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CITY OF SERVICE INITIATIVE

Leading Effective Volunteer
Engagement in Dublin

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WHAT IS THE CITY OF SERVICE INITIATIVE?

“Cities of Service” is a coalition of cities large and small working together to engage citizens to address the service needs of community challenges. Founded in New York City on September 10, 2009, the emphasis is to harness the power of volunteers to help solve pressing issues. Specifically, it calls for a multi-year effort to develop comprehensive service plans, coordinate strategy focused on matching volunteers, and the advancement of best practices that accelerate the service movement. (Source: Cities of Service, nyc.gov/service)

BACKGROUND ON CITY OF DUBLIN'S VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Every city at some point in its service delivery utilizes the time and talents of its citizens. Across the country, such volunteer engagement is accomplished in numerous ways through non-profit/local government partnerships, local volunteer center and United Way affiliation, and citizen action groups. In many leading communities, volunteer programs are founded in local government at the township, city and county levels – typically, well-planned communities have higher community engagement. In the mid-1990s, the City of Dublin, realizing its already high level of citizen engagement, opted to launch its own volunteer program housed in Recreation Services. In 1998, the program was launched and within a matter of a few months, it was moved to a centralized, city-wide function serving the needs of all city departments and divisions. The year 2009 marks The City of Dublin Volunteer Program's tenth year as a city-wide initiative.

Revised in June, 2009, the Mission, Vision and Values of Dublin's Volunteer Program are as follows:

Mission

A city-wide volunteer program that creates safe, meaningful, innovative opportunities for community involvement

Vision

The City of Dublin Volunteer Program is a national model for engaging citizens in meaningful, effective community and government involvement with committed passionate community members and staff leadership.

Core Values

- Fostering a sense of community belonging
- Engaging residents in city government to build relationships and leadership
- Enriching people's lives through service
- Innovation and recognition
- Building special connections with youth and seniors
- Developing fiscally responsible opportunities for enhancing the community's quality of life

As the scope of volunteer service unfolded in a centralized capacity, Dublin's Volunteer Program has been awarded and recognized on a local, state, regional and national level for its innovation, partnership efforts, effective service delivery and organization.

Combining Dublin City Council's summer request for greater emphasis on community volunteerism with the City of Service Initiative along with the City's overall focus on strategic visioning – this marks an opportune time to re-think, re-tool and launch further innovative service on a comprehensive scale.

THE NATIONAL SERVICE CLIMATE

Shifting Demographics and Trends in Service

Conventional wisdom about volunteerism tends to be this: Volunteers are by-in-large senior citizens with time on their hands, those without fulltime employment, and teens who are in need of something to do. Trends tell us a very different story.

Trends in Volunteerism

From *Volunteering in America – Research Highlights*

The Corporation for National and Community Service

- In 2008, 61.8 million Americans or 26.4 percent of the adult population contributed 8 billion hours of volunteer service worth \$162 billion, using Independent Sector's 2008 estimate of the dollar value of a volunteer hour (\$20.25).
- Despite the challenges of a tough economic situation, the volunteering rate held steady between 2007 and 2008, while the number of volunteers slightly increased by about one million.
- Over 441,000 more young adults (age 16-24) volunteered in 2008 than 2007, representing an increase from about 7.8 million to more than 8.2 million.
- Neighborhood engagement levels have risen sharply since 2007, with a 31 percent increase in the number of people who worked with their neighbors to fix a community problem and a 17 percent increase in the number of people who attended community meetings.
- As the economy slows and nonprofit organizations struggle to provide services on smaller budgets, volunteers become even more vital to the health of our nation's communities. Between September 2008 and March 2009, more than a third (37%) of nonprofit organizations report increasing the number of volunteers they use, and almost half (48%) foresee increasing their usage of volunteers in the coming year.¹ Almost no organizations are showing a decrease in their volunteer usage.
- Volunteers were much more likely than non-volunteers to donate to a charitable cause in 2008, with 78.2 percent contributing \$25 or more compared to 38.5 percent of non-volunteers.

About 8.24 million young people ages 16-24 volunteered in 2008, over 441,000 more than in 2007. This increase in young adult volunteers makes up almost half of the overall increase in the number of volunteers nationally. The volunteer rate for this group increased significantly from 20.8 percent in 2007 to 21.9 percent in 2008. The interest among young people in volunteering coincides with their reported increase in the belief that it is essential or very important to help other people in need. The Higher Education Research Institute studies the attitudes of first-year college students each year and reported that in 2008, 69.7 percent of students held this belief in 2008—the highest rate since 1970.²

¹ From the most recent Sounding from the Listening Post Project, a national survey of nonprofit organizations done in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service.

² From "The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 2008," J.H. Pryor, S. Hurtado, L. DeAngelo, J. Sharkness, L.C. Romero, W.S. Korn, S. Tran, and published by the Higher Education Research Institute, January, 2009.

