

Volunteer Centers

Two examples:

Volunteer Central - <http://www.volcentral.org/>

"Volunteer Central is a database designed to inform and provide opportunities for the community to become engaged in organizations and activities that occur within the Four Corners region and are in need of volunteer expertise, manpower, short-term and long-term assistance. Volunteer Central is also focused on gathering information on people, displaying their areas of expertise and interests and matching them with those community functions, programs and organizations to increase the opportunity for citizens to become engaged in their community."

Volunteer Central was a collaborative effort between community organizations and Fort Lewis College. It was funded in a variety of ways. The website and database was developed by a local web development company at a significant discount and the cost of hosting for at least the first year was also donated. Fort Lewis College provided physical space and also supervision for Service Tree, the student organization that ran Volunteer Central. Several individuals and organizations helped insure the office was supplied and also donated some major pieces of equipment, such as a copy machine. Student staff were compensated by work-study or Americorps scholarships. Students could also get credit hours for a practicum at the office.

Some funds out of a special regional funding source assisted with the start-up and first year costs of the site and surrounding efforts. Each participating community organization had an individual password their staff could use to access, update and modify the information about their organizational needs as they appeared on the website. The long-term financial plan was that community organizations would make an annual contribution to assist with the maintenance and upkeep of the website, as well as small marketing and outreach activities in the community. Fort Lewis College would continue to

support the effort through the students, staff and faculty involved with Service Tree as well as handling the marketing and outreach to the campus population.

FirstCall – www.firstcall-vc.org

“United Way 2-1-1 is your one-stop-shop for finding meaningful volunteer opportunities that you need to bring your life into balance. United Way of Larimer County is home to the Volunteer Center of Larimer County and offers a number of free services to engage individuals, families, groups, youth, and businesses in volunteerism and community involvement. Our services include:

- Online database of volunteer opportunities that provides matches by area of interest and location. Allows for direct opportunity sign-up and tracking of involvement hours.
- Online calendar of nonprofit agency events in need of volunteers.
- Biannual Volunteer Resource Guide with volunteer program profiles for over 160 nonprofit agencies in Larimer County.
- Weekly e-mail alerts listing current volunteer opportunities.
- Personalized volunteer referrals over the phone by dialing 2-1-1.
- Community-wide days of volunteering (24-Hours to Help Homelessness, National Youth Service Day, Make A Difference Day).
- Volunteerism resource library.
- Faith-based service crews.
- “Business Cares”, an employee volunteer program service.
- Volunteer recognition events and awards.
- Youth volunteer and service-learning resources and programs.
- Consulting and volunteer recruitment services to nonprofit organizations.”

The volunteer clearinghouse aspect of FirstCall is funded almost entirely by United Way funds as a part of 211, the national United Way effort to

establish community Information and Referral centers. For more information on the 211 effort and 211 regions in Colorado see: <http://211colorado.org/>.

Combining with Information Referral:

As noted above, FirstCall combines a volunteer clearinghouse function with the information referral services. Although Montrose County is not an active 211 site, there is already a IR webpage:

<http://www.montrosehumanresource.com/>

With an IR webservice already in place and interest in the development of a volunteer clearinghouse services, the group may want to consider the possibility of approaching the United Way either through the 211 project or Volunteer Solutions or both to discuss the possibility of financial support. Even though United Way doesn't work in Montrose in a general way their may be support available to the specific project(s).

The Cheaper, Easier Way:

Another option is to encourage organizations and individuals in your community to select, use and advertise one of the national clearinghouse options that are already available. Most of these sites allow organizations to create an account and manage their own information. Some of the sites have fees associated with them and some do not. Community organizations would simply have to decide what, if anything, they are will to pay for. The trick here is that **everyone agrees to use the same site** and then **outreach is conducted in the community** so individuals are aware of the new service.

There are a lot of different options out there. I included a list of some that I think are the best. My number one pick would be idealists.org (www.idealists.org). It is a well-know site, it has been around for quite a while, the search capacity and options are easy and useful, it looks rather user-friendly, and there are different "levels" that organizations can opt for

depending on their needs. Idealists.org is also partners with one of the most popular board recruiting websites and they have a new partnership with the volunteer section of the popular job site Monster

(<http://volunteer.monster.com/>). The only potential challenge that I saw was that idealists.org is selective about what type of government agencies they will list so there may be conflict with listing volunteer positions through health and human services, etc. However, the site does encourage users to contact their staff with questions or proposals if there are concerns about eligibility.

