

## Awards Program Shows Volunteers' HEARTS

When Victoria Kleemann, director, volunteer services, UCSF Medical Center and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital (San Francisco, CA), was looking for a way to honor her volunteers, she simply had to look right in front of her — at a recognition program that was already in place for hospital employees.

"I established the HEARTS program to mirror the employee recognition program. HEARTS is an acronym for Honoring Exceptional And Random Treasures of Service. It gives patients, staff and visitors the opportunity to write a recognition form acknowledging volunteers for their outstanding service. HEARTS forms are publicized on our website, in our newsletter and in various hospitalwide publications."

Awards are given out at HEARTS parties held throughout the year and during an annual recognition luncheon. Every recipient receives a framed HEARTS award, is acknowledged in the Caring Connections newsletter and is invited to a HEARTS party, where cake and beverages are served. Each volunteer has his or her recognition form read out loud and is able to meet and celebrate with other honorees.

Source: Victoria Kleemann, Director, Volunteer Services, UCSF Medical Center and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital, San Francisco, CA. E-mail: Victoria.Kleemann@ucsfmedctr.org

## USEFUL TOOLS

### Skillbank Form Reveals Talents and Interests

Do any of your volunteers have a green thumb or possess the skills of a handyman, or perhaps are excellent musicians? There is one easy way to find out. It's called a "skillbank" form.

The Shawnee Mission Medical Center (Shawnee Mission, KS) requires volunteers to fill out the form, so they can be matched with a job they will be good at and find fulfilling. With nearly 600 volunteers working at the medical center, the form helps the volunteer coordinators get to know what skills and talents their volunteers have to offer. "It really helps us hone in on specific skills. If we see someone has an interest in gardening, sewing or perhaps they were once a financial planner, we can find jobs where they can put these skills to use," says Peggy Todd, manager of volunteer services at the medical center.

The form (shown at right) is divided into the following 14 categories; under each of these categories are lists of skills or interests the volunteer can check.

The volunteers are asked to complete the form during the application process. It is available on the medical center's website as well as in hard copy. Todd and two other volunteer coordinators then peruse to find the best match.

Source: Peggy Todd, Manager of Volunteer Services, Shawnee Mission Medical Center, Shawnee Mission, KS. E-mail: Peggy.todd@shawneemission.org

**SHAWNEE MISSION MEDICAL CENTER**

**SKILLBANK (Please check all that apply.)**

Return completed forms to: Shawnee Mission Medical Center, Volunteer Services Department, 9100 W. 74<sup>th</sup> Street, Shawnee Mission, KS 66204; Fax: (913) 789-3149

