



# The Spirit of Volunteerism



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
VOLUME 16 / NUMBER 5  
Published January 2012

Coordinator	Dawn L. McCall
Executive Editor	Nicholas S. Namba
Director of Written Content	Michael Jay Friedman
<hr/>	
Editorial Director	Mary T. Chunko
Managing Editor	Phillip C. Kurata
Designer	Chloe D. Ellis
Cover Designer	Dori Walker
<hr/>	
Photo Editor	Ann Monroe Jacobs
Reference Specialist	Martin J. Manning

Cover photo: ©mangostock

The Bureau of International Information Programs of the U.S. Department of State publishes *eJournal USA*. Each issue examines a major issue facing the United States and the international community, and informs international readers about U.S. society, values, thought, and institutions.

Each *eJournal* is published in English, followed by electronic versions in French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. Selected editions also appear in Arabic, Chinese and Persian. Each journal is catalogued by volume and number.

The opinions expressed in the journals do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government. The U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and continued accessibility of Internet sites to which the journals link; such responsibility resides solely with the publishers of those sites. Journal articles, photographs, and illustrations may be reproduced and translated outside the United States unless they carry explicit copyright restrictions, in which case permission must be sought from the copyright holders noted in the journal.

Editor, *eJournal USA*  
IIP/CD/WC  
U.S. Department of State  
2200 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20522-0501  
USA  
E-mail: [eJournalUSA@state.gov](mailto:eJournalUSA@state.gov)

## About this Issue



The joy of seeing a boy's eyes light up when he comprehends words printed on a page is deeply satisfying for this volunteer reading tutor.

©AP Images/SouthtownStar, Art Vassy

Who gives blood in the United States? Who leads Boy Scout troops? Who sings carols in hospitals during the holidays? Who puts out fires and rescues people in medical emergencies? They are volunteers, so woven into the fabric of U.S. life that they often go unnoticed.

This issue of *eJournalUSA* is dedicated to the unheralded citizens who collectively contribute some \$173 billion annually through their unpaid labor. They are part of a tradition of volunteerism that has deep roots in U.S. society. Firefighting was an early form of volunteerism that Benjamin Franklin introduced in Philadelphia in 1736. This innovative idea spread rapidly, and within a few years the cities up and down the eastern seaboard of North America boasted volunteer fire companies.

The tradition of volunteerism flourishes today in communities large and small and in a myriad forms as the Internet opens new vistas for volunteerism, allowing people to help others worldwide without leaving home. The tradition is embodied by health care workers serving in areas devastated by natural disasters, by the "grandfathers" of Alexandria, Virginia, who mentor young boys growing up without fathers, and by volunteers who help refugees from distant lands build new lives in U.S. cities. The Spirit of Volunteerism recounts their stories and the stories of those whom they serve. ■

*The Editors*



©AP Images/The Oakland Press, Jose Juarez

## The Spirit of Volunteerism

### 4 **Volunteering: An American Tradition**

BY SUSAN J. ELLIS AND KATHERINE H. CAMPBELL

Volunteering began when North America was a wilderness and continues today.

### 10 **America's Volunteer Firefighters**

BY RICK J. MARKLEY

Volunteer firefighting began in the American colonies and the tradition remains strong now.

### 18 **It Takes a "Grandfather"**

BY JEANNE HOLDEN

Volunteer "grandfathers" mentor fatherless boys.

### 22 **Partners In Health: Listening Builds a Community**

BY LISA J. ARMSTRONG

Volunteers listened to Haitians' needs and helped build a clinic and a community.

### 28 **Resettling in Seattle**

BY CHARLOTTE WEST

Volunteers with the International Rescue Committee help refugees build new lives in a new land.

### 32 **Beyond Profit: IBM's Corporate Volunteers**

BY KATHRYN MCCONNELL

One of the world's largest computer companies encourages staff to share their skills to help those in developing countries.

