

Volunteers in Plano

Dear VIP Volunteers and Supervisors, THE BRICK

(a story worth sharing from the Internet)

A young and successful executive was traveling down a neighborhood street, going a bit too fast in his new Jaguar. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something. As his car passed, no children appeared. Instead, a brick smashed into the Jag's side door! He slammed on the brakes and backed the Jag back to the spot where the brick had

been thrown. The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearest kid and pushed him up against a parked car shouting, "What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost a lot of money. Why did you do it?" The young boy was apologetic!

"Please, mister...please, I'm sorry but I didn't know what else to do," he pleaded. "I threw the brick because no one else would stop" With tears dripping down his face and off his chin, the youth pointed to a spot just around a parked car. "It's my brother," he said. "He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair, and I can't lift him up."

Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned man, "Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me." Moved beyond words, the driver tried



*Summer Team enjoy volunteering
Chelsey Alexander, Police Vacation
Safety School*

to swallow the lump in his throat. He hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair, then took out a linen handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him everything was going to be okay. "Thank you and may God bless you," the grateful child told the stranger. Too shook up for words, the man simply watched the boy push his wheelchair-bound brother

down the sidewalk toward home.

It was a long, slow walk back to the Jaguar. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver never bothered to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message:

"Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!" God whispers in our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes when we don't have time to listen, He has to throw a brick at us. It's our choice to listen or not.

Thank you for slowing down and sharing yourself with the City of Plano.

Respectfully,

Robin Popik
Volunteer Resources Supervisor

Judi Gradt
VIP Administrative Assistant



Did you know.... volunteering brings people healthier outlooks?

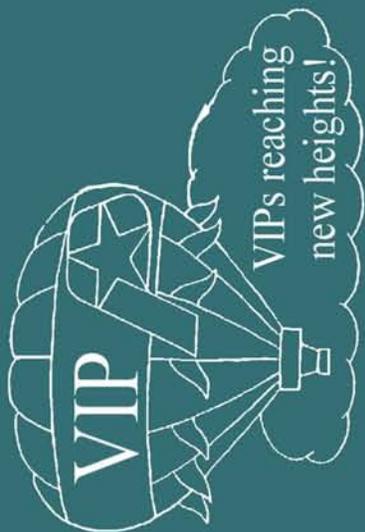
Here are some things that frequently happen when people serve as volunteers:

- ★ They become open to new experiences
- ★ They see themselves grow over time
- ★ They expand their horizon
- ★ They have a purpose in life
- ★ They possess goals
- ★ They have a sense of competence in managing everyday activities

What do these things have in common? According to a study by Sheldon Cohen of Carnegie Mellon University, these are some of

the predictors of health and happiness. The study found positive associations between these characteristics and reduced vulnerability to disease.

Cohen's study found that people who are happy, relaxed and positive were less likely to catch colds than people with more negative emotional styles (depressed, hostile, tense). The positive folks have lower levels of Cortisol, the stress hormone. He proposes this reduces people's susceptibility to disease. (Source: "Health and Happiness," The Futurist, January-February 2004.





Volunteers in Plano

Seniors Share Memories and Win Awards



Plano Public Library System volunteers take senior citizens down memory lane through the Library Links with Seniors program. "The program is designed to

stimulate thought processes by the seniors sharing memories and experiences," said Susan Rhoads, library liaison. "It encourages fellowship between the residents."

Seven senior-care centers in Plano (nursing homes, independent living facilities, resident care homes and assisted living facilities) receive monthly visits from a Library volunteer to lead a variety of programs.

The program was recognized in June by the Northeast Texas Library System. "We were awarded the Library Project of the Year for libraries serving over 12,000 people," Rhoads

said. There are five Library Links volunteers currently. "The objective is to get more volunteers because there are lots more care homes looking for programs like this," she explains.

Jane Kline, a volunteer of more than three years, visits the Life Care Center of Plano and DaySpring Assisted Living. "I go once a month to each and present a 45-minute program, using library materials that remind them of things in the past," Kline said. Most of the residents are transplanted here from somewhere else; it's a good time to share memories and find something in common. Kline said, "I value the time I spend with the seniors and usually get as much out of the program, if not more, than the seniors themselves do."

Barbara Copenhaver, activity director at the Inn at Orchard Park says, "The program themes come from old TV shows, commercials, books, tapes or holiday stories, to bring the seniors back a little bit and give them an opportunity to discuss memories. Each program gives them a chance to share their time period... and they love to reminisce about the past."

Truck Driver Turns Light Duty Volunteer

Bill Biermann worked his way through college driving trucks in Wichita, KS. He earned his B.S. in accounting and became a C.P.A. After 15 years using his education, first at the IRS then as an executive with a small manufacturer in Fort Worth, restructuring and downsizing left him out of work in 2001.

With the children grown Bill and his wife used this opportunity to fulfill a dream of touring the USA. The trucking industry allowed them to travel the USA and parts of Canada. Biermann started working for Contract Freighters Inc, CFI, in January 2003 after working for two other trucking companies. "My wife and I enjoyed many tourist sights, meeting interesting people and seeing many towns one could not reach easily in the of in planning vacations," Bill explains.

Bill was injured on the job in March. Once cleared for light duty work, CFI tries to provide office work for those employees on workers compensation. If they cannot, the employee is required to volunteer 30 hours per week. He contacted Judi Gradt and she was able to find him light duty work from early April to June.

He first worked for Becky Morales in Environmental Waste, where he prepared the recycling information packets for distribution. Then Bill went to Plano Centre to stuff envelopes and to help in the office. Later he went to the City's in-house Print Shop where he worked for Joyce Kyles.

"I have to admit this last assignment was my favorite. Joyce quickly learned of my accounting and computer background,

and made good use of it. I completed some month-end spreadsheets, and modified a quarterly spreadsheet. It was fun using my accounting background again." Joyce showed Bill the billing spreadsheet from the vendor, which she uses to create another spreadsheet for accounting. Accounting manually transcribes Joyce's data onto journal entry work papers for clerks to use in data entry.

"After that I took a billing spreadsheet from a vendor and modified it by incorporating accounting's journal entry work paper around the vendor's original data. Joyce now only has to review the data and forward the spreadsheet to accounting. If everyone agrees, Joyce could save herself a week or more in the course of a year. Accounting will also save time. Accounting also will receive a great new source document for use by its internal auditors and financial auditors." Joyce said it was great having Bill. She was glad to identify his hidden skills, so she could take advantage of them.

Bill enjoyed his volunteer activities so much he put Robin Popik in touch with his supervisor Todd Rose, who has become a new resource for our volunteer program.

Bill believes the City of Plano has many great employees on the front line and he enjoyed working with all of them. Thanks to the departments for giving the truck driver a smooth ride home.

VOLUNTEER VOICE



Inside the City Manager's Office: A Closer Look

Plano resident Jo Belli researches details for the Sister Cities program, compiles Citizen's Academy workbooks, posts information on City Hall bulletin boards and helps to organize neighborhood roundtables. Belli said, "Not only have I met many nice people, but I have also learned a great deal about our city." No matter what schedule constraints or skills limitations a person may have, Belli encourages anyone to volunteer. "Go for it! What do you have to lose?" she said. "You might really enjoy something you have never done before. Don't volunteer because you want to do something nice for someone; volunteer because you might make a new friend or learn something new that your current situation may never teach you!"

Small Talk: Not Just an English Lesson for this Husband/Wife Team

Fred and Sharon Frawley volunteer close to home at Parr Library in the Small Talk program. "It's a program for those who can read and write English, but lack confidence using the language in speaking situations," explains Fred. Students come from countries, such as China, India, Korea, Vietnam,



Israel, Iran, Brazil, Peru and Russia.

This volunteer experience is for anyone wanting to learn about the cultures and customs observed around the world. Fred reiterated, "We're helping to build the speaking skills of some bright, intellectually inquisitive people. We really look forward to this experience every week."

Play with a Purpose: Therapeutic Recreation Benefits from Teen's Zeal

Plano eighth grader, Abby Freeman, has her mom Joyce Freeman by her side as she volunteers. The pair belongs to the National Charity League, a mother/daughter charitable organization. They help the Therapeutic Recreation program by participating in arts and crafts, sing-a-longs, story times and other



activities for those with disabilities and special needs.

"The kids are so sweet, and you really get a good feeling from helping them out," Abby said. "They all have different abilities, but after a while, you just see them as little kids. Some are more difficult, but you just grin and bear it. And in the beginning, your mom is around if you have trouble or you don't know what to do."

Abby pointed out that "Making an impact in someone else's life and not just thinking about your own is definitely worth your time." "It's a great feeling to know you've truly made a child's day," she says.

Building Inspection Team



"Volunteering gave me an opportunity to meet new people when we first

moved to Plano and I was able to utilize some of my office skills to help where I was needed. It has been a rewarding experience and I feel part of the Building Inspections Team."

Gloria Purjet – seated on right

Full-Scale Emergency Exercise — Volunteers Needed

The City of Plano will participate in a full-scale emergency exercise, coordinated through the Texas Department of Emergency Management and the Texas Engineering Extension Service December 14 through 16, 2004. Daytime volunteers will be needed to help set up, tear

down, register people, act as victims, and more.

If you are interested, call (972) 941-7637 to leave your name, number and email address (if you have one). More information will be available December 1.



Volunteers in Plano



"There are many things I like about volunteering. First of all, we choose to do it on our own which makes the job a lot of fun and the process more efficient. Second, after completing a certain project, I feel happy and while working, the worries are nonexistent. Lastly, the somewhat informal nature of some of our projects allows for interaction with other people and our friends. Best of all, it comes in handy for NHS and scholarships."

Theja Lanka, Schimelpfenig Summer Reading, center male in photo.

Saying Goodbye: Exit Interviews

Just as there are "introduction" processes volunteers and staff members go through, there are also processes for when individuals end or complete their volunteering. After an individual leaves, the agency should know why they left, and get some feedback on their volunteer experience. One of the simplest ways to do this is an exit interview.

Please consider calling the Volunteer Resources Supervisor at (972)941-7114 prior to leaving to share your perception and experiences with us. Only through this input can we best evaluate our programs. Thanks in advance!

VIP Newsletter by:
Robin Popik
email: robinp@plano.gov
website: www.planotx.org/vip/

Please call the Volunteer Resources Office, 972-941-7436, with changes to your name, address and phone number.



**Volunteers Resources Group
City of Plano
1409 Avenue K
Plano, TX 75074
972-941-7436**