



Sunset Park and Recreation, Seaside



CASA for Children Inc., Portland



Eugene Opera, Eugene

VOLUNTEERING IN OREGON:

Volunteer Recruitment Brief

The Volunteering in Oregon project, conducted in 2016 and funded by The Oregon Community Foundation, sought to explore key questions related to volunteering in Oregon among nonprofits in the state. The VIO project included a statewide electronic survey with nonprofit organizations, an electronic survey with volunteers within these nonprofits, interviews with representatives from nonprofit organizations and case studies of three organizations with robust volunteer programs. Ultimately, the aim of the VIO project was to identify recommendations and action steps for how OCF and its partners might best encourage and support effective volunteer engagement and service in Oregon. To read the full report, please visit oregoncf.org/VIO2016.

This brief is one of three from the VIO project, focusing on specific and/or innovative practices of Oregon nonprofits to recruit volunteers, e.g., the various ways that organizations ask or invite people to work in the organization without pay. The other two briefs focus on volunteer engagement and recognition. What follows is a summary of key volunteer recruitment practices, described by organizations and volunteers involved in the VIO project.

Promoting Volunteering via Word of Mouth

This was described by VIO participants, both volunteers and organizations alike, as the number one way that potential volunteers learn about an organization. Hearing about an organization and its volunteer opportunities from staff, board members and other volunteers is the most common pathway to an organization. One volunteer shared:

"If I go to a doctor's office for my own care, I'm always talking about [organization], asking that if they have any free time to come and volunteer."

Hosting Special Events

Most organizations interviewed described hosting an annual event or celebration for volunteers. Although this serves

as a recognition strategy, it also serves as a way to help potential volunteers learn about the organization and volunteer opportunities. One board member shared:

"There's the [annual] event, and participants learn about volunteering there too."

Other types of special events included more frequent gatherings on a monthly or quarterly basis, for example, where the organization hosts a meet-and-greet event. These are opportunities for community members and potential volunteers to learn more about the organization in a fun and group-based setting. One volunteer coordinator shared:

"We have a pizza night every month for people to come and find out more."

Partnering With Other Organizations

Organizations described different types of partnerships they have developed with other organizations in the community, to both deliver services and recruit/engage volunteers. One type of partnership commonly described was working with local schools, colleges and universities. This partnership was described as operating on two different levels. First, students who participate in programming or services provided by the organization develop a positive experience with the organization and later become volunteers.

"I see students in our programs come back and give back, and then have kids, and they volunteer too."

Second, organizations partner with schools that have a service-learning requirement, and cocreate direct volunteer experiences for students.

"We're right next door to [university] and it's one of our main recruitment sites. Most classes have civic engagement requirements, and we enjoy it, [students] enjoy it. Many of the students who volunteer stay afterward even after they're done with their hours."

Other examples of partnerships that organizations have developed to support volunteer recruitment include

making regular presentations to community, civic, business and faith groups.

Some organizations have established strong partnerships with businesses in the community to recruit volunteers. In one example, an arts organization partnered with a local coffee shop and other businesses in a small community whose economy is largely based on tourism. The organization posts flyers in local businesses and has established a rewards program to promote episodic volunteer opportunities. In exchange for every hour volunteered, volunteers receive a punch in their rewards program card. After accruing five hours, for example, volunteers receive discounted or donated goods or services at participating businesses, such as a free coffee drink. The rewards program serves as both a recognition and an appreciation strategy, and it is also a recruitment strategy not only for locals but also for tourists visiting the community for short periods.

Utilizing Social Media

Social media tools were described as important to engaging with current volunteers, in addition to raising awareness of the organization and activities to recruit new volunteers. Having an active and visible presence on Facebook and Twitter was seen as effective, especially in reaching younger age groups.

"We started by working with our marketing team to transition from print publications and press releases to doing more on social media and being in different areas, like we're starting to do lectures at OMSI, where a lot of younger people might find out more about us."

Utilizing Recruitment Tools

In order to reach a wide audience of potential volunteers, organizations in the metro Portland area and in Central Oregon described utilizing volunteer-matching services such as Hands On Greater Portland and Volunteer Connect. This was seen as especially valuable to highlight specific volunteer opportunities, such as those available for families with young children or large service groups.

Running Advertisements

Local newspapers were described as an effective way to recruit volunteers, especially in more rural areas. This includes running advertisements about volunteer opportunities or highlighting an organization's successes. One organization also specifically highlighted the importance of advertisements on the local Spanish-language radio station, in order to reach and recruit volunteers to better reflect the community and provide culturally responsive services.

Participating in Volunteer Fairs

Although there was a level of disagreement among organizations about the extent to which volunteer fairs resulted in the direct recruitment of volunteers, there was agreement that these were generally an effective way to

raise community awareness about the organization. This was described as having an indirect impact on volunteer recruitment, though organizations emphasized that more varied and frequent types of communication about an organization and volunteer opportunities bring new volunteers into the organization.

"All of us participate [in the Standard Expo] and it's such a great experience, it's well organized, it gets a lot of people out, there's a lot of great communication on all sides."

Selected Resources for Volunteers

Oregon-based volunteer resources

- Hands On Greater Portland, serving the metro Portland area www.handsonportland.org
- Connect Central Oregon www.connectcentraloregon.org

National volunteer resources

- Catchafire www.catchafire.org
- Corporation for National & Community Service www.nationalservice.gov/programs
- United We Serve www.serve.gov
- VolunteerMatch www.volunteermatch.org

International volunteer resources

- Peace Corps www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer
- Volunteer International www.volunteerinternational.org
- Volunteers for Peace www.vfp.org

Selected Resources for Organizations

- Network of Volunteer Administrators Central Oregon www.volunteerconnectnow.org/volunteer-administrators.html
- Mid-Valley Volunteer Managers Association www.mvma.org
- Nonprofit Association of Oregon www.nonprofitoregon.org
- Northwest Oregon Volunteer Administrators Association www.novaa.org
- Oregon Volunteers! www.oregonvolunteers.org

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