### 37 **Additional Resources on Volunteerism**

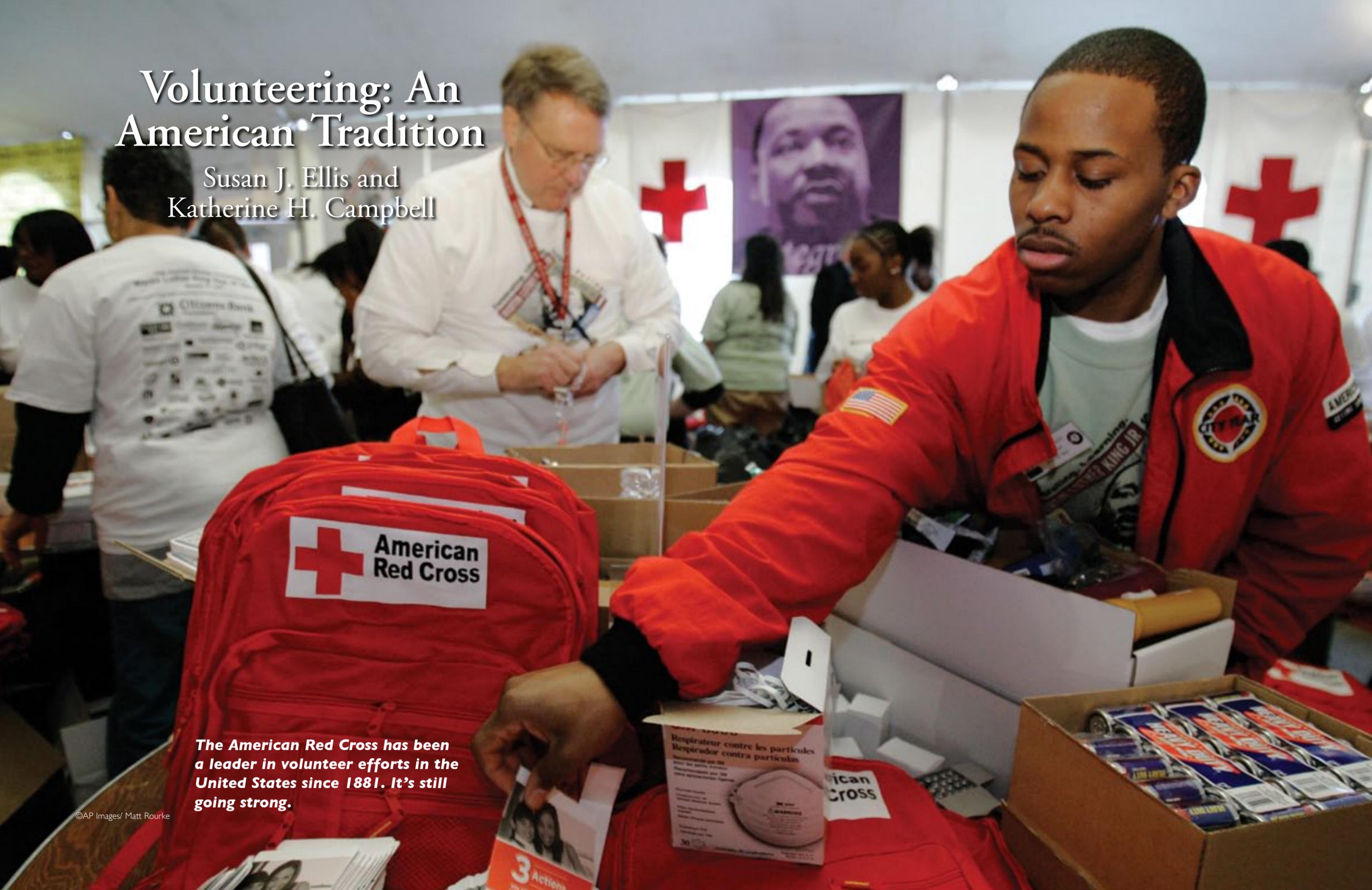
Photo left: Muslim and Jewish volunteers, Reem Ameiche and Risha Ring, sort canned goods at a food bank in Pontiac, Michigan, to help needy people through the winter.

*The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.*

# Volunteering: An American Tradition

Susan J. Ellis and  
Katherine H. Campbell

*The American Red Cross has been a leader in volunteer efforts in the United States since 1881. It's still going strong.*





©AP Images for Sprite/Dave Einsel

Volunteering provides joy for those who give as well as for those who receive assistance.

*“I have seen Americans making great and sincere sacrifices for the key common good and a hundred times I have noticed that, when needs be, they almost always gave each other faithful support.”*

—Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835

In the United States, just about everyone, at one time or another, has been a volunteer. On any given day, millions of Americans give of their time and talents to benefit their communities through volunteer service. Volunteering is so pervasive in the United States that it can be observed daily in almost every aspect of life.

In a typical year, about one-fifth of the American population, more than 62 million people, serve as volunteers, according to U.S. government statistics. They contribute more than 8 billion hours of services, valued conservatively at \$173 billion.

The roots of U.S. volunteerism are far reaching and deep. Americans have been banding together to help one another since colonial times. The settlers of the new American colonies all had the same priority: survival. Physically, the land was a wilderness, and social organizational structures were lacking. Cooperation frequently meant the difference between life and death.

Neighboring farmers combined efforts to clear land, build houses and barns, and harvest crops. Quilting parties and spinning bees were common occurrences, as were “whangs,” gatherings of women who helped each other with annual housecleaning. Church buildings were built by volunteers, and town records are rife with references to donations of land, materials and money, all given voluntarily so that each community could have its own place of worship. Volunteer efforts by both men and women were called “changing works.”

As the first settlements became small cities, new ways of voluntary action evolved. Early street lighting was a

## Volunteerism in America



©AP Images for Rebuilding Together/Bill Ross

Many volunteers work in projects to provide housing for the poor. Putting a coat of new paint on a house is one of the last chores before handing keys over to new occupants.

**Nearly 63 million Americans** volunteered more than 8 billion hours in 2010. The value of the volunteers’ time was \$173 billion, according to the Corporation of National and Community Service (CNCS), a federal agency that leads President Obama’s “United We Serve” initiative.

The most widely practiced forms of volunteerism were:

- Fundraising for charitable or nonprofit Organizations—26.5%
- Food preparation and distribution—23.5%
- General labor and transportation—20.3%. (e.g., clean up projects or giving rides to the elderly)
- Tutoring—18.5%
- Youth mentoring—17%

People born between 1965 and 1981, called Generation X, gave 2.3 billion hours of service in 2010, an increase of almost 110 million hours compared to 2009.

Many Generation X volunteers use their digital skills to help organizations worldwide—without leaving home. The United Nations Online Volunteering (UNV) service, established in 2000, has more than 20,000 registered volunteers who completed 15,109 assignments in 2010. Some online volunteers have helped develop many of the 2,000 NGOs registered with UNV. ■



©AP Images for Hampton Hotels/ Kevin Wolf

Maintaining monuments and parks in the United States could not be done without volunteers. President Lincoln looks a bit spiffier thanks to this volunteer



©AP Images/Richmond Times-Dispatch, Alexa Welch Edlund

"Now, Son, this is how you hit the ball out of the park," says an elderly, retired baseball player to a young, up-and-coming player. Coaching sports attracts many volunteers in the United States.

shared responsibility of homeowners who rotated the hanging of lanterns at their front gates. "Sunday schools" were started so that poor children, working at jobs for six days a week, could be taught to read the Bible on their single day off.