BOOMERS AND MILLENNIALS

In order to most effectively harness the power of service from our community, our planning path focuses on two generational groups, remaining proactive with volunteerism's emerging trends.

Baby Boomers: Boomer engagement is currently in the midst of redefining what volunteer engagement will look like in the near and long-term future. Just as Boomers re-defined societal norms in culture, family and the workplace, so too will they re-define service. Some trends indicate that Boomers are seeking to volunteer as a continuation of career paths, as seamless transitions or pathways into new careers, emphasizing leadership and change. The 77 million members of this generation have been "far less civically engaged than the Greatest Generation at every stage to date" and trends indicate that they are even rejecting the traditional term "volunteer" (Source: Reinventing Aging, Harvard School of Public Health). Organizations who rely on volunteerism to meet service delivery are currently addressing the need for greater creativity and emphasis on matching the Boomer profile to their service opportunities. In order to accomplish this, the way we engage this generation will have to undergo a paradigm shift, utilizing greater feedback, identification of needs and service delivery in new, creative ways.

"The significance of volunteer administrators creating a well-orchestrated match between the volunteers' interests, skills and abilities and a volunteer position will be vital. Baby Boomers will not be satisfied with fulfilling a role based solely on the needs defined by the organization. They will be seeking activities that utilize their talents and desire to make a difference." (From *Baby Boomers and the New Age of Volunteerism*, Daniel Lindblom, National Service Fellow, Corporation for National and Community Service.)

The Millennial Generation: Contrary to Boomers, this generation is the first to be "required" to volunteer through service-learning in schools and community groups. Studies are showing that as this generation is beginning to enter the workforce, they are volunteering in record numbers, demanding that it be a part of corporate culture and valuing it at a greater pace than The Greatest Generation did some 60 years ago. Research consistently indicates this expectation of service. The "increase among Millennials represented all of last year's gain in volunteerism; other generations combined showed no increase in participation levels." (Winograd and Hais -- *Millennials Lead the Nation in Service to Our Country*, 08/18/09). How service is delivered, however, is also different to this generation than what conventional wisdom defines as volunteerism. This generation prefers to serve in less formal ways, as a method or pathway to increased social engagement, and as a means to the end of achieving knowledge about how their service meets a greater, universal good. Volunteer opportunities must be designed with a clear outcome, team-orientation, with apparent impact and tie in with a cause.

The City of Dublin's Volunteer program's two largest age groups are in fact the Boomers (32%) and Millennials (26%) and each group is steadily increasing.

TURNING UP THE VOLUME—A LOUDER CALL TO SERVICE

Although the call to volunteer has always been enveloped in our history, recent national and international events have drawn greater attention to volunteerism. The recent bi-partisan passage of the Serve America Act and the emergence of the millennial generation have further launched service as a way to share both burden and solution to community needs. This has all been done on a scale never before attempted in our country, and leading communities such as Dublin and national leading organizations such as AARP and the Points of Light Institute are defining it swiftly.

Furthermore, cities and communities are realizing the lasting and overall benefits of volunteerism and citizen engagement. For some time, leading research has established clear findings on the overall health

benefits of volunteerism, incorporating the overall levels of engagement as clear indicators of community satisfaction. "Levels of civic engagement are an indicator of a community's interconnectedness, of the sense of ownership felt by residents, of a city's capacity to learn and adapt to serve the community, and of levels of social capital. Social capital is the networks, relationships, communication, and trust between people that contributes to social cohesion. Increased social capital has a positive impact on reported quality of life, access to economic and social opportunities, and even mental and physical health." (City of Redmond-Civic Engagement, Metropolitan Design Center, University of Minnesota, 2007, Information Sheet 1: Integrating Health into Comprehensive Planning). The City of Dublin is no stranger to this phenomenon; quality of life indicators tell us that the level of opportunity for interaction and engagement are key components of citizen satisfaction. The ability to access volunteer opportunities is also a pertinent factor to this type of engagement.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The months of September and October, 2009 were dedicated to reviewing current practices and roles and meeting with diverse community focus groups and a community-wide meeting of all agencies who utilize volunteers in Dublin.

Internally, City staff held discussions on organizational readiness to identify opportunities for increased service from citizens to explore cost-effective ways for safe, appropriate and productive volunteerism to meet City work goals. Plans are also underway to enhance our on-line abilities to manage the entire process effectively via the City of Dublin web site.

Citizen Focus Groups

City staff hosted several focus groups with a diverse set of community members to offer insight on community needs and how volunteer initiatives will best serve those needs.

