



Welcome & Keynote Address

2020 Governor's Conference on Volunteerism

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

Volunteer NH hosts the annual **Governor's Conference on Volunteerism** in partnership with the Governor's Office.

The purpose of the conference is to educate, enhance skills, and provide professional development that will support and strengthen New Hampshire's volunteer programs and organizations.

Learn more by visiting VolunteerNH.org

Unanswered Questions

Our Keynote Speaker, Bryan Bessette of The Freedom Café, has been kind enough to submit written answers to the questions we didn't get to!

Question: If you aren't in a thriving community how do you recruit new volunteers? We don't have the UNH nearby with enthusiastic youthful volunteers. We are more of a retirement community.

Response: This is an area where creating accessible roles to fit your targeted demographic is important. The retirement community can provide a wealth of opportunity for volunteer support and often bring time and significant expertise to an organization.

If you are looking to involve another demographic of folks, I would encourage you to try a targeted recruiting campaign. Where are the folks you want involved and what are they doing? Find ways to promote your organization and volunteer opportunities in that context.

Question: With regards to "opportunity," is it better to try to create it or let it happen organically (or a mix) especially as it pertains to fostering empowerment?

Response: Certainly a mix is possible. Having interview questions surrounding potential volunteer hobbies or what they love to do in their free time can help foster new ideas. We've often had people sign up for our café assistant role and in their interview discover that they are a photographer, really enjoy graphic design, love working on events, or that they write music or poetry and regularly perform at open mic events, each of these opens up a whole new conversation about how they might be involved. That said, creating a framework for how these strengths could fit your organization is important and allows individuals to self identify with the opportunity.

Question: How do you use volunteers to help out in the best, most efficient ways without burning them out?

Response: As I shared in my lessons learned, this can be challenging, especially when a group of volunteers are working to pull off a project with a deadline. I now bring up the importance of boundaries with teams right at the start of a project and, asking how we are doing and how each team member is doing in their commitments outside the project is a focus during all of our check-ins. Leading by example - both in dedication and boundaries is key.

Question: Are there volunteers from an older generation that work at Freedom Cafe?

Response: We do have a larger population of younger volunteers. But yes the age of our volunteer team includes our retirement community. We have had to be intentional about creating volunteer opportunities that would best fit varying age demographics. Because we want the whole community to be involved, we have created family serving opportunities, board and committee work that targets professionals and events that cater to our older community members.

Question: How do you suggest matching the wide variety of people seeking volunteer opportunities--from those who want to do occasional, spur of the moment (oh, I've got a free Saturday!) to those looking for long term involvement with specific roles.

Response: Along with developing clear long-term volunteer opportunities, I try to keep a list of shorter project opportunities that can be accomplished with lower time commitment and training requirements. We will often partner with other organizations or

volunteer days to work with individuals or groups to support these projects. Sometimes we have folks who say, “hey, I have a free saturday, is there anything I can do to help?”

Typically, these folks already have some connection to the organization and may even be able to join a current volunteer to assist in a project. This can be a great way to connect with new volunteers and a strategy to recruit for longer term involvement. If there is a project and supervisor availability, we have at times said yes to that Saturday request. Sometimes though, those requests can be “sideways energy” and take a supervisor's time away from more crucial work they need to accomplish. I have learned to say, “Unfortunately, this Saturday is not possible, however...” The however is - we do have a project coming up and here is how you can get involved.

Question: How do people find what matches their interests and skills, time available etc?

Response: Many organizations place volunteer job descriptions on their websites. There are also great organizations like Volunteer NH focused on connecting volunteers to organizations. You can view opportunities for many different roles and organizations at: <https://volunteernh.galaxydigital.com>.

Question: I struggle to find "Job descriptions" that match with my skill sets even if my values/goals/interests are in line with an organization--do you have suggestions for seeking out opportunities that are not posted if you want to develop some of the skills that are being required?

Response: If there is an organization you are interested in supporting, you could always email and ask if there are opportunities to propose a new role. You could follow their normative process to get involved and ask this question during a volunteer interview. An organization may ask you to serve in an established role for a period of time to allow trust to develop. The opportunity to expand and even propose a new volunteer project or role may follow.