

Ghanaians volunteerism is just not called 'volunteering'.

Last year I left my job in Vancouver at the Canadian Cancer Society with the plan to relocate to Victoria. However, I took a small detour along the way by becoming a volunteer with VSO-Canada. I went to Ghana on a 7-month project as Volunteering Development Coordinator for the National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana (NALAG) and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). Canada and Ghana have six district/ municipal partnerships (ie. sister cities) and my role was to look at how volunteerism and citizen engagement could support these partnerships. Ghanaians are familiar with volunteering – for decades international volunteers have come to provide a helping hand. Local volunteerism is another story. Of course – they have volunteerism; it is just not called 'volunteering'. I wrote a handbook and delivered workshops reminding Ghanaians are of their rich traditions of mutual self-help. My efforts were devoted to helping district/ municipal officials to transition from citizens blaming local government ('Why don't YOU do something?') to shared responsibility ('WE have challenges and together WE are going to do something about it').



It was a remarkable 7 months! I was provided comfortable but basic housing in the capital city of Accra and a local wage. I was fortunate that my role allowed me to see much of the beautiful country. Check out my blog if you want to see photos and learn more about my experience: <http://bethechange.typepad.com/>

VSO Canada has recently introduced a new program area: "national volunteering". They are now always seeking people with the expertise that AVRBC/ CAVR members offer. Postings vary from 3 months to 2 years and could take you to places like Mongolia, Cambodia, Cameroon or Kenya. Naturally, you will have a chance to share your skills but you will likely learn and gain more than you give. Check out the VSO website <http://www.vsocan.org/default.aspx> to learn more!

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Feel free to contact me if you want to ask me any questions about my experience with VSO. I am now back in Canada, happily settled in Victoria, seeking a job!

Happy Adventures! *Kay Larsen*

Message from the President

Seasons Greetings to all members of AVRBC! The holiday season generally gives us an opportunity to sit back and reflect on the past year. But most importantly, it provides us with the chance to count the many blessings in our lives. The past eight months as President have certainly had the usual challenges of a new position but there are many blessings. First of all, we are fortunate to support Administrators of Volunteer Resources around the province of British Columbia – you are a tremendous and inspiring group of individuals! Second, I personally feel blessed to work with such a hardworking, dedicated group of volunteers who make up our Board of Directors. As we all know, *many hands make light work* and that is absolutely true in this case.



The Board has had a very busy year. You will see from our Executive Update included in this newsletter that we have tackled large projects such as a revision to the Policy & Procedure Manual, an update of the Constitution & By-laws and the development of an Outreach plan, in an attempt to reach all areas of our province. As well, we are in the process of compiling the recent membership survey results and will be comparing the results with the survey completed in 2001. Key elements of each survey will be incorporated in the strategic plan and will help to lead the future direction of AVRBC.

So, take some time to pause, reflect and count your own blessings as we near the end of 2007. May you have a Happy, Healthy Holiday Season!

Debbie Kennedy, CAVR
President, AVRBC

AVRBC Executive Update

2007/2008 AVRBC Board

Debbie Kennedy	President
Sandra Palmer	Vice President
Charlene Robson	Past President
Clare O'Kelly	Regional Coordinator
Anita Berisha	Treasurer
Muffet Chambers	Secretary
Lindsay Baker	Learning & Development
Oscar Cruz	Communications
Jackie Rankel	Membership

- Revising the AVRBC Policy & Procedure Manual, including a thorough review of all job descriptions
- Review & revisions to the Constitution & By-Laws – last revision in 2000
- Compiling data from e-mail, survey monkey – results will be presented to the Board at the end of November with a focus on web re-development
- Development of an outreach plan which will be implemented over a two year period
- Partnered with Volunteer BC at a Lower Mainland Regional Meeting (Speed Networking) and joined their AGM
- President held 1:1 meetings with each member of the Executive to get to know each individual and provide some recognition for the role
- Development of an "Advocacy" Committee to balance work originally done by the Community Awareness Committee and now the Communications Committee
- Will partner with Volunteer Richmond's leadership conference in February 2008 for our AGM. A very *exciting* keynote speaker for our Learn & Lead Day has been secured!
- A standardized e-mail template for consistent messaging, each message referring members to the website
- Revision to the grant application process through the Learning & Development Committee
- The AVRBC website and AVRBC members will be considered as resources to Community Connections, Culturally Welcoming Volunteer Program
- Completing review & revisions to strategic plan which will be posted on AVRBC website when complete
- New Policy Development
- All archived records from Nanaimo have been reviewed & are with the President.
- Exploration of part-time, paid Administrative position
- Volunteer Works – Letter to Red Ridge seeking clarification

The Members Have Spoken... **A Report from the Communications Committee**

ML Burke

The *AVRBC Website Survey* results are finished and an overview of the report was given by Oscar Cruz at the Executive Meeting on November 27. In the Summer of 07, the Executive asked the Communications Committee to find out what the Membership would like to have on the website. A survey was developed and distributed through a web-link to 125 members, which garnered 71 responses over a three-week period. This represents a 57% return which is considered very high in the survey world. The Committee was very encouraged to see the AVRBC membership so engaged and the importance they placed on improving their website.