As early as the 1600's, colonists formed citizen fire brigades to combat fires in Boston, Philadelphia and New Amsterdam (later New York), and in 1736 Benjamin Franklin formally organized Philadelphia's volunteer fire company, consisting of "thirty volunteers who equipped themselves with leather buckets and bags and baskets." The concept quickly spread throughout the colonies and persists today, when more than 70 percent of firefighters in the United States are volunteers.

Three and a half centuries later, volunteerism imbues American society. Volunteering, because it is so pervasive, often goes unrecognized. Most Americans probably never contemplate the role of volunteerism in their day-to-day lives and never ask themselves:

- Who donates blood?
- Who runs the parent-teacher organizations in schools?
- Who works to preserve historical landmarks?
- Who passes out political campaign leaflets and registers citizens to vote?
- Who uses ham radios to relay calls for help?
- Who leads 4-H Clubs? Scout troops? Youth sports teams?
- Who blogs, tweets, and uses other forms of social media to advocate for change?

This list only skims the surface, but it illustrates the diversity of volunteer activities in which Americans engage.



©AP Images/Ross D. Franklin

Volunteers play an important role in registering Americans to vote.

Americans volunteer not because of coercion or profit, but because they recognize a need and are willing to take responsibility for meeting that need. But because they assume this responsibility in addition to their everyday jobs and duties, and because they do not seek monetary reward, volunteers themselves often underestimate the impact of their work.

Most historians, too, have overlooked the magnitude and diversity of contributions made to U.S. history and society by volunteers. However, the cumulative effect of countless voluntary actions, occurring as they do in every part of the United States and in every decade, makes it apparent that many aspects of American history and culture have been shaped by volunteers.

The role of volunteers in the United States has always been that of pioneer — to recognize significant issues and needs well before government or other institutions do and to provide services to address those needs.

Volunteering does not happen in a vacuum; it has always been shaped by changes in demographics, family composition, employment patterns and economics. For example, with equal numbers of women and men now in the work force, many U.S. companies have established corporate volunteer programs, encouraging their employees to volunteer by offering release time ranging from a few hours a week to a year's sabbatical.

And with people over 60 constituting the fastest growing segment of the population, some U.S. volunteer organizations for senior citizens have responded by lowering their age requirements, attracting active Americans in their 50s and 60s to serve the burgeoning number of octogenarians and beyond.

The explosive rise of the World Wide Web has changed everyone's lives and affected volunteering, too. First, it should be noted how important volunteers were and still are to the development of the Web itself: open-source programmers, online community hosts, and countless unpaid bloggers are all contributing to this global exchange forum.

The Web also gave birth to virtual volunteering, in which someone located anywhere in the world, at whatever time of choice, can provide online service. This can be anything from editing reports to translating documents, but also giving technical assistance or mentoring a young person via e-mail and voice-over-Internet calls.

Technological convergence, too, is having an impact on volunteering. For example, smart phones are allowing micro-volunteering, in which someone can do small tasks in a few minutes through Internet-connected calling.

Looking toward the future, it seems safe to predict that the causes served by American volunteers will continue to change; the presence and commitment of volunteers will not. ■

*Susan J. Ellis and Katherine H. Campbell are the authors of By the People: A History of Americans as Volunteers. Ellis is president of Energize, Inc., a training, consulting, and publishing firm that specializes in volunteerism. Campbell is executive director of the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration, the only independent body setting standards for those whose career is leadership of volunteers. She is a past national president of the Association for Volunteer Administration.*

*The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.*

# America's Volunteer Firefighters

Rick J. Markley





courtesy of Philip Stittleburg

Volunteer firefighters do more than put out fires. They also provide emergency medical treatment, as the La Farge volunteers, above, are doing for a driver who has rolled and crashed his truck.

**L**a Farge, Wisconsin — It's 2 a.m. and you're shaken from a deep sleep by a loud tone, then rapid beeping. This is followed by a voice crackling through the radio at the side of your bed saying, "Fire department requested. Fire department requested." As an unpaid volunteer, you answer the call.

This scene in La Farge, or one very much like it, plays out every night in countless communities across America. That's because more than 85 percent of fire departments in the United States are staffed either fully or partially by volunteers. These volunteers, nearly 1 million in all, come from all walks of life, sacrifice time with their families and even their sleep to respond to a range of emergencies: rescuing victims trapped in automobiles or buildings, containing hazardous materials and battling fires. These men and women are part of a tradition that pre-dates U.S. independence.

### ROOTS OF VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTING

Benjamin Franklin was a noted inventor, writer and diplomat. What's less well known is that Franklin organized the first volunteer fire brigade 40 years before the 13 American colonies declared their independence and became the United States of America. During a trip to Boston, Franklin noticed how much better prepared the city was for fighting fires than was Philadelphia — the city he called home. When he returned to Philadelphia, Franklin organized the Union Fire Company in 1736. The idea of volunteer fire brigades grew in popularity and similar groups were formed in other American colonies.

The early American volunteer firefighters tended to be financially successful and civic-minded. Their personal prosperity was important because the volunteers had to provide all of their own firefighting equipment.

Much has changed since then. Large U.S. cities, like Boston and Philadelphia, now have departments staffed with full-time career firefighters, but away from the cities, most U.S. suburban and rural communities are still protected by volunteer firefighters.

### COMMUNITY FIREFIGHTING: AN AMERICAN TRADITION

La Farge is a small town in southwest Wisconsin. As fire chief, Philip Stittleburg oversees a crew of 30 volunteer firefighters, who hold full-time jobs as farmers, managers, factory workers and business owners. The volunteer department has one fire station and protects 2,750 residents spread across 135 square miles (350 square kilometers). They respond to about 50 emergencies per year; vehicle collisions and fires make up the bulk of their calls.