All-Agency Gathering

On Tuesday, October 6, 2009, all Dublin agencies that utilize the services of Dublin volunteers were invited to attend a Community Roundtable Discussion on service needs, community capacity, efficient referral and accessibility to service requests and demands. These agencies included those such as the Dublin Arts Council, the Dublin Library, the Dublin Historical Society, Dublin Methodist Hospital, Nationwide Children's Close to Home, the Dublin Food Pantry, Welcome Warehouse, The Memorial Tournament and more. This meeting proved to be extremely successful; the City will convene this group to meet on a more regular basis, increasing communication, cross-referral and capacity-building among service leaders.

Employee Input

Initial meetings were held with key City personnel to discuss the "City of Service" concept and encourage creative ways the staff may open up greater opportunities and partnerships with volunteers to continue to meet and enhance service delivery.

Because a community will support what a community defines, all focus groups completed an exercise to capture a representation of what the Dublin community perceived as the top critical needs volunteers could address. Further, all agencies participated in an on-line survey to measure their collective ranking of critical needs identification. The findings were consistent across the board.

THE FINDINGS

When asked, "What are Dublin's most critical needs that volunteers could address?", needs identified by focus groups and participating agencies were the following:

- 1. Focus on diversity and the multicultural character of Dublin**
- 2. Increase attention to senior citizen outreach and teen mentorship**
- 3. Create and maintain service that addresses health, wellness & Dublin's natural environment.**

AGENCY SURVEY RESULTS AND KEY FINDINGS

General Perception of Volunteerism in Dublin

All Dublin and Dublin area agencies who utilize volunteers were asked to complete an on-line survey about their community volunteer engagement and leadership capacity. There was an 88% response rate to the survey. There is no doubt that the community perceives itself as a supportive and active community. Of the agency respondents, 82% feel Dublin, Ohio is a "great" example of volunteerism and 60.8% cited Dublin's corporate community as being "supportive of and/or volunteers" in our organizations.

Capacity-Building

Among those responsible for leading volunteer efforts, there is a strong indication that capacity-building is an issue that needs to be addressed and/or facilitated with regard to volunteer management.

- 77% Want to learn more about effective volunteer management
- 60.9% Are concerned about volunteer burnout (the same leaders and volunteers each time, every time)
- 60.8% Feel there should be "consistent, regular dialogue among those who manage volunteers.
- 27% Indicated agreement with the statement, "Our volunteer management is just fine the way it is"
- Finally, when responding to the statement, "If all students in Dublin were required to volunteer for graduation, we could handle the increase in volunteers;" only half of the respondents answered in the affirmative.

Text responses to the capacity-building topic included the following:

- *Recruiting a greater issue than managing*
- *Attrition... and scheduling*
- *Finding meaningful opportunities*
- *Lacking a key person responsible and necessary systems*
- *Training and retention of the people who have been recruited.*

Regional Outlook

Of our participating Dublin agencies, 52% indicate that they occasionally turn away volunteers because they are "full," or, that their volunteer needs are met at that time. Furthermore, when asked if they would be supportive of utilizing their own volunteer time or volunteer resources in other communities/areas in central Ohio, only 24% say no.

Size and Scope

At this time, there is no effective way to completely measure the community's level of service, hours, and outcomes. The size and scope of area programs range from managing five volunteers to 3,000, and range in service hours from 20 to 100,000 per year. Many organizations do not measure outputs and outcomes. There is clearly opportunity here for further measurement to generate true numbers of service initiatives and efforts in the Dublin community.

THE CITY OF DUBLIN'S THREE-YEAR PLAN COMPONENTS

Utilizing the knowledge gained from research and information gathered the following seven goals have been established as the 2010-2013 City of Service Initiative

While it is absolutely clear that the Dublin community is an already-engaged community, these goals seek to launch Dublin as "The Community of Choice" in terms of citizen engagement and service to others.

GOALS

Goal #1— Maintain City's diligence in its current volunteer service delivery functions

- Continue to respond, initiate and align service with City and Council goals and initiatives
- Identify greater efficiencies for volunteer intake and vetting, placement and oversight
- Establish further communication effort with all City departments to increase volunteer project awareness and initiate creative strategies for volunteer utilization
- Maintain cost-effective service to City departments, events and projects
- Increase regular, sustained service to all City departments (currently at 38,000 hours of service per year)
- Continue innovative service in parks and environmental sustainability

Goal #2 – Launch volunteer initiatives to serve community-identified needs and trends

Partnering with key local organizations, conduct appropriate research and initiate pilot volunteer programming to serve in areas identified as service needs and opportunities.

