



Volunteerism from the Heart

This book will inspire your volunteers, potential volunteers—and everyone in your organization.

BY TERRENCE FERNSLER

Voices From the Heart: In Celebration of America's Volunteers

By Brian O'Connell. 168 pages. Softcover. Chronicle Books & Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California.

You might think a book of volunteers' stories is too personal to be interesting, but these are delightful accounts of 25 volunteering experiences. These are the stories of people who simply like to be able to make a difference. Each story is written in a firsthand way that makes it easy to identify with the storyteller. The volunteers are representative of literally millions of others. Listen to some of the things they say:

"The greatest rewards are thanks from those you help. Volunteering has broadened my horizons. I've made friends."

"Learning is what volunteering is all about for me."

"I realize how much one person can change things when they give without expecting anything back."

"It's a tremendous opportunity to witness the resilience and ingenuity of the people around me."

"When any of us take inventory of the meaning of our lives, the occasions of making a difference for other people and for important causes turns out to be among our lasting joys. And there's something rewarding in being among other people when they're at their best."

If you know anyone who is considering volunteering, all you need to do is give them this book. It is a testament to the rewards of people helping people.

But this book does more than inspire people to volunteer. It documents the value of volunteering in our society—a value that is too often overlooked. It is also a cornucopia of ideas for strengthening a nonprofit organization. For instance, volunteers give twice as much money as those who don't volunteer. Persuade your donors to volunteer and you will increase revenue. Looking for new donors? Target other organizations' volunteers—volunteers give to organizations beyond those in which they participate.

Another place to look for volunteers is among young people, the book suggests. Teens are enthusiastic volunteers and gain innumerable benefits from their work. They report that what they receive most from their volunteering is learning to respect others, gaining satisfaction from helping people, learning to be helpful and kind, and learning to get along with and relate to others. Student volunteers get better grades, have fewer disciplinary problems, and are more likely to stay in school. As volunteers, youth feel they are productive participants in society—and they are.

The volunteers' stories are accompanied by beautiful photographs of real people. The photos capture the joy and meaning that volunteers and their clients are gaining from the experience. It is a well-done and amazingly inspiring book. ■

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and you will increase revenue.**