Stittleburg said the fire department has the same number of volunteers and responds to about the same number of calls as it did when he joined 38 years ago.



courtesy of Philip Stittleburg

Chief Philip Stittleburg began driving fire trucks when he was in law school in 1972. Lawyering and fire fighting have been his life's pursuits since then.

## Volunteer Firefighting in the U.S.

- 86 percent of fire departments are all or mostly volunteer; they protect 39 percent of the population.
- Of the 1.15 million firefighters in the United States, 812,150 are volunteers.
- 94 percent of volunteer firefighters serve communities with fewer than 25,000 residents.
- There are 21,235 all volunteer and 4,830 mostly volunteer fire departments in the United States.
- Volunteer firefighters save local communities \$37.2 billion per year in taxes.
- 72 U.S. firefighters died in the line of duty in 2010; 44 were volunteers.

Another thing that hasn't changed is the commitment of volunteer firefighters. A sense of civic responsibility compels men and women to pull themselves out of bed for those 2 a.m. emergency calls.

"Most of them have the sentiment that you owe something back to your community," Stittleburg said. "The community takes care of you, nurtures you, and you owe something back. And there's a lot of satisfaction in being part of a team that is doing a hard job — a job that not everyone can do."

Stittleburg first volunteered for fire service as a part-time driver while attending law school. With firefighting in his blood, he joined the La Farge department in 1972 after graduating from law school; he was named chief five years later.

As a lawyer, Stittleburg worked as an assistant district attorney prosecuting criminal cases. He says both professions require fast decision-making often based on incomplete information or changing scenarios. If decisions prove wrong, the consequences can be dire, so trial lawyers and fire chiefs need to make back-up plans. Stittleburg says his time in the courtroom has made him a better fire chief, and the reverse is true as well. He recently retired from the district attorney's office, but remains a volunteer fire chief.

Stittleburg says he's witnessed some encouraging changes in both his department and in volunteer fire departments across the country. With the perspective he gained as an officer in the National Volunteer Fire Council, Stittleburg says there is now a much greater level of professionalism among volunteers, achieved through rigorous training. Unlike the first volunteer firefighters, today's volunteers do not have to buy all of their firefighting equipment.

### FINANCING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Most communities with volunteer fire departments set aside some tax money to buy and maintain protective equipment such as fire-resistant pants and coats, helmets, breathing air tanks and masks, and boots. Public money

**More than 85 percent of fire departments in the United States are staffed either fully or partially by volunteers. These volunteers, nearly 1 million in all, come from all walks of life.**

is also used to buy tools to fight fires and perform rescues. But the money a local government provides is often not enough to meet a fire department's needs. When that happens, volunteer firefighters sponsor community events to raise the additional money. For example, through



courtesy of Philip Stittleburg

La Farge firefighters direct a helicopter to land in a snowy field to transport a highway accident victim to a hospital.

activities like raffles and selling calendars, the La Farge volunteers raise as much as \$10,000 per year — 10 percent of the company’s annual budget — to buy additional fire and rescue equipment.

The federal government also plays a role in helping volunteer fire departments by issuing annual grants. When applying for a federal grant, a department must show that the equipment, such as a fire truck, is needed and also must commit to providing some of the money for the purchase. Stittleburg says he’s used such grants to buy fire trucks for La Farge. But even with the grants, many volunteer fire departments keep their vehicles running a long time.

“When I got here in 1972, we had two trucks: one was a 1957 International that was our first-line engine and the other was a 1939 Dodge,” Stittleburg said. Shortly after he became chief, Stittleburg’s department bought a 1972 fire engine. “Now, my second-line engine is that 1972 International; it’s older now than the 1939

was when I joined.” And that 1939 Dodge? It has been fully restored and is used as a showpiece in parades.

Ben Franklin, volunteer firefighter and diplomat, would be proud. ■

*Rick Markley volunteers as the media manager for the International Fire Relief Mission, which provides used fire and emergency services gear and training to developing countries. He is a volunteer firefighter and the former editor of Fire Chief magazine.*

## Firefighting: A Family Tradition



courtesy of Thad Stutler

Thad Stutler, volunteer fire chief in Dyer, Indiana, has family members who have been putting out fires and saving people for nearly a century. His great-great grandfather, Philip Keilman, joined the Dyer volunteer fire department in 1915.

**Dyer, Indiana, is a bedroom** community 64 kilometers south of Chicago. Its 16,000 residents are protected by a volunteer fire department led by a third-generation Dyer volunteer firefighter.

In December 1987, Thad Stutler, then 23 years old, joined Dyer’s volunteer fire department, fresh out of college with a nursing degree. In 1965, 22 years before, Stutler’s father, Gary, joined the same volunteer company, where he held all of the ranks in the department and served as chief for one year.

The origins of the family’s volunteer fire service go back to 1915 when Phillip Keilman, Thad Stutler’s maternal great-grandfather, joined the department. Keilman, who worked as a chemist for E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company (Dupont), was one of the original 19 members who formed a volunteer fire service to protect their town.

“I grew up hanging out at the firehouse,” Stutler said. In the 1960s and 1970s it was common for the volunteer fire department to be made up of those related by blood or marriage, he said. And those who weren’t related were as close as family.

Times have changed since Stutler learned to fight fires by tagging along after his father at the station. Now,

volunteer firefighters are required to take 1,000 hours of training when they join. And there are greater career demands, he said. Dyer’s staff of 31 volunteer firefighters responds not only to fires, rescues and vehicle crashes, but also to medical emergencies. The department answers more than 1,100 calls each year, with more than 80 percent of those being medical calls.

