

As the VRC interviewer had thought, All Stars was the perfect match for them; it offered both the opportunity to be involved with theater and the chance to work with young people. All Stars uses performance-based programs to help inner city kids find their voice and develop confidence and discipline. Genny initially found her niche in set design and construction, following her interest in working with her hands and building. More recently, she has become involved in volunteer recruitment. As a professional in marketing, she created the campaign "Each One Reach One", where volunteers bring a friend to join in on the project. Genny has also organized social events and once a week she calls potential volunteers to participate in an introductory session with All Stars.

John started out by sewing costumes, which was something he always had wanted to do. Now he is the editor of the newsletter. John began volunteering in the Spring of 2001; since then he has helped in phone fundraising campaigns and producing financial reports. He has also done street performances and has encouraged his friends to join All Stars. Most important is John's extraordinary work with the volunteer newsletter: "Calling All Stars". Under John's wing it has grown from a one-page series of announcements to an 8 page monthly publication.

"We thank the Volunteer Referral Center," emphasized the All Stars Director of Volunteers, Gail Elberg. "Genny is loving and supportive of other volunteers and it is a pleasure to have her", she continued. About John she says, "Even more important than the newsletter is his commitment to doing good in the world".

As it did for John and Genny, volunteering provides a wide range of opportunities to follow your dreams, roll up your sleeves and pitch in for a greater cause. VRC was their first step on this journey, their guide to find a place to do what they do best.

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a wide range of
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VRC involved in the "Leave No Volunteer Behind" Workshop

On March 22, 2005 the NYAVA (New York Association for Volunteer Administration) hosted a workshop entitled, "Leave No Volunteer Behind: An Inclusive Volunteer Program Is a Strong One". Led by Leslie Heller and Elana Gartner Golden, specialists in disabilities training with experience in volunteer management, participants from approximately 35 organizations learned how to include volunteers with disabilities in their volunteer program.

VRC's own Executive Director, Brienne Cliadakis, who is also the co-chair of NYAVA's Professional Development Committee, helped organize the workshop. Doris May, a VRC interviewer, also attended the workshop on behalf of The Volunteer Referral Center. Participants learned how to interview and create an accessible environment for volunteers with special needs. It was emphasized that volunteers with disabilities usually have more daytime hours to volunteer, and in the proper environment, with appropriate accommodations (which could be as minimal as extra lighting), they make excellent volunteers. The workshop leaders did a terrific job in helping to dispel stereotypical perceptions of people with disabilities.



Board member and interviewer Mary Lambert working with a volunteer.

NYC "Share Your Heart" Volunteer Expo (2005) – A One-Stop Shop for New Yorkers on Volunteering

This past Valentine's Day weekend, from February 10th-12th, 60 New York-based non-profit organizations were in the heart of NYC, Grand Central Station, for the first ever Volunteer Expo in NYC. Thanks to the support of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce Community Benefit Fund, Grand Central Terminal, and many other sponsors, New Yorkers were able to share their hearts with "the unsung heroes in our city" as the MCC called the non-profit agencies. The enthusiasm was wide spread. VRC's Executive Director, Brienne Cliadakis, mentioned "Having the first ever Volunteer Expo in Grand Central Station was terrific! Not only was it very effective in helping agencies recruit volunteers, but it sent a message to the public, highlighting the importance of voluntarism by giving it such a prominent location."

All 60 non-profits, including VRC, were recruiting volunteers and spreading the word to New Yorkers about opportunities for giving back and connecting to fellow New Yorkers. Friendly staff from each organization helped potential volunteers feel at home, free to ask questions, and gather information to make their final choice. The Expo created the rare opportunity for face-to-face meetings with many non-profits in one location. The sense of unity that it fostered among non-profits brought excitement about being a part of this worthy cause: volunteering in the Big Apple. "VRC was thrilled to participate in the Expo! It was a great opportunity for VRC and we enjoyed being a part of such an important event in the volunteer world." claimed our VRC Director.

Plans for the future are to duplicate the Expo in each borough to expose all non-profits interested in recruiting volunteers throughout New York City. "Let's share our hearts and make NY a better place, is the sentiment we all share."

NEW FACES AT VRC

Development volunteer RUTGER VAN DEN HURK is now our new VRC Project Coordinator. Rutger came to New York from the Netherlands a little over a year ago when his wife was offered a job at the United Nations. While going to school and job-hunting, Rutger found the VRC on the Internet and came in for an interview. His fundraising and computer skills were immediately noted and he was quickly put to work on a variety of projects. We are delighted that we can count on him as part of the official staff.