The website was originally developed as a brochure or static website giving information about events, conferences and other news. It evolved to include a *Members Only* section that is accessed by a login and password. This gives access to the membership contact list and forums for discussions or questions relative to the profession. The site was recently re-designed to give it a more contemporary look and layout. However, ease of navigation continues to be a challenge and contributions for the current website still requires a webmaster (or mistress) to implement.

In short, the members want a friendlier, more accessible, current and useful website. Members frequently expressed frustration with the current password system, difficulties with navigation and

outdated content or no relevant content at all. Members are using the website primarily to keep informed about current events, conferences, job postings, trainings and workshops.



When asked what they would like to see, the response clearly indicates a need for regional reps and committee chairs to be able to directly upload their own information and for users to easily navigate a more current looking website.

The top 5 choices for productivity tools were an event calendar, online trainings and workshop notices, a members-only area, registration forms and a news/document archives section for info like job postings, minutes, articles, etc.

When asked how they would like to connect with other members through the

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website, responses were prioritized as follows: Sharing Best Practices, having a Members' Library, offering Member Profiles (short work-related bios), having a Philosopher's Corner (opinions, life issues, travel, play), and lastly a Favourites section (members' talents, interests, etc.)

The final three questions referred to the possible development of a web-based volunteer management system. We asked if members currently use a system, if they would use a web-based system and would they like AVRBC to develop such a system.

In short, 33 out of 71 said they are using software and 16 did not respond to the question. Of the 33 respondents, 19 are using Volunteer Works and 14 are using "Other" programs.

Seventy –four percent (74%) of the respondents said they would or might be interested in a web-based volunteer management system. Overarching issues were cost, privacy and security according to Canadian standards.

As to whether AVRBC should be involved in developing such a system, there was a mixed response with AVRBC's mandate to be considered and also developmental costs being a major concern. A recommendation was made for AVRBC to take a leadership role to further research possible solutions to this challenge.

You will be able to go to the website to view the full report, which details each question's responses and comments. Ironically, this will go up on the site as soon as the webmaster can get to it.

*Many thanks to the Communications Committee for their hard work on this project.
Chair: Oscar Cruz, ML Burke, Carmen Cayer, Astarte Sands*

2008 Membership Renewal Forms are now available on the Website. Please note renewals are due on or before February 29, 2008 to avoid late fees. Ensure all information is filled out so that we can update our records. Also please ensure that cheques include the name of the member.

Happy Holidays to all!

Technological tools shared at the AVRBC meeting Nov 15, 2007

Online survey tools:

- Survey Monkey – www.surveymonkey.com
 - There is a free component to Survey Monkey and a paid component. I have only used the free component and have found it very useful. The only annoying thing about the free side is that if you ask qualitative questions, it's not easy to print out the answers. I usually take a screen shot of the comments and paste it into Word and then print it out, to capture the qualitative comments. Printing out the quantitative responses is easy.
- Zoomerang – info.zoomerang.com
 - Have not used

Social Networking Site

- Facebook – www.facebook.com
 - Facebook might be useful for setting up discussion boards for groups, such as committees or volunteer programs *but* since everyone has to sign up with Facebook with an individual profile, it will mix 'business' and 'pleasure' in that your work contacts that are part of the group will see your personal interactions online as well

Blogging

Blogging is great for one-sided communication to your audience. It is an easily-updatable webpage that is usually fairly conversational in tone. You enter 'posts' of different information, usually at least once to several times a week. The key with blogging is that once you start, you *have* to keep it up, at regular intervals, or you will lose your audience.

- Blogger – www.blogger.com (free)
 - Probably the most common free blogging site on the Web
- WordPress – www.wordpress.com (free)
- LiveJournal – www.livejournal.com (free)
- TypePad – www.typepad.com (for small businesses and professionals; there is a fee)

Meeting Schedulers

- MeetingWizard – www.meetingwizard.com
 - Have tested and it appears easy to use
- TimeBridge – www.timebridge.com
 - Have not used

Beth Cougler Blom – beth@volunteervictoria.bc.ca

A Day in the Life of a Coordinator of Volunteers

Dr. Seuss made silly rhymes,
That is my life at times, at times.
I ply my trade with volunteers,
Have honed my skills o'er years and years.