<p><b>BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Architect <input type="checkbox"/> Attorney Type: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Business planning consultant <input type="checkbox"/> Certified public accountant <input type="checkbox"/> Dispute mediator <input type="checkbox"/> Employment counselor <input type="checkbox"/> Financial planner <input type="checkbox"/> Human resource specialist <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance agent <input type="checkbox"/> Paralegal <input type="checkbox"/> Retail Sales <input type="checkbox"/> Risk management consultant <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic planning consultant <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<p><b>HEALTH &amp; MEDICAL SERVICES</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> CPR/first aid <input type="checkbox"/> Dentist <input type="checkbox"/> Disabled assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Home health assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Hospice services <input type="checkbox"/> Hygiene instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health services <input type="checkbox"/> Nurse <input type="checkbox"/> Nutritionist <input type="checkbox"/> Optometrist <input type="checkbox"/> Physical therapist <input type="checkbox"/> Physician Type: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Visually impaired services <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<p><b>EDUCATION</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Day care aide <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary school teacher Subject: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> ESL instructor <input type="checkbox"/> High school tutor Subject: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> GED instructor <input type="checkbox"/> Librarian <input type="checkbox"/> Life skills instructor <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy instructor <input type="checkbox"/> Mentor <input type="checkbox"/> Middle school tutor Subject: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting skills instructor <input type="checkbox"/> Special education <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<p><b>SKILLED TRADES</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Auto mechanic <input type="checkbox"/> Carpenter <input type="checkbox"/> Drafting <input type="checkbox"/> Drywall <input type="checkbox"/> Electrician <input type="checkbox"/> Hair stylist <input type="checkbox"/> Handyman <input type="checkbox"/> Heating and air conditioning repair (HVAC) <input type="checkbox"/> House painting <input type="checkbox"/> Makeup artist <input type="checkbox"/> Mosaicist <input type="checkbox"/> Plumber <input type="checkbox"/> Roofer <input type="checkbox"/> Yard maintenance <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<p><b>SPORTS &amp; RECREATION</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Camp counselor <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching Sport: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Disabled sports activities <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise/aerobics <input type="checkbox"/> Lifeguard <input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife/nature leader <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<p><b>NONPROFIT ADMINISTRATION</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising <input type="checkbox"/> Grant writing <input type="checkbox"/> Special event planning <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer recruitment and training <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<p><b>ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Acting <input type="checkbox"/> Balloon art <input type="checkbox"/> Band <input type="checkbox"/> Bingo <input type="checkbox"/> Face painting <input type="checkbox"/> Juggling <input type="checkbox"/> Musical Instrument Type: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Singing <input type="checkbox"/> Storyteller <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<p><b>COMPUTER SUPPORT</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Hardware <input type="checkbox"/> Internet <input type="checkbox"/> Networks <input type="checkbox"/> Software <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<p><b>HAND CRAFT SKILLS</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Arts and crafts <input type="checkbox"/> Ceramics/pottery <input type="checkbox"/> Needlecraft <input type="checkbox"/> Sewing <input type="checkbox"/> Woodworking <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<p><b>ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Adding Machine <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Programs (Access, Excel, PowerPoint, or Word) Type: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Data entry <input type="checkbox"/> Filing <input type="checkbox"/> General office assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Mailings <input type="checkbox"/> Receptionist <input type="checkbox"/> Word processing <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<p><b>COMMUNICATION</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Calligraphy <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign language Language: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Graphic design <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing/promotion <input type="checkbox"/> Multimedia production <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter/brochure <input type="checkbox"/> Publishing <input type="checkbox"/> Photography <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations <input type="checkbox"/> Public Speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Sign language <input type="checkbox"/> Tour guides <input type="checkbox"/> Video production <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<p><b>CORPORATE TRAINING</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural sensitivity <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitator <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership development <input type="checkbox"/> Management planning <input type="checkbox"/> Motivational <input type="checkbox"/> Stress management <input type="checkbox"/> Team building <input type="checkbox"/> Time management <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
		<p><b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental education <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening/horticulture <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape architect <input type="checkbox"/> Recycling <input type="checkbox"/> Veterinarian <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
		<p><b>GENERAL ASSISTANCE</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Companion/volunteering <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone reassurance <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation/driver <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

## Ice Breakers You Can Use

■ **The Crucial Debate** — Ask everyone to pair up then give them a silly topic — soft vs. hard mattresses, for example. Each person must take a side and debate the topic. The pair must debate at the same time, loudly and without stopping, for one to two minutes.

This ice breaker gets participants in a talking mood, and their answers give insight into their personalities.

## References Provide Additional Insight

When you apply for a job, typically your potential employer asks for references. Likewise, if a person applies to volunteer at your organization, it may be a good idea to ask him or her for references as well.

At The Children's Village (Dobbs Ferry, NY), all volunteer applicants undergo a strict screening process that includes providing three references from people or agencies they've worked with or volunteered at in the past. Family members are not acceptable references.

"We are a child welfare agency, so screening volunteer applicants is crucial to the safety of our children. Reference forms add another dynamic to the interview process and give us some insight into the applicant's character," says Candida Fitts, director of Volunteer and Academic Services at the organization.

For each reference, volunteer applicants must provide a phone number and/or e-mail address and details as to how they know and how long they've known their reference. Each reference is then sent a letter describing what the organization does and what traits they look for in volunteers. The letter also requests that the reference fill out a form about the applicant. On the form, references are asked to rate applicant qualities, as well as answer a series of questions about him or her. If an e-mail address isn't available or the reference doesn't reply to the e-mail, the person is then called and asked the same questions over the phone.

Source: Candida Fitts, Director of Volunteer and Academic Services, The Children's Village, Dobbs Ferry, NY. E-mail: cfitts@childrensvillage.org

## Downsizing Shows Strength of Volunteers

Downsizing? Right-sizing? Call it whatever you like — everyone is feeling the pinch. And in colleges all across the country, development staff have to do more with less.

Lee Davis, director, The Fund for Agnes Scott, Agnes Scott College (Decatur, GA), says their institution is no different. After having a full-time director of reunion giving for seven years, this was their first year without one. Davis says the transition has been challenging.