Here are some other options that looked promising and seemed to have user-friendly, versatile service options:

www.volunteermatch.org

<http://www.servenet.org/>

<http://www.1-800-volunteer.org/>

<http://www.charityamerica.com/>

Two Options for Assistance With Creating a Volunteer Clearinghouse:

The following sites both offer technical support for communities that are developing a Volunteer Clearinghouse. All of the text is taken directly from the site.

Volunteer Solutions – United Way <http://www.volunteersolutions.org/>

Volunteer Solutions is a Volunteer Matching Application that helps Volunteer Centers connect individuals to volunteer opportunities in their community. Volunteer Solutions helps volunteers, nonprofit agencies, corporations, event organizers, and Volunteer Centers get connected. Read on to learn how Volunteer Solutions helps each one of these groups and how to get yourself or your organization involved with Volunteer Solutions today.

Database Management Products (for sale):

Millions of volunteers have already used Volunteer Solutions' technology in

thousands of communities around the United States. Volunteer Solutions provides today's most advanced and most complete set of services for managing your volunteers, agencies, and opportunities through the Internet.

Volunteer Solutions Enterprise Edition

Volunteer Solutions Enterprise Edition can help your organization work online. This Enterprise Edition provides you with the most advanced tools to truly provide an online volunteer matching service.

Volunteer Solutions Mini

Volunteer Solutions Mini is designed for organizations that either need a lower price option, or that do not require the more advanced features of Enterprise Edition.

Workplace Volunteer Systems

Volunteer Solutions Workplace Volunteer Systems can help you promote, manage, and measure your employee volunteer activities. Workplace Volunteer Systems is the most advanced online system providing extensive customization, reporting, and integration into existing corporate intranets.

Student Volunteer Systems

Volunteer Solutions Student is an online technology solution that allows Universities, Colleges, High Schools, etc. to connect students and employees to quality volunteer opportunities. As part of a suite of United eWay tools, SVS provides a fully branded web presence to promote volunteer opportunities and events while taking advantage of a robust reporting system to track student interests and hours volunteered.

Volunteer Event Management

Volunteer Event Management is the perfect tool to help you efficiently organize your volunteer events. With easy to use forms for your center, your agencies, and your volunteers, you can now leverage the Internet to match volunteers with projects available in your community and for your events.

Points of Light Foundation – Resources for Volunteer Centers

<http://pointsoflight.org/centers/start.cfm>

The Points of Light Foundation works in partnership with the Volunteer Center National Network (VCNN) to help mobilize people and resources to find creative solutions to community problems.

Volunteer Centers are conveners for the community, catalysts for social action and key local resources for volunteer involvement. They bring people and community needs together through a range of programs and services based upon community needs, demographic area, population size, and other factors.

Technical Assistance for Starting a Volunteer Center:

When a community embarks on this process, it is starting a non-profit business. The long-term success or failure of the Volunteer Center rests largely on issues such as community readiness, available resources, potential for partnerships, and sustainability.

- Is there an identified need in the community that the Volunteer Center will fill?
- Is there strong leadership that will support new Volunteer Center development?
- Are there local funding sources that will provide resources for the Volunteer Center?

Answers to questions like these will help you assess if the community's needs warrant a Volunteer Center, and if there is adequate support for its development and successful operation.

Getting involved with the Volunteer Center Start-Up Program

The Volunteer Center Start-Up Program is a technical assistance program designed to support Volunteer Center development in local communities.

The program uses the analogy of a life cycle of a tree in three phases of growth "*Planting the Seed*," "*Nurturing the Seed*," and "*Growing for Success*" to chart a course for new or emerging Volunteer Center development. Implementing the Benchmarks for Development as a framework, the program outlines the steps necessary for launching a successful, thriving Volunteer Center.

How do I get started?

Receive the Free Information Packet.

E-mail the program staff or call (202) 729-8000, ext.3228. Review and share the information packet with potential partners who are interested in supporting new Volunteer Center development.

Purchase the Volunteer Center Start-Up Kit

Order the kit from our Catalog or contact a representative directly at 1-800-272-8306. What's in the Start-up Kit?

Participate in Volunteer Center Development Training.

Join us at our annual National Conference to learn best practices and trends, and to participate in training and networking activities that will support new Volunteer Center development. Or, build a relationship with a local or state agency such as your State Commission on Service and Volunteerism to sponsor a Volunteer Center development training event.