At home, Stutler and his wife have four children, none old enough to join the volunteer fire department. Like Stutler, the children have grown up around the fire service, whether it is manning a popcorn machine during the fire department open house or portraying accident victims during a training drill.

“They are already knowledgeable about firefighting and fire safety,” Stutler said. They’ve been taught how not to panic during stressful situations. But all of this grooming does not mean Stutler will push his children into the volunteer fire service. He still remembers the advice his father imparted to him as a young man.

“He told me not to join the department because he did, but join because I want to,” Stutler said. “And if I did join, do a good job; don’t take the place of someone else who would do it right.” ■

## Fighting Fires Beyond U.S. Borders



Ron Gruening/IFRM

The International Fire Relief Mission ships donated equipment to fire departments in foreign countries. A plumber in North Branch, Minnesota, donates the warehouse space to store the equipment before it is shipped.



Rick Markley/IFRM

Ron Gruening, left, teaches Honduran firefighters on Roatan Island how to strap on a breathing-air pack so they can enter a burning building.

**Americans' volunteerism in fighting fires** extends beyond the borders of the United States. Several U.S. nonprofit groups donate equipment and provide training to firefighters in developing countries. One such group is the International Fire Relief Mission (IFRM), whose volunteers often spend their own money to help firefighters overseas.

"When American fire departments buy new equipment, the gear that they replace still has a lot of life in it," said Ron Gruening, who is IFRM's president and a volunteer firefighter. "We send it to needy fire departments around the world, where it will keep those firefighters safer

and help them protect their citizens. We also spend time in those countries training their firefighters how to use the equipment and giving them basic firefighting instruction."

In February 2010, the IFRM team delivered equipment and training to the Honduran island of Roatán. There, IFRM found a young, dedicated group of firefighters using mismatched, badly worn protective clothing. The Roatán firefighters were in for a treat.

"We were fortunate to have come across a protective-clothing distributor who had a supply of never-used gear," Gruening says. "It was in perfect condition; we had to cut the tags off. It was available because U.S. standards are improved every few years, and this gear did not meet the new standard. The distributor was not allowed to sell it to U.S. fire departments, yet through his donation to IFRM, he was able to protect those Honduran firefighters."

IFRM focuses on helping fire departments with chronic funding problems. However, after a massive earthquake in Chile destroyed several fire stations in February 2010, the IFRM team sent out an urgent plea for help to U.S. fire departments. They were able to quickly collect, package, and ship gear to help restock Chile's fire departments. ■

Photo right: Citizens of Yucca Valley, California, express appreciation for their firefighters.

©AP Images/Reed Saxon



# It Takes a “Grandfather”

By Jeanne Holden



*Bernard Jones, the leader of the Alexandria, Virginia, Grandfathers Group, shows one of his protégés an attention-riveting website.*

©Louise Krafft



Bernard Jones, standing, leads a monthly meeting of the Alexandria, Virginia, Grandfathers and their protégés.

©Louise Krafft

NaVonté rushes into an old townhouse in Alexandria, Virginia. His brother DeShaun hurries in behind him. A few other African-American boys follow. They get hearty welcomes from Bernard Jones and several other African-American men inside. It is the first Saturday of the month, and Jones is hosting a meeting of the Grandfathers Group. Today's topic is career planning.

Sponsored by the Northern Virginia Urban League, the Grandfathers Group aims to promote the development of African-American boys ages 9 to 12 whose fathers are absent from the home. The Urban League, founded in 1910, helps African Americans to secure civil rights and become economically self-reliant.

The boys who join the Grandfathers Group are matched with African-American males, usually age 50 or older, to build one-on-one relationships based on trust. The Grandfathers offer their life experiences, knowledge, instincts and abilities to positively shape the character of African-American boys.

Since the program began in 1998, the Grandfathers have mentored 150 boys in Northern Virginia. Similar programs help boys in other urban areas of the United States. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, only 35 percent of African-American children in the United States live with two parents, compared to 78 percent of white, non-Hispanic children. Federal research shows that

fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of school and are at a greater risk of getting involved in crime or alcohol abuse than children of two-parent households. The Grandfathers Group aims to help boys who are growing up fatherless to avoid these consequences.

"It's good for African-American boys to meet African-American professionals outside their families and to see that they are responsible adults and good citizens," said Veronica Dean, NaVonté and DeShaun's mother. "My sons have little interaction with adult males, and the ones that they do come into contact with are typically not African American."

Veronica says her sons' perceptions of African-American men are tainted by TV shows in which they are often portrayed as homeless or as people involved with illegal drugs or crime.

The Alexandria, Virginia, couple James and Laverne Chatman created the Grandfathers Group in 1998. James, now deceased, understood the needs of fatherless boys firsthand because of his youth in a fatherless home. But his uncle helped him learn all that a father would have taught: how to fish, how to knot a tie, and how to be a gentleman. James, who was a successful businessman, wanted other fatherless boys to benefit from surrogates.

Tony Martin, 52 years old, has been a mentor for two years in Alexandria. He is matched with Ronald Clark, 12. "He's unique," Tony said. "I have great

conversations with him. We talk about sports and reading. I tell him about the civil rights movement."

Tony says that Ronald listens intently and follows his advice. Ronald, for his part, says the Grandfathers Group is very good. Ronald's mom says he loves it. Tony often visits Ronald at a local recreation center, and he attends many of Ronald's basketball games.

"I want to teach Ronald to take academics seriously, to keep an open mind when it comes to learning and to be a humble person," Tony said. "If he has any questions, I want him to feel free to ask them. I want him to be able to talk to me about anything."