- Increase service outreach opportunities to seniors
 - Partner with Washington Township and key City personnel to evaluate needs for volunteer-led programming such as "Kind Call"
 - Expand awareness of and recruitment for City's "Senior Buddy" volunteering (one-on-one matches with senior residents in need of transportation, friendly visits, recreational opportunities)
 - Open dialogue with agencies who serve our seniors to increase awareness, prevent duplication, enhance services through Dublin volunteerism
- Increase service outreach opportunities to engage teens and teen mentorship
 - Expand Dublin Teen Corps from summer-only to year-round service group
 - Inform and educate our youth on impact grants that encourage solution-based service (dosomething.org, for example)
 - Host community education and awareness on teen mentorship
 - Increase visibility about local non-profit agencies who encourage, educate and engage teen mentorship volunteerism

- Facilitate volunteer-led wellness initiatives
 - Implement volunteer-led wellness clubs via Dublin Recreation Services, focusing on a WACKY Club (Wellness Action Club for Kids and Youth)
 - Partner with neighborhoods to offer creative wellness strategies for kids and families, such as walking groups, “human buses to schools,” and bike path clubs
 - Increase health-benefits messaging around volunteerism (“It’s good for you”)
- Establish an innovative Citizen Academy
 - Educate and engage citizens on form of government and city initiatives
 - Increase understanding of governance, citizenship and engagement at the local level
- Effectively engage our boomers and millennials
 - Explore micro-volunteerism and virtual volunteerism to enhance City services (editing, translating, etc.)
 - Recruit a resource pool of project leaders to assist City employees and/or projects

Goal #3 — Facilitate community dialogue on service and volunteerism

Increase dialogue with community, community agencies, faith-based community, business sector and schools on why volunteerism is needed, how it can be accessed, educating communities about service and monitor community-readiness for service.

- Establish regular dialogue with all agencies who use volunteers
 - Twice per year meeting with all agencies
 - Consistent referral and communication on current events and opportunities
- Increase regular dialogue with faith-based community
 - Attend leadership meetings and designate specific time or times of year for service
- Increase regular dialogue with school communities
 - Monitor educational requirements that include service and/or service-learning
 - Explore options for student awareness on best practices in volunteering
- Organize community-wide “Days of Service” calendar
 - MLK Day of Service, Leadership Dublin’s Community Service Day, Make A Difference Day, Earth Day, etc.
 - Potentially increase days of service focusing on sustainable efforts that build relationships
- Engage social entrepreneurs to focus on solution-based service
 - Partner with “Meet Up” groups and social engagement sites to engage in greater dialogue on community impact and solutions to needs
- Partner with Leadership Dublin to host annual recruitment event
 - Host final class of the year’s curriculum with a community-wide service recruitment event
- Introduce regional opportunities and needs
 - Invite Dublin neighborhoods to experience the “Beyond the Freeway Tour,” an educational tour of social needs in the greater central Ohio area
 - Request funding from local organization, such as Dublin A.M. Rotary

Goal #4 — Strengthen partnerships to build capacity to manage those who serve

- Explore establishing a coalition of service organizations
- Project Leadership Implementation
 - Train and implement the use of volunteer Project Leaders to serve as liaisons between City's volunteer resources and service departments
 - Train and implement the use of volunteer Project Leaders to serve as liaisons between City's volunteer resources and community projects
- Educate and/or refer Dublin agencies on best practices in volunteer management
- Implement project leader concept-appointing project leaders to oversee liaison relationships within City
- Continuation of regular dialogue among those who lead service opportunities

Goal #5 — Serve as the centralized hub of service information via the City of Dublin Volunteer Resources Page

- The City of Dublin's web site will help to serve as a hub of service for community-wide volunteer engagement. In addition to its current postings of volunteer opportunities for the city, it will consist of the following:
 - Volunteerism Toolkits on volunteer project oversight, "good volunteerism habits," and examples of unaffiliated acts of service
 - Community-wide referral source to leadership and service
 - Community-wide service calendar for service opportunities
 - Increase usage of e-news capability
 - Enable community blogging/dialogue
- Establish monthly column in local news print media
 - Column on volunteerism, opportunities, benefits and impact
 - Centralize listing of all community service needs and events

Goal #6 — Increase the understanding of the power of volunteerism through community-wide recognition

- Establish increased attention to established recognition (Community Champion Awards, Presidential Awards for Volunteer Service, etc.)
- Explore corporate community recognition related to corporate philanthropy
- Maintain promotion of volunteer involvement stories through all City vehicles of communication
- Partner with organizations to celebrate volunteerism with greater community-wide emphasis
- Host September community-wide celebration of volunteerism
 - Partner with Historic Dublin Business Association for final Sláinte Thursday (September) to celebrate volunteerism as its focus

Goal #7 — Celebrate Dublin's community diversity through volunteerism

- Establish Diversity Roundtable to drive community understanding of multicultural climate in Dublin
- Continue current outreach to diverse populations who seek service opportunities
- Celebrate diversity of volunteer population through public relations efforts
- Support and partner with organizations to launch community education and awareness sessions on the various cultures in Dublin