So how are they managing that? For starters, they have really had to streamline what they can do to support their volunteer fund chairs.

In the past, there were very personalized websites for each reunion class, which were labor intensive to manage. This year they have created more standardized websites for reunion classes. For example, donor lists and RSVPs used to be posted individually for each reunion class. Now there is a single link that alumnae and visitors to the website can use to view all RSVPs, and the donor list is comprehensive, including donors from each reunion class.

In reality, Davis says, most of the classes have not missed the personalization of those websites. “Alumnae are more likely to go through Facebook or use continuous e-mail chains for class communication, so we are going through their communication channels more frequently now.”

Davis says they are also learning that some of the extraordinary measures taken in the past aren't necessary now. “We have such strong alumnae that have such an affinity for the college. They are carrying the program this year.”

Also carrying the program are the volunteers. “Those years of personal attention trained our class fund chairs well, so that they have really reached a new level of maturity as volunteers. Their expectations are well-formed, and they are not afraid to tell us what they need.”

*Source: Lee Davis, Director, The Fund for Agnes Scott, Agnes Scott College, Decatur, GA. E-mail: lpdavis@agnesscott.edu*

## Six Tips for Remembering Names

It's a big plus if you can readily remember and call your volunteers by name. Doing so is especially impressive if you work with many volunteers.

Here are six tips to help you remember all those names:

1. Listen closely and make eye contact.
2. Verify the proper name.
3. Repeat the name quickly.
4. Ask a question using the name.
5. Repeat the name when you leave.
6. Mention the name to a friend.

When in a meeting or other large gathering of volunteers, play the name game. The first member of the group announces his or her full name. Then the second person repeats the first person's name, and adds his or her own. The third person says the first and second persons' names and adds his or her own, and so on through the group.

SEEKING VOLUNTEER INPUT

## Turn to Your Volunteers for New Ideas

Your volunteers provide an extra hand with a variety of tasks. But why not ask them for more than just physical service. “Volunteers want to contribute to our organization's success. Let's give them that opportunity!” says Tom Linley, director of volunteer services at Volunteer Florida (Tallahassee, FL). “We check in with all volunteers on a regular basis and ask for input,” says Candida Fitts, director of volunteer services at The Children's Village (Dobbs Ferry, NY).

Linley and Fitts regularly turn to their volunteers for new ideas to make their organization run more efficiently. “A volunteer once came to me with the idea that there should be a greeter at the entrance to one of our parks. I thought that would be a great idea, and I told the volunteer to run with it. He did, and his idea has now turned into a majorly successful volunteer opportunity we offer,” says Linley.

Gathering input from your volunteers can be done in a variety of ways. Here are a few methods, formal and informal, Linley and Fitts use:

- **Suggestion box, either real or virtual.** “While an old-fashioned idea, it's a great way for your organization's team (both employees and volunteers) to provide input,” says Linley.
- **Community Advisory Committee.** “The committee is made up of friends and neighbors in the town who had some concerns, all of whom later became our most ardent advocates and regular volunteers,” according to Fitts.
- **Volunteer Council.** “Our council was made up of about 12 volunteers who were very consistent and had a lot of input,” Fitts says.
- **Management by Wandering Around aka MBWA.** “The value of developing strong relationships with employees and volunteers cannot be overemphasized. Our human resources are our most valuable asset to accomplishing our organization's mission. Organizational leaders (from the executive director to the frontline supervisor) who spend time with their staff (employees and volunteers) learn plenty to improve their work and keep their organizations strong. Simple conversations that start with ‘How are you doing today?’ can lead to great relationships and great ideas on how to improve,” Linley says.
- **Surveys.** “I love surveys and find they are a fast and easy way to get input. There are numerous free online tools like Survey Monkey and Google docs that are easy to use and free,” suggests Linley.
- **An open mind.** “Success breeds success. When a volunteer comes to you with an idea, be willing to take a (calculated) risk and let them test drive the idea, even if all the fine details are not fleshed out. Organizations whose leaders embrace this kind of engagement will likely be surprised at the success that can be accomplished by volunteers,” says Linley.

*Sources: Candida Fitts, Director of Volunteer & Academic Services, The Children's Village, Dobbs Ferry, NY. E-mail: cfitts@childrensvillage.org*

*Tom Linley, Director of Emergency Management and Volunteer Services, Volunteer Florida, The Elliot Building, Tallahassee, FL. E-mail: tom@volunteerflorida.org*