A mentor can also help a fatherless boy keep from developing resentment about his life. One of the earliest Grandfathers, Melvin Miller, saw that boys who did poorly in school were often angry at not having a father at home, not being able to afford extras, or at having a mother who was rarely home. The Grandfathers Group paired Melvin

**"I want to teach Ronald to take academics seriously, to keep an open mind when it comes to learning and to be a humble person." Grandfather Tony Martin said about his 12-year-old protégé, Ronald Clark.**

with a boy who was beginning to slack off in school. His mother was a nurse and worked long hours.

"So I used to go by his house some evenings to talk to him," Melvin said. "He seemed not so resentful when he talked to me." Melvin proudly reports that the boy did well in school and entered a prestigious state university.

The Grandfathers program is "life changing" for both the boys and their mentors, said Laverne Chatman. "We have found that the mentors are learning better skills for their own grandchildren, have fewer health issues



Malcolm Murray, a dentist, shares his wisdom with a boy growing up without a father.

©Louise Krafft

because they are positively affecting some lives, and have a camaraderie with each other."

Grandfather mentors are expected to maintain at least four monthly contacts with the boys. At least two of the contacts have to be in person. "The personal touch is important," said Clyde Bassingale, a current Grandfather mentor. "Face-to-face contact teaches a boy how to deal with people."

Bassingale said that he and his young friend have gone bowling, had lunch at a pizza parlor and visited the National Museum of Natural History.

On the first Saturday of the month, the Grandfathers Group gathers for an activity that is attended by most of the mentor-mentee teams. At the career day event on this particular Saturday, a panel of six African-American professional men shared their memories and experiences preparing for their careers. Each panelist stressed the importance of doing well in school.

One, a dentist, pointed out that nobody succeeds every time and that the most important thing is to keep trying. Another panelist told the boys, "Look around you. All of us, your mentors and those of us on the panel, are here to show you that there are professional African-American men who care about you and your success." ■

*Jeanne Holden is a freelance writer in Northern Virginia and the author of Principles of Entrepreneurship.*



# Partners In Health: Listening Builds a Community

Lisa Armstrong

*Dr. Paul Farmer, co-founder of Partners In Health, listens to the heart beat of a young victim of the 2010 Haitian earthquake.*



PIH's American and Haitian volunteers worked side-by-side treating victims of the 2010 earthquake.

Within hours after the January 12, 2010, earthquake in Haiti, people of Partners In Health (PIH) started to arrive in Port au Prince to care for injured people caught in the rubble of collapsed buildings. First, the organization's Haitian doctors and staff arrived from towns around the country, including Cange, where Zanmi Lasante ("Partners In Health" in Haitian Creole) is headquartered.

In the first six months after the earthquake, 733 PIH volunteers from 26 U.S. states and six countries worked in Haiti. They set limbs, delivered babies, and treated tuberculosis, malaria and other illnesses. In tent city hospitals and makeshift clinics, Haitian and American doctors and nurses worked side by side.

PIH has provided health care in Haiti for more than 20 years, primarily in rural parts of the country. Today, the staff also are working in the camps that house more than 1 million displaced Haitians. Under green tents, in the blazing sun, they inoculate, offer prenatal checkups and treat basic ailments. "We were at some point seeing

5,000 to 7,000 people a week, and have seen over 100,000 people at the camps," said PIH's Donna Barry.

"Our goal was not to 'Americanize' our surroundings, but to augment the system in place during the emergency response," says Ed Arndt, a nurse practitioner at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, in a PIH blog post he wrote about his experience. "We were all there to provide direct care and emotional support to our patients."

#### SOLIDARITY: THE KEY TO SUCCESS

The notion of solidarity sets Partners In Health apart from many other charitable organizations. Their efforts have succeeded because they respect and listen to what the people in the impoverished communities want, rather than telling them what they need.

"One thing that was obvious, even in the 1980s, was that Haiti was a veritable graveyard of development projects, with lots of externally imposed programs," said Dr. Paul Farmer, who co-founded Zanmi Lasante with Haitian



Nurse practitioner Ed Arndt from Boston helping victims of the Haitian earthquake.

community leaders and Ophelia Dahl of Britain in 1983. Farmer and Dahl established Partners In Health in 1987.

"So PIH really started as a solidarity organization for Zanmi Lasante, which would be Haitian-run and employ Haitians," Farmer said. In addition to Haiti, PIH works with partner organizations and national health ministries in 11 other countries: Lesotho, the United States, the Dominican Republic, Kazakhstan, Guatemala, Burundi, Russia, Mexico, Rwanda, Peru, and Malawi.

Farmer first went to Haiti's Central Plateau in the spring of 1983 before starting his first year at Harvard Medical School. In the city of Mirebalais, he volunteered in a small clinic run by an Episcopal priest, the Reverend Fritz Lafontant. That's where Farmer and Dahl met.

Dahl was 18, and hadn't yet decided what she wanted to do with her life, so, at her family's suggestion, she went to Haiti to volunteer.

"I had never been to a developing country," Dahl said. "I grew up just outside London, had been to Europe and the United States, and had lovely, very forward-thinking parents, but had not witnessed real grinding poverty. It was extraordinary, and made an enormous impression. You couldn't turn away from the poverty; it was overwhelming."

Dahl and Farmer traveled to Cange, a small, destitute community of people left landless after construction of a dam flooded their homes and fields. The people were desperately poor, and did not have basic health care. Dahl and Farmer wanted to help. When Dahl returned to

England, she began collecting donations. The first was 500 British pounds from a supermarket executive she met at a dinner party. It purchased scales to weigh children.

Meanwhile, Farmer was envisioning a project that would provide health care on a larger scale. "It was a long-term vision. We would start by addressing something small, and partner with Father Lafontant," Dahl said.