And with each passing month-day-week
I've learned to count on no repeats.
There is no constant, there is no way
To plot a Volunteer Manager's day.

Except to say 'bye' the time I go home- I've bonded with my telephone!
I talk, I talk, I talk some more,
I recruit, I train, I ask, I implore.
In the midst of a community fray I coax,
I persuade, I turn quietly gray.
I provide a shoulder and a gentle pat,
Then turn 'round and say, "You can't do that!"

I must wheedle the Board to fee up some cash,
Must step on my impulse to do something rash.
I've thank yous to write, as well as begging letters,
I've a message on the machine from someone knitting sweaters.

My voice mail is jammed with good news and grumblers
But half of the callers left no name or numbers.
I need a photographer, I need a mall sitter,
I need a ticket seller...but no more knit sweaters
There's a birthday tomorrow, a sympathy call too,
But still the Director asks, "Need more to do?"

They are old and young and in between,
They're stalwart and cheery and ever so keen.
They have children and siblings and lovers or spouses,
But they give of their time, leaving their houses...
To do some driving, filing, teaching, ferrying,
Web-making, fund-raising, speaking and sharing.
They give of their skill, effort and passion
Pushing the boundaries of care and compassion
They're picky and messy, late and on-time

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They're clever, finicky, frenzied, sublime.
They're on the Board, they're on the street,
And I'm the common ground on which they meet.
And meet they do...and with me they share
The only thing universal is that...they care.

The Christmas Grinch or the Cat in the Hat,
This coordinator's a lit like that!
The topsy-turvey hoorays and jeers
Of clients, care givers, bosses and peers.
The wants and the needs of disparate groups,
To be rallied and tallied and teamed into troops...
Troops that help, that try, that stumble-

But whose genuine efforts help keep me humble.
'Cause despite all the chaos, the re-vamping and silliness
A coordinator's life abounds in willingness...
For everything I do, I get more in return,
For everything they give, I have to learn.



--Ann West
(a friend at UNICEF)

Regional Reports

Fraser Valley Regional News

On Dec. 5th AVRBC co-hosted the "Celebrating the Spirit of Volunteering" event marking the UN International Day of the Volunteer. Regional Rep, Nellie Taylor was on the organizing committee, and it was designed to provide educational and networking opportunities for individuals who manage and coordinate volunteer programs. The Hon. Lt. Governor Steven L. Plant opened the event and Mary MacKillop was the keynote speaker. It was well attended and provided an opportunity for networking and promotion of AVRBC - not to mention an opportunity to eat an early and delicious turkey dinner! For more information about the Fraser Valley AVRBC Regional events contact Nellie Taylor at n.taylor@primus.ca.

Mid North Island Regional News

Five members in the Mid-North Island met in September, the first of what they hope will be regular quarterly regional meetings. The networking topic was "Helping a Volunteer Move On". Next meeting is scheduled for February 6th. Contact Joan Ryan, Regional Rep, for more information at joan.ryan@viha.ca.

South Island Regional News

The South Island AVRBC members meet regularly on the third Thursday of each month. Dec. 13th was there Christmas celebration which included a catered lunch and laughter yoga, in the lovely setting of the Swan Hill Nature Sanctuary. An all-day workshop is being organized for January on "Developing Effective Orientation and Training Programs". For more information contact Regional Reps Beth Cougler-Blom and Nancy Martens at beth@volunteervictoria.bc.ca or nancy.martens@viha.ca

There are changes ahead for the AVRBC South Island group! Beth Cougler Blom of Volunteer Victoria, who shares the regional representative role with Nancy Martens, will be going on maternity leave for a year as of mid-February. While she's on leave, Beth will be temporarily replaced in the regional rep role by her Volunteer Victoria colleague Bonnie Van Volkenburg. Thanks Bonnie!

Lower Mainland Regional News

Lower Mainland Regional Workshops have received fabulous turnouts and very positive feedback on the topic and presenters. This September was a tremendous success with 22 members and 6 non-members attending the Speed Networking session at eh lovely Vancouver Aquarium in collaboration with the Volunteer BC AGM. We're happy to report that November was equally as beneficial with 24 members and 7 non-members coming together for the eagerly anticipated Conflict Resolution for Professional in Volunteer Management.

We shall kick off the new year with a full day workshop on January 24th. The dynamic speaker Carol Boothroyd will present "Effective Presentation Skills"; The leadership skill that never goes out of style! This will be held at the Coquitlam City Hall complete with a hot gourmet lunch.