

From: Linda Bridges, Palomar 2<sup>nd</sup> VP  
To: Club 2<sup>nd</sup> VP/Membership Chairmen.  
Emailed: 9.21.11

## **WHY VOLUNTEER?**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Today, I'd like you to think about why we volunteer. Every year, millions of Americans volunteer throughout the United States. From early pioneer days, America has built its strong foundation upon volunteer support. This has been true from the "barn-raising" days of the early pioneers to the "fund-raising and "friend-raising" era in which we now live. Americans continue to volunteer to make the world a better place in which to live and many are finding it is not what you get that makes for happiness in life, it's what you give away.

Our members are the most important people in the world. They recognize that even the best job in the world can't pay you the same kinds of rewards you receive as a volunteer. When you give from the heart, it enriches your whole life. Today, most women do not need the stimulation that organizations offered a generation ago....(years ago) they needed an outlet for their creative energies as well as the opportunity to meet other people. With millions of women working full time outside the home, organizations must create innovative ideas that will attract new members to our clubs and keep the members we have—even if they become part of the workforce.

Most of our clubs list membership recruitment as a top priority. They have mapped out a campaign that has included club flyers, new brochures, press releases, membership teas and special orientation get-togethers. These are all fine for getting our name out in the community and bringing in a guest or two, but once you have an audience of prospective members, do you have an answer for those questions (or excuses) that will come up? I don't have the time! What's in it for me? I don't have any talents? How can I volunteer when I don't have any money? I've volunteered before, but I always dropped out. How can I stay excited about volunteering?

I'd like to offer a few comments that may help you answer these 'WHY VOLUNTEER' questions

### **QUESTIONS & COMMENTS**

#### **1. You invite your co-worker to a meeting. Her reply "How can I volunteer when I have no time to volunteer?"**

If you have no time to volunteer, then you are missing the greatest gift in life: happiness. Money can't buy happiness, but giving of yourself to others increases your abilities to generate great emotional rewards. It's common today to see your friends burn out at work. Sometimes it leads to a health crisis. Only then, do they finally step back from their busy lives to reassess themselves. So often these same people pull back from their chaotic lifestyles to spend more time giving to their families or to their community. Why

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wait until you face a crisis to evaluate the priorities in your life? Join forces with the millions of Americans who spend their time volunteering?

**2. You ask your neighbor to attend a club activity. She asks: “What’s in it for me?”**

If all the world stayed home indulging only in personal pursuits, we would be reduced to wild animals who defend their territories with cruel vengeance. However, in contrast, when we open our hearts and leave our homes and go into our communities, we find beauty, mystery and the true pleasure of connection to the world in which we live. In fact, community involvement actually reduces our level of fear of the unknown because we see the world with open eyes instead of through imaginary fearful thoughts. When we learn about the real world, we are capable of listening to the truth told by other people, and then life becomes a harmony. The busy market place of life has produced a culture of people directed toward individualistic pursuits. In contrast, it has also produced a culture of givers who are willing to step outside their personal needs long enough to find a deeper, richer significance in their lives that money, fame, beauty or education cannot buy. The only way to find your life is to lose it first in service to others. That’s what we really want, a life full of meaning. And that’s what volunteerism is all about. Why not start today?

**3. You’ve been trying to get your sister to join your club. She has always felt she lives in your shadow. What can you say when she remarks: “What can I possibly do? I don’t feel I have any talents.”**

Volunteering provides opportunities to develop new talents by working with trained teams on specific goals. Many people have turned those new skills into viable paying jobs. Many find their volunteer network invaluable in locating jobs and new friends. A degree of self-analysis is required. Match your volunteer job to your personality and interests. There are many opportunities for each of us to receive the training for the development of new skills in areas that interest us. But the best training comes from following the footwear manufacturer’s advertising slogan: “Just Do It”. Does it take talent to serve soup to the hungry? No, just do it. Does it take talent to visit an older adult in a nursing home? No, just do it. It doesn’t take talent to volunteer. It just takes you, and it takes you just the way you are.

**4. Your son is dating a really sweet girl and you know she would be an asset to your club. She’s in college and on a tight budget. How do you answer her question: “How can I volunteer when I don’t have any money?”**

You don’t need money to volunteer. All you need is a willing heart and a desire to give to others. There is a magic and mystery about volunteering. The volunteer with no money gets back more than he or she ever gives. Charities would be happy to have you offer your time rather than your money to further their cause. In helping others, you will find your self-esteem is greatly enhanced; you will have more energy and a higher

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morale, which makes you an attractive commodity for better employment. Giving of yourself is the key ingredient to finding new direction for your life.

**5. You happen to run into a past member at the mall. You stop to chat and try to encourage her to come back to club. She seems a little uneasy with the invitation. She finally lays her cards on the table and in a moment of truth she says: “I used to love the women’s club. I loved helping the community, but my interest just seemed to fade away. I don’t know why. How can I stay excited about volunteering? Why do I keep dropping out?”**

Excitement is a by-product of volunteering. There are peak moments of excitement, such as reaching that one million dollar mark during the Children’s Hospital telethon. However, like any job (paid or not), there is a necessity for practical daily responsibilities, procedures, rules and order designed to be followed. Sometimes this practical side of volunteering discourages us and leads us to drop\_out. To maintain your commitment to your volunteer job, remember to pace your time and efforts to avoid burnout. A natural tendency in early volunteering is to overextend yourself. Decide up front what amount of time and energy you have to give in order for you to maintain a level of commitment and excitement about your volunteer job. Also, remember to lighten up; keep looking for the humorous side of what you are doing as a volunteer. As long as you can keep laughing, especially at yourself, you won’t even think of dropping out. I’d like to tell you a story about a long time volunteer working with AIDS patients. One day he finally said “I can’t do it any more. It’s just too sad for me” In most cases, the volunteers are the ones to offer support and comfort. In this instance, it was an AIDS patient that offered the comfort. Just as the volunteer was ready to leave, a patient told him to “Lighten up”. It’s not that bad. Sure I’m going to die, but you have made my life these last days so much better. In fact, to tell you the truth, before you came, I was already dead. You have given me life. Without you, I would already be dead. You are my life. Don’t go.” And the volunteer stayed. You don’t have to drop out as a volunteer. You need to change your perception of what is really going on by stopping for a moment and listen to those in need. Their voices will renew your excitement about volunteering. Their lives will inspire you anew.

I hope that each of you will be a volunteer for the rest of your life. I hope that you will find the words to encourage a friend, an acquaintance or a stranger to become a volunteer. Many people you have never met are counting on you to make that positive decision. They need you, but you need to volunteer even more. Your happiness, health, and length of life literally depend on whether you are ready to share your time, talent and treasure with others. Make volunteering a vital part of your life.

*Volunteering, 101 Ways you can Improve the World & Your Life*

By: Doublas M. Lawson, Ph.D