#### LISTENING BUILDS A CLINIC

Dahl and Farmer trekked the dusty trails at Cange, asking the people what they needed most. "We'd stop at a terrible, dilapidated, cracked hut, and one of the kids would find a parent, who was hacking away at a dusty, postage stamp-sized piece of land, trying to grow maize," Dahl said. The response was almost always the same: They wanted a clinic.

It was the notion of working in partnership with the local community that inspired the

**It was the notion of working in partnership with the local community that inspired the organization's name: Zanmi Lasante/Partners In Health.**

organization's name: Zanmi Lasante/Partners In Health. Dahl and Farmer formed a team, which eventually included Farmer's college roommate, Todd McCormack; another Harvard medical student, Jim Yong Kim; and Boston businessman Tom White, who contributed millions of dollars to build PIH's first community-based health project in Cange.

"We started PIH in a squatter settlement," Farmer said. "There I met some of the people I work with to this day. And that's part of what makes PIH special. We are all still working together."

PIH's approach is holistic; the group provides food, schooling and other basic necessities in addition

to medical treatment. “We could have given people all the medicine in the world, but if they were going home to a place with no roof or access to water or food, they were going to die,” Dahl said. Today, children vaccinated through PIH efforts 20 years ago are healthy adults. Unlike most of their parents, they have had access to education, adequate diets and medical care.

Even after the 2010 earthquake, PIH has worked to provide more than emergency medical care.

“We’ve increased agricultural outputs,” Barry said. “We have a farm near Cange, and they immediately got to work growing corn crops, knowing that food needs would be high, as displaced people had moved out to the Central Plateau.” Working with Zanmi Agrikol (Haitian Creole for “Partners in Agriculture”), PIH ramped up production of Nourimanba, a peanut-based food, to fight malnutrition, and provided farming tools to more than 1,000 families.

Today, PIH staff and volunteers view their work in much the same way that Dahl and Farmer did when they were setting up the first clinic in Cange.

“Going to Haiti is extremely daunting, and it was very daunting back then,” Dahl said. “But the key is to focus on a small area where you can help, rather than saying ‘I am going to combat poverty’ or ‘reforest the whole of Haiti.’ It is about looking at long-term prospects, making partnerships and allegiances, and working together, through thick and thin.” ■

*Lisa Armstrong is a freelance writer who reported on the aftermath of the Haitian earthquake for the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.*



©Ron Haviv/VII/Corbis

Ophelia Dahl, co-founder of Partners In Health, listens to a Haitian woman stricken by the 2010 earthquake. Listening to local concerns is the key to the success of Partners In Health.



Photo Right: Haitian women sort peanuts to prepare *nourimanba*, a highly nutritious food. PIH helped Haitian farmers launch peanut cultivation and *nourimanba* production.

# Resettling in Seattle

Charlotte West



**People who fled conflict in their homelands find new lives in Seattle with the help of volunteers from the International Refugee Committee.**



photograph by Jonathan Dodds

Jared Meyers, second from left, and Reyna Swift, right, visit with the Liana family to help the new arrivals from Burma adjust to life in Seattle.

Six women sit around a table littered with sticky notes and pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that fit together into a map of the United States. Jennica Prescott, a volunteer with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), walks around the room asking if they can find Washington state on the map. They laugh as one of them tries to put Utah on the East Coast.

The IRC has been helping these women and their families from Bhutan to resettle in the Pacific Northwest. “It’s amazing to hear the paths of how they got here. The goal of the organization is to help refugees become self-sufficient,” Prescott says.

Founded in 1933, the IRC today works in 22 American cities, resettling refugees, and in more than 40 countries, places like Sudan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Burma, providing emergency assistance, education and health services. In 2010, the organization helped resettle 9,600 refugees in the U.S. and provided services to 24,500 refugees, asylum seekers and victims of human trafficking abroad.

The IRC office in Seattle has helped more than 18,000 refugees from more than 30 countries to resettle in the Puget Sound area since 1976. The majority of their clients come from Bhutan and Burma, with smaller groups from Somalia, Eritrea and Iraq.

Most of the IRC’s work in Seattle is carried out by about 200 volunteers who work on the administrative side as well as directly with refugees.

Volunteers become refugee mentors through the Friend of the Family program. Volunteers are paired with

families and meet with them weekly to help them adjust. They teach the families to use public transportation and help them practice English. Others teach classes on how to get a job or help young people deal with school.

The IRC volunteers span the age spectrum from college students and recent graduates to mid-career professionals and retirees. All are motivated by a desire to give back to society.

“I had been looking for ways to be involved in the community since I moved to Seattle. I really wanted to work with minority communities, especially those that were new to the U.S. because I missed having the cultural exchange that I had during the Peace Corps and other travels abroad,” says Tilden Keller, a former Peace Corps volunteer in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Keller mentors two families, one from Burma and the other from Eritrea. The Meh family of seven, part of the Karenni tribe of Burma, came to Seattle about a year and a half ago. They were farmers in their homeland before spending 10 years in a refugee camp in Thailand.

Keller says her relationship with the Meh family has evolved since she began working with them. In the beginning, she helped them with practical matters like hooking up the electricity for their apartment and setting up a bank account. Now she spends a lot of time just “hanging out” with them. On one particular visit she sits in their living room playing a game that resembles jacks.

Keller has a vivid memory of going to the local zoo, Woodland Park, with the Meh family. “When we got to the ‘Thai village,’ their eyes all lit up. The kids ran around

the house and told me about how each thing was just like home. I think that it was the first time they really felt connected back to their old life since they had arrived in the U.S.,” she says.

