

Volunteering during the recession: Opportunities or Threats?

I always like to start off on a positive note so therefore I will begin by looking at the opportunities that have developed as a result of the current economic climate and the opportunities that we could create in the voluntary sector to the benefit of all our partners.

KVC has seen a dramatic increase in the number of enquiries about volunteering during the past year or so. As more people become unemployed and the increased awareness of the benefits of volunteering become more apparent, motivations also change. For many, volunteering is seen as a route to employment, building on self esteem and confidence whilst also allowing the individual to share and develop skills. It also provides up to date 'work experience' for CVs and recent references, which is very important when job seeking. And the benefits also extend to us in the voluntary sector as we see more and more people searching for a valuable (and enjoyable) experience whilst volunteering. We are working together with the Chamber of Commerce, and looking at ways to develop employee volunteering and also ways to employ the skills of the members of the Executive Futures programme they run for those who have been made redundant.

However, along with the opportunity of recruiting more volunteers with higher level of skills and experience, we have to consider what will be the impact on us as organisations and what adjustments we can make in order to gain. Most of us are experiencing a tough time due to the

recession and are feeling some degree of financial stress due to reduced income or, in some cases, a complete cut in funding. This is at a time when demand for our services is increasing, as well as our organisational costs, and we face a situation when we are being asked to do 'more for less'.

Many organisations have reported having to cut back and in a lot of cases it is the role of the volunteer co-ordinator that is trimmed. The knock on effect is felt by all. Volunteers getting lost in the recruitment process, becoming disenchanted through lack of induction, training and supervision/support and inevitably leaving the organisation. We know that new volunteers and the retention of existing volunteers are the lifeblood of any well run organisation. Many organisations could not exist, or at least provide their current level of service, without the help of volunteers.

The profile of new volunteer recruits coming through are that they are mostly young women with a rich array of qualifications, skills and experience who prefer to get involved in short term or one-off/episodic opportunities. Evidence collected by the Institute for Volunteering suggest that they prefer to help out in education (30%), health and disability (22%), event support management (59%), and a high percentage of them volunteer in order to use and learn new skills (25%), or to improve their career prospects. The majority of volunteers (59%) helped out with more than one organisation. Moreover, people who were employees (62%) volunteered more than people not

continued from page 7

working (55%). These figures also reflect what is happening in the Borough of Kingston.

With this changing profile of volunteers, we have decided to turn our marketing strategy on its head. Instead of just marketing your opportunities, we will be marketing potential volunteers skill sets to organisations. Every day we are seeing people who have excellent communication skills, organisational and time management skills, people skills (such as caring, negotiating and listening), accountability

and assessment reporting, planning skills, budgeting skills and survival skills (such as stress management). We can help and support you to adjust to these changes and develop your opportunities. Below we have put together examples of the types of people we regularly see who want to share and develop skills, together with some examples of what volunteer roles they could do.

Maria Jarvis, KVC Manager
020 8255 8685
volunteering@kvc.org.uk

Can You Afford to Miss Out? - Highly Skilled Volunteers

Here are a few examples of volunteers I have interviewed in the past 9 months, along with some suggestions of potential roles.

Ian: 40 years experience in financial accounting and management. (Possible treasurer/trustee)

Wanda: 30 years experience in the Civil Service developing & implementing national policy on children and young people; 3 years on equality in the health service and 4 years as Director of the Women's National Commission. (Possible trustee or project to draw up an organisation's business plan)

Gerard: Experienced business analyst with a strategic understanding of the public sector. (Possible business planning or committee member)

Danielle: Post graduate diploma in law, specialising in company procedures, commercial contracts and charity law (Possible role looking at an organisation's policies & procedures)

Ben: I.T developer and analyst (Possible role drawing up an IT & communications strategy)

April: Volunteer co-ordinating and event planning & marketing (Possible fundraising events co-ordinator)

You can see their talents are very diverse and offer organisations, like yourself, opportunities that have not previously existed. Most of those listed have now been placed or are in the process of talking with organisations. But it would be a shame to miss out on such quality volunteers in the future.

So if you would like to develop new opportunities that would fit the skills being offered then the KVC development project can help you take the next step. So why not contact me at KVC for an informal discussion.

Pat Stanley
Volunteering Development & Good Practice Worker 020 8255 8685
outreach@kvc.org.uk

Good Practice and Development Project

In response to the recent economic downturn, KVC has invested in a new Good Practice and Development Project to add value to our existing services. **Pat Stanley** (see previous page for contact details) is available to you on a one-to-one basis and also through our new training programme which aims to cover all aspects relating to volunteering. We can help you prepare a strategy for involving volunteers and developing opportunities right through to supporting your organisation to achieve the only UK Quality Standard; Investors in Volunteers which recognises excellence in volunteer management.

The benefits of achieving the award demonstrates:

- Consistency across the organisation
- Continuous improvement and increased effectiveness
- Proves excellence in Volunteer Management to funders
- Demonstrates to volunteers and paid staff that volunteer's contributions are valued
- Attracts more volunteers to your organisation
- Good PR opportunity

Good Sports - Sports Volunteering Opportunities

The following sports-related opportunities are currently available in Kingston:

Kingston Fencing Club are looking for someone to assist with maintaining their armoury.

Walking4Health scheme is looking for Walk Leaders.

Kingston Royals Swimming Club are looking for someone to provide administrative support to the Club Treasurer.

Corinthian-Casuals F.C. are looking for the following:

- Press Secretary
- Reserve Team Administrator
- Reserve Team Support
- Tannoy Announcer
- Clubhouse Support.
- Fundraiser

If you are interested in any of these or have opportunities at your sports club, please contact **Hedley Featherstone, Good Sports Project 020 8255 8685** goodsports@kvc.org.uk

PRO-ACTIVE London Awards for Sport & Physical Activity

These awards recognise the outstanding achievements of the unsung heroes of community sport and are the only awards that celebrate community sport on a London scale.

There are eight categories, including Volunteer of the Year and Young Volunteer

of the Year, both of which recognise the contribution made by the volunteer in the areas of encouraging wider participation, innovative ideas and commitment to personal development.

Full details can be found on the website www.pro-activelondon.org

Hoodies do some goodies!

With the credit crunch and youth unemployment at record levels, the South London V Team (part of the national youth volunteering charity) and Kingston Volunteer Centre came up with an innovative solution over the festive season. Rather than buying expensive presents, they have been encouraging young people (aged 16 to 25) to 'Give the Gift of Time' to friends, family or even the community instead!

The Festive Campaign was launched in London by Lucie Jones (from X Factor) and locally, the 'Goodie Hoodie' squad were out and about in December in Kingston. Identifiable by their purple furry hoodies, they were asking young people to consider doing a good deed for someone instead of buying a present (e.g. clearing the garden, walking the dog or cooking someone breakfast in bed). Young people wrote out their pledges onto a gift of time voucher – A Time Token – ready to gift wrap and give to someone from their family or friends over the festive period.



As well as giving out Time Tokens, the 'Goodie Hoodie' crew also suggested wider volunteering opportunities which the young people could do (e.g. helping a charity or a local community group, or getting valuable work experience to help further a career dream).

Meena Kapila, Youth Volunteer Advisor for Kingston said: "Our Festive campaign has been a great way of helping young people during this economic climate and also encouraging more young people to get involved in their local community through volunteering!"