Some Thoughts on Making It Work:

- Be creative and diverse in inviting agencies, organizations and groups.
 - Court ordered community service officer.
 - Volunteers of America.
 - Senior Corps.
 - Conservation Corps.
 - PTA, neighborhood associations and other non-incorporated groups that still access and utilize volunteers.
 - All-volunteer groups (no professional staff).
 - Service learning programs or individual teachers who engage in service learning.
- Be consistent across agencies, organizations, or groups in how volunteer opportunities are classified / organized.
- Use a “letter of commitment” or something similar to clarify the roles and commitments of partner agencies. Some ideas:
 - They will use the site and keep it up-dated.
 - They will “train” their staff and encourage them to help get the word out.
 - They will include a logo (or whatever) in their newsletter, on their website, in the window of their office, etc.
 - They will help with collecting data / stats as necessary.
 - They will help with marketing / outreach efforts by x, y, or z.
 - They will attend necessary meetings and actively work to improve the effectiveness of the project.
 - They will assist with funding by....
 - If each agency, organization or group buys into the idea and engages in small efforts to support it then it should not be a huge effort on anyone’s part to keep things up and running.
- Recommend one person from each group be responsible for updates and they set a monthly reminder.
 - Make sure everything is up-to-date including volunteer options, contact information, requirements, wish-list or whatever.

- Make sure everything is working as it should be (links, tech issues, etc.)
 - Make sure all the information is clear and communicates what was intended.
 - Make any changes in response to any feedback that has been received.
- If an email address is provided as a contact option, make sure someone is checking it and answering messages.
- Keep stats if possible – start as soon as possible.
 - How many “hits” the site gets, how many people found the volunteer position through the site, etc.
- Provide “training.”
 - Staff people will need to know how to access the site and maintain their profiles.
 - Community members will need a chance to see the site in action and try it out a few times in an environment where they can ask questions or get help.
 - Encourage and support key people in the community who work in places where there is free internet access (library, workforce center, internet café, etc.) to know about the site, how to use it and how to help others access and use it as well.
 - Don't forget churches as a *great* place to offer demos / training.
- Develop a “brand.”
 - Make a catchy name, tag-line, graphic, ect. that is branded specifically to the site and can be used throughout the community until it is burned into the cortex of your citizens.
- Advertise *all the time*.
- Check-in at least two times in the first year and at least annually after that.

Volunteer Centers in Colorado:

The list isn't comprehensive but it does provide a sense of the diversity of efforts throughout the state.

- Aurora Volunteer Center 1298 Peoria St
Aurora, CO 80011
([See a map](#)) 303-326-8618, severett@auroragov.org
<http://www.auroragov.org/volunteer>
- Eagle County Volunteer Center PO Box 660
Eagle, CO 81631-0660(970) 328-8843, gail.britt@eaglecounty.us
<http://www.eaglecounty.us/hhs/v>
- Foothills United Way 2955 Baseline Road
Boulder, CO 80303(303) 444-4013, smoscow@unitedwayfoothills.org
[Online Opportunities](#)
- Mile High United Way, Inc. Centennial Plaza
2505 Eighteenth Street
Denver, CO 80211-3939(303) - 561-2331,
volunteer@unitedwaydenver.org
<http://www.unitedwaydenver.org/>
[Online Opportunities](#)
- The Volunteer Center of the Pikes Peak Region 518 North Nevada
Colorado Springs, CO 80903-1106
([See a map](#)) (719) 575-4345, lynne@ppnp.org
<http://www.pppnp.org>
- Volunteer Center of United Way of Weld County 814 9th St
Greeley, CO 80631-1104
([See a map](#)) (970) 353-4300, uwwc@unitedway-weld.org
<http://www.unitedway-weld.org>
- Volunteer Connection - Longmont Branch 2919 17th Ave
Longmont, CO 80503-1650
([See a map](#)) (303) 772-5772, vclong@volunteerconnection.net
<http://www.volunteerconnectin.net>

- Volunteer Connection of Boulder County 2885 Aurora Ave
Boulder, CO 80303-2250
([See a map](#)) (303) 444-4904, laurak@volunteerconnection.net
<http://www.volunteerconnection.net>
- Volunteer Connections of the San Luis Valley 707 Main Street
Alamosa, CO 81101-2539
([See a map](#)) (719) 589-5688, hollyvcf@amigo.net
<http://www.vcfvolunteering.org>
- Volunteer Pikes Peak 518 N. Nevada Ave
Colorado Springs, CO 80903 (719) 955-0763, volunteer@ppunitedway.org
www.volunteerpikespeak.org
[Online Opportunities](#)
- Denver Metro Volunteers
Denver CO
- FirstCall United Way 211 1247 Riverside #4
Fort Collins CO 80524 (970) 407.7066, info@firstcall211.org
www.firstcall-vc.org
- Volunteer Central
Durango CO
<http://www.volcentral.org/>