Reyna Swift and Jared Meyers, a couple, began working with the Lianas, a Burmese family of six, in September 2010. Swift and Meyers were looking to do something together that would have an immediate impact on the lives of others.

Meyers and Swift visit the family once or twice a week and occasionally go with them on excursions to the mall, the zoo or downtown Seattle. A typical visit might include encouraging the family practice English, talking about daily difficulties, and playing games.

“I remember the first time we met with the family. We brought along an UNO [card] game. After we began playing, Jared and I realized that we had each given the family different sets of rules. After several games, our frustration began to slip away,” Swift laughs.

The Liana family are members of the Chin, a Christian minority in Burma. In Seattle, they attend a Burmese church, which recently celebrated Chin National Day, and Swift and Meyers went with them that day.

“They face daunting challenges in their adjustment to life in the U.S. but still remain positive and very strong as a family unit. Each time I visit, I am impressed with the way the family works together as a unit,” says Meyers.



photograph by Jonathan Dodds

This young mother, who fled ethnic conflict in Burma with her child, contemplates a more peaceful future in Seattle.

**Volunteers are paired with families to help them adjust. They teach the families to use public transportation and help them practice English. Others teach classes on how to get a job or help young people deal with school.**

Volunteering with the IRC has helped Alyssa Loos, a student at the University of Washington, figure out her own priorities. She teaches an advanced class of English as a second language once a week at the IRC headquarters in downtown Seattle.

“This volunteer experience made me sure that I want to be a teacher,” she says.

One morning, she teaches an employment class to two men from Iraq. “Tasks could be preparing food, cleaning windows or washing dishes,” she says.

Loos brings her own experience of studying Arabic into her teaching. For instance, using traditional sayings like “Insha’Allah” (“God Willing”) and writing her name on the white board in Arabic were big hits with her students. “It breaks down the barrier when I show that I’m learning a language too,” she explains. “They are so grateful and work so hard.” ■

*Charlotte West is a freelance writer based in Seattle and an adjunct professor of history at Seattle University.*

# Beyond Profit: IBM's Volunteers

By Kathryn McConnell



*IBM's corporate volunteers are introducing new technologies that will shape Indonesia's future.*

courtesy of Janice Fratamico, IBM Corporate Service Corps



courtesy of Mathian Osicki & Lisa Lanspery, IBM Corporate Communications

Computer technology skills taught by IBM volunteers have boosted the effectiveness of health education in Nigeria. Here, a health educator conducts a workshop in Nigeria's Cross River State for a class of attentive students, except for the little one on the back row.

Work in the private sector means more than helping a company turn a profit. It means contributing to communities.

That's why in 2008 computer giant International Business Machines Corp. (IBM) started its Corporate Service Corps linking its employees to governments and nonprofit organizations in developing countries. It is part of a new era of international volunteerism.

Based in Armonk, New York, IBM spends \$60 million a year on the corps. "It's at the intersection of technology, economic development and job creation," said Stanley Litow, IBM's vice president of corporate citizenship. Since the program began, IBM has sent some 1,400 of its employees to work on projects in about 50 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Litow said that's more than any other company doing pro bono work in the developing world.

The Corporate Service Corps enables IBM to identify and train its next generation of skilled leaders while helping developing nations solve pressing problems, Litow said. "This is a model that increasingly other companies will be emulating."

The program offers a triple benefit, Litow said: technical assistance for the communities it serves, a chance for employees to hone their leadership and technical skills, and inroads for new markets.

Teams consisting of six to 12 employees with skills in technology, science, marketing, finance or business development immerse themselves in places like Cross River State, Nigeria; Chiang Mai, Thailand; and Johannesburg for up to one month while developing solutions to local challenges. "They are providing those skills to make a real difference," Litow said.



courtesy of IBM

This healthy child brings a beautiful smile to her mother's face. IBM's corporate volunteers in Nigeria have chosen health care as a target for their service.

Team members come from IBM locations around the world. They have 2 1/2 months of preparation before they leave home, meeting with fellow team members via phone, over the Internet and in person. They receive information about project goals and their host country's culture.

The Johannesburg team was asked to recommend ways to use information technology to improve the city's public safety infrastructure. "Public safety is so linked to economic development and livability," Litow said. "The project required people with expertise in safety, software development, business processes, government, law and finance."

Ron Dombroski, an IBM marketing executive, went to Johannesburg as part of the six-member team that included colleagues from India, Brazil and the United

States. He said the team proposed a five-year plan calling for installing security cameras to deter crime and aid emergency workers and adapting mobile terminals like smart phones to provide maps of the locations of fire hydrants and power switches to aid firefighters responding to emergency calls.

### BEGINNING A RELATIONSHIP

Another IBM team went to Nigeria and worked on a health care project for pregnant women and young children in remote villages in Cross River State. The IBM team networked each clinic into a cloud computing environment, with fingerprint reader cards to ensure that medical records for each mother and child are accurate and complete. That gave doctors quick access to information needed to make good decisions. (In cloud computing, an organization rents excess server capability from another entity, freeing it from the need to acquire its own data center.)

With IBM's help, the Cross River State health project expanded the number of people it served from 1,000 to 20,000 in a short time, Litow said.

In Jakarta, the Corporate Service Corps is helping to improve the city's transportation system. In Chiang Mai, an IBM team is working on an information system that will help the city expand its health tourism industry. In Cebu, Philippines, corps members are helping officials develop a land-use plan.

The idea of corporate volunteerism is catching on with companies like Dow Corning, PepsiCo, Novartis and John Deere, which are looking at IBM's model, Litow said. IBM is also working with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and CDC Development Solutions, a consulting firm, to build a website for international corporate volunteerism where companies can share information about their programs.

"If businesses share their skills and knowledge with governments and people of the developing world, