MULTI-CITY VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
ANNUAL REPORT
2014

Background

In late 2012, the Dakota County HiPP Shared Services sub-committee developed the idea of collaborating in our efforts to develop and/or enhance our volunteer programs. The Committee modeled the program after Burnsville's successful volunteer program. Four cities agreed to participate and entered into a joint powers agreement in 2014. The cities include: West St. Paul, Apple Valley, Inver Grove Heights and Rosemount.

Prior to this initiative, each city used volunteers to some extent in Parks and Recreation and for city events, but a formal program, documentation, and outreach were very limited. The cities wanted to grow their volunteer base and find opportunities to use volunteers throughout each city. The cities also agreed to purchase and utilize a database called Volgistics to maintain volunteer data and provide reports.

A job description, pay range and budget were developed as part of the JPA (See Appendix A). The next step was to hire a part-time volunteer coordinator. Diane Erickson was the four cities' unanimous selection for the position. She began working in May of 2014 at 24 hours per week. The parties agreed that West St. Paul would be the legal employer and would then bill the three other cities each one-fourth of the costs for the position. Some in-kind supplies, office space and computers were provided at each location. Each city has designated a high level administrative staff person to facilitate the Volunteer Coordinator's work for their respective cities.

Goals and Accomplishments for 2014

1. Learn the volunteer needs of all four cities and get acquainted with all department heads and others who utilize volunteers.

    - Developed relationships with department supervisors in each of the four cities. Diane works to showcase the successes of current volunteers being used to get supervisors excited about utilizing volunteers. She has created wish lists for supervisors for projects they would love to have completed.
    - Attended Staff meetings, and met with department supervisors to educate about the Volunteer Program, and identify volunteer needs. Set up volunteer interviews with supervisors after the initial screening and interview process has been completed. Diane worked with supervisors to develop a system for scheduling their volunteer's, and also for arranging for supervisors and their volunteer's to know how to contact each other should a shift need to be cancelled or rescheduled.

2. Develop and implement a work schedule to provide quality personalized time for each city while remaining readily accessible to all cities on any given work day.

    - Diane works 24 hours per week in three 8 hour days. She developed a system agreeable to all four cities where she works at least 4 hours in all 4 cities each week. She also works for any city remotely at any time, so is available for immediate needs.

3. Establish office space and tools needed to do the job (desk space, computer, printer, phone, e-mail, business cards, ID cards, etc.).

- Diane has office space in each city, some of which are shared by other part-time staff when she is not present. She has a computer at each work station and printer access. Volgistics is Cloud-based, so she can access it from anywhere. Diane e-mails items she is working on to herself so she can continue working on projects wherever she is located.

4. Develop written program materials and online documents for all aspects of the Volunteer Program.

- Developed a Volunteer Application, Policy Manual, Job Descriptions, and Timesheet. Prepared a guide for Supervisor's working with volunteers.
- Created a Volunteer Application in Volgistics which is linked to all four cities websites.
- Prepared this annual report for 2014 with the assistance of her primary supervisor.

5. Promote volunteerism through the communities to increase citizen engagement in their local government. One of the other primary goals is to promote volunteerism throughout the communities. Methods used include: publicity in newspapers, social media, newsletters, and personal visits.

- Diane has participated in community gatherings, open houses, community events and has attended a YMCA senior day. She has been involved in writing articles for city newsletters. She assisted in establishing a volunteer page on each city's website and has personally responded to numerous potential volunteers that were identified by others.
- She met with community civic groups, businesses and non-profits to promote the program and the benefits of volunteering in each community. She is in the process of attending city events and meetings, community meetings, networking meetings and, in 2015, will contact businesses who provide the opportunity to their employees to use work time to volunteer.

6. Solicit volunteers and volunteer opportunities for each city, interview potential volunteers and match their skills to the volunteer position.

- Have active volunteers in place in each city covering their most important volunteer needs.
- Developed and implemented a screening and interview process for prospective volunteers. Created a system to track each volunteer's progress within each city, even when the coordinator is not physically present.

Roles being filled by volunteers

General office support, scanning, and data entry; finance projects, accounts receivables, and payables; housing survey, statistical compilation of results; grant writing; police car detailing; phone surveys; greeting and directing; bird and duck nesting houses (building, placement and upkeep); park monitoring: snow shoveling; landscaping; research projects; developing social media, and scanning proposal plans; organizing office supplies and public spaces; taking down or setting up shelves, Christmas trees, etc.; compiling packets, gift bags, or promotional materials; collecting outdated signs; delivering posters.

7. Utilize the Volgistics database to be able to provide reports and statistics as requested.

   • Diane worked with the four cities to capture the volunteer hours of those that are currently volunteering and inputted their information and hours in to Volgistics. She collected and tracked hours in Volgistics for all new volunteers. She learned how to e-mail volunteers through Volgistics, how to pull reports, how to make design changes, and utilize other capabilities of the database.
   • Provided reports for the city Councils and management to show concrete numbers including the number of volunteers, the type of work they are doing and the number of hours per year of volunteer work.

8. Research and participate in regional and State volunteer associations to develop skills and insights from others. Seek out relevant no cost or low cost training sessions, and attend as many as make good fiscal sense.

   • Attended trainings that have been no cost to the cities through the MAVA grant.
   • Attended free Volgistics training.
   • Diane is a member of MAVA (Minnesota Association of Volunteer Administrators) and participates in a Volgistics user group.

Volunteer placement

The 4 cities are in different places in their identification of volunteer needs. The below statistics are considered a success to each of these cities based on where they are in their continuum.

   • West St. Paul: 28 active volunteers, 658 hours; 3 active groups (11 individuals), 97 hours; 5 inactive volunteers, 94 hours. Total hours: 849
   • Apple Valley: 4 active volunteers, 94 hours
   • Inver Grove Heights: 5 active volunteers, 117 hours.
   • Rosemount: 4 active volunteers, 150 hours; 1 inactive volunteer 11 hours. Total hours: 161

These numbers include all volunteers who are doing city wide projects that are not related to groups that were already in place before this program started. This does not include Committees or groups that clean up parks or streets.

Value of Volunteer Hours to the Cities

The most commonly used valuation for volunteer time is the number posted every year by the Independent Sector http://independentsector.org/volunteer_time . The value they have posted now is $22.55 per hour.

The value of volunteer hours for 2014 for the volunteers listed above is 1,218 hours x $22.55 = $27,466. This amount will be much larger next year as there will be a much larger pool of volunteers by year end 2015.

Grant Opportunity

Although not anticipated, Ms. Erickson utilized her resources well and discovered a grant opportunity. She and one of her supervisors co-authored the grant application and the program was awarded a grant for $2,000, along with free training opportunities.

The grant is being used for the cost of the Volgistics database, volunteer supplies and volunteer appreciation events for the four cities. Measurable outcomes of this grant include:

1. Number of volunteers and volunteer hours for each city;

2. Average turnaround time for volunteer placement;

3. Amount of satisfaction as measured by a good or very good response from over 90% of volunteers who are surveyed; and

4. Number of contacts made within each community to promote volunteerism.

Other Accomplishments

1. Promote and seek public recognition for examples of municipal excellence.

   - Interviewed by the Pioneer Press and Rosemount Town Pages to promote the four- city collaboration. Volunteer Program was also promoted through newsletters, neighborhood meetings, websites, social media, etc.
   - She has been asked to speak as part of panels for both a human resource professional organization and at a state MAVA conference in 2015.

2. Develop a strong web based and social media outreach for each city for the volunteer program.

   - Developed website information and worked with the four cities to get a consistent message on each website, allowing for a section for individualized needs as well.
   - Worked with appropriate staff in each city to ensure social media is a tool available to the Volunteer Program.
   - Attended open houses, chamber meetings, and community events.
   - Appointed chair/facilitator of the Directors of Volunteers in Dakota County networking group. Also attend the Government Volunteer Coordinators & Managers' networking group.

3. Have a pool of volunteers for each city available to fill all volunteer requests quickly, so not to have understaffed events, or have staff need to fill a role a volunteer could easily do.

   - Started a list for each city of volunteers who are looking for one time, or short term volunteer opportunities.

4. Ensure volunteers are well trained and feel valued and appreciated.

   - Diane is a liaison to all placed volunteers, and initiated a system for ongoing check-ins with them to make sure they are happy with their placement. She makes sure they are getting the ongoing training and feedback they need.
   - Worked with supervisors to ensure they understand the benefits of positive and constructive feedback for their volunteers.
   - Trained volunteers on the importance of recording their hours on the provided volunteer timesheet, or e-mailing their hours to her.

2015 Goals

In addition to continuing with goals set for 2014 that are ongoing, the following goals are added:

1. Assist each city to develop a volunteer recognition program

   • Will help cities create an event that shows sincere appreciation for their volunteers. A date has been set for West St. Paul's Volunteer Recognition Event.

2. Develop an evaluation tool to measure the experience the volunteers are having.

   • Researching the best tool to create an evaluation that captures the data for cities to show if and how volunteers feel valued and appreciated and developing insight as to where we can improve.