Career Counselor MARJORIE MARTIN, a retired public health nurse and former teacher, is currently volunteering at the Children's Advocacy Center, as well as with the VRC. She enjoys working with the other volunteers and is impressed by the diversity of VRC's clients.

Avid and experienced volunteer, ELAINE ORR found VRC at the Transition Network. She has volunteered for many years and was formerly very active in a nonprofit organization called Historic Yellow Springs located outside Philadelphia. Her volunteering background made her a perfect fit for VRC.

A native of Sweden, MATILDA HERDLAND has an extensive background in recruiting, including positions at the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm and Foray and Utin Inc. in New York City. Seeing VRC's ad in the New York Times, Matilda thought that matching clients with volunteer jobs sounded fulfilling and that her professional experience would prove helpful. Indeed it has. Mathilda is currently on maternity leave, taking care of Izabella Anna Herdland who was born March 21.

When JOAN GREENSPAN first visited the VRC, shortly after she retired after 20 years as an executive at the Screen Actors Guild, she was referred to the American Folk Art Museum, where she worked on their Arts and Antiques Show. At the completion of the project, Joan returned to the VRC where she requested administrative work. Since last Valentine's Day she has been assisting in appointment scheduling, filing, phone work and is being trained to be an interviewer.

Non-Profits Call for Young Professionals – A New Generation of Volunteers

This past January, to start the New Year, VRC launched the Young Professional Committee (YPC). At the initial kickoff, with several twenty- to forty year old participants from both the non-profit and the corporate world, we discussed our concerns about the future of volunteering. The view was unanimous: most professional New Yorkers, with their busy lives, need more accessible volunteer opportunities at non-profit agencies that are receptive to fun and innovative ideas from the next generation.

The committee's initial concern is to learn what motivates young people to embark on social service.

While we know that "giving back" to the community is a common desire, we also find inhibiting factors, such as time restrictions, disenchantment with the world, or interest in working on substantive projects that don't always fit "cookie-cutter" job descriptions.

The committee noted a distinct category of potential volunteers among young professionals who are between jobs. They have time, unimpeded by job demands. Other young professionals welcome new experiences and skills that a volunteer job may produce, for a subsequent career change. Meeting peers with similar interests is, of course, a strong incentive, whether it's just for fun or for networking.

However, for most young people the overriding issue is lack of time. We must address this if we want to attract young volunteers and hold their interest. We must offer a portfolio of short-term tasks instead of requiring the commitment of large blocks of time. Perhaps the possibility of volunteering from home can be added to the mix as well as having more flexibility in scheduling diverse activities.

Ultimately, multiple options, freedom and enjoyment is what Generation X is looking for. If we do not provide these, fail to adapt to legitimate time constraints, or ignore the need to supplement traditional referrals with viable alternatives, we will slowly find ourselves without the much-needed efforts of our young professionals.

YPC's work has just begun. Please join us in any way you can in accomplishing our mission. We believe you will find the work inspiring and worthwhile.

WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings,

Welcome to spring!

I want to welcome and thank all new volunteer staff members who have helped to keep the office buzzing through the long, cold winter. It has been an active and busy time here at the Volunteer Referral Center.

Prospective volunteers seem to be increasingly committed to their search for volunteer work. We can see this in a decline in the "no show" rate and in an increase from last year in the total number of interviews actually conducted. Because of this, the number of referrals provided by VRC also went up. This is great news for us and for the agencies!

More good news is that through a substantive grant we were able to update our technological systems, which is greatly improving the way we do business.

VRC has been particularly active promoting voluntarism so far this year, participating in the first ever Volunteer Expo at Grand Central Terminal on February 10-12 (see page 3 of this newsletter) and the St. Vincent's Hospital "Mind, Body and Spirit Health Fair" on April 12. In addition, VRC is involved in the New York Association for Volunteer Administration (NYAVA). Our Executive Director, Brienne Cliadakis, became co-chair of the Professional Development Committee this winter and is now on the board of NYAVA.

Again, I thank everyone who has been involved with VRC either as staff member and/or contributor. You're the best!

Hope to see you all at the Benefit, "Forbidden Broadway" on April 17th. It should be a fun afternoon.

With warm regards,

Nancy Carr
President



VRC President Nancy Carr

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