



# WILLAMALANE PARK & RECREATION

## HOW THEY'RE ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS DURING COVID-19

Our clients continue to find creative ways to support their communities amid the challenge of COVID-19. We know how hard you have been working. Here we will highlight one organization's successful response to the pandemic in hopes of inspiring others.

We were particularly interested in the response of Willamalane Park and Recreation District, an organization that worked fast to engage their resources and loyal volunteers to provide essential community services. We interviewed Mavis Sanchez-Scholes, Willamalane's Volunteer Program Coordinator, to learn how she found creative ways to make a difference at this critical time, keep her volunteers engaged while maintaining key safety measures, and prepare for the future.

### Meet Willamalane Park and Recreation District

Willamalane Park and Recreation District of Springfield, Oregon oversees nearly 50 parks and recreational areas and serves 1.8 million patrons annually. The organization relies on its volunteer program to fulfill its mission, "Deliver exceptional parks and recreation to enrich the lives of everyone we serve." The Willamalane Volunteer Program sees more than 500 volunteers each year.

*"Volunteers remain essential to our mission, now more than ever. Our traditional in-person volunteer opportunities are all on hold, but we've heard from our dedicated volunteers that they would still like to participate and help the community."* [Mavis Sanchez-Scholes](#)

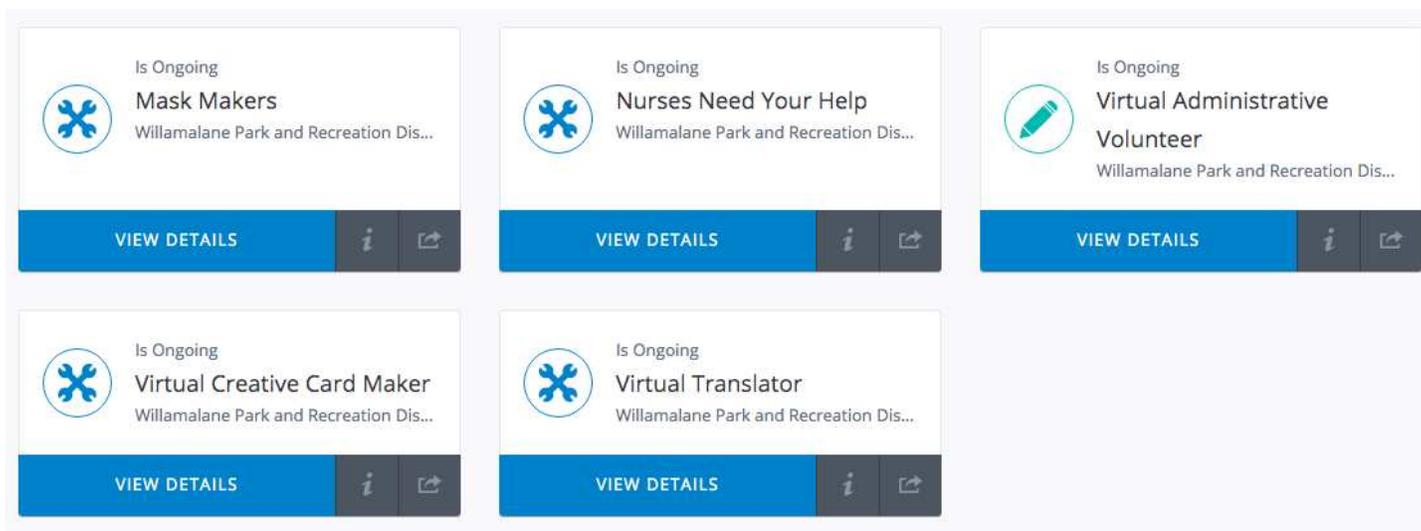
Here's how Sanchez-Scholes is engaging her volunteers to serve her community while responding to COVID-19:

## 1. Encouraging Participation with Virtual Opportunities

To keep everyone safe, Sanchez-Scholes had to get creative. So, after deactivating the program's traditional in-person opportunities, she created and posted virtual volunteer opportunities on her Get Connected site. All opportunities can be performed remotely, offering flexibility for volunteers who want to make a difference safely and in their own time (while keeping them engaged with her program).

### ▶ [How to Create a Virtual Opportunity](#)

Here are some ways Willamalane is helping their community using virtual volunteer opportunity postings:



## 2. Keeping Volunteers Informed with Regular Communication

Sanchez-Scholes knew her volunteers would ask a lot of questions during these uncertain times. So she addressed questions and concerns by maintaining regular communication. Here are some ways Sanchez-Scholes is communicating with her community:

### Email Blast

Sanchez-Scholes keeps her volunteers up-to-date via email. Each week, she provides updates about the organization and its volunteer program, like cancelled opportunities, volunteer impact, new virtual opportunities, and other community news. Sanchez-Scholes communicates efficiently with her volunteers using the Get Connected [Email Blast](#) tool and User Filter.

### Email Newsletter

Sanchez-Scholes also engages volunteers by writing her volunteer newsletter. Each month, she features the program's exciting new volunteer opportunities. This month? Pointing volunteers toward her virtual volunteer opportunities!

### Survey

Shortly after implementing virtual volunteering opportunities, Sanchez-Scholes sent her volunteers a survey. She wanted to collect volunteer feedback to better support her volunteers during such an unusual time. Survey tools like Survey Monkey or Google Forms can help you gauge your volunteers' involvement with the virtual opportunities, which can ultimately guide your program's response to crises moving forward.

### 3. Highlighting Key Information with Spotlights

Her dedicated volunteers rely on Willamalane’s volunteer management software to access key program information and register for volunteer opportunities, so it was important that her site helped to guide volunteers to important information.

[Spotlights](#) are a way of drawing attention to announcements, pages, and opportunities. Sanchez-Scholes highlights Willamalane’s virtual volunteer opportunities and need-to-know COVID-19 updates using her Get Connected site’s [Spotlights](#) feature:



### 4. Welcoming New Volunteers

Despite limited operations, it was important to Sanchez-Scholes that her program still welcomed new volunteers. Even if your organization has hit the “pause” button, there are ways you can engage volunteers now and for the future.

Sanchez-Scholes continues to welcome prospects by inviting them to create a new volunteer profile on her site. Then, she keeps new registrants active by providing them with online onboarding materials and training documents. This way, volunteers who want to take part in in-person opportunities later in the year can participate in onboarding now and hit the ground running upon re-open!

We recommend you create training documents, videos, and other engaging content to post on your site using the [Custom Pages](#) tool. We also recommend you send your [automated welcome message](#) to include a brief update on your organization’s current operating procedures.

The response of Willamalane Park and Recreation District is just one example of the hard work organizations like yours are putting in. We wanted to share their strategies to help inspire your own and reassure you that you’re not alone. Whether you’ve had to pause operations entirely, or you continue to work on the front lines, we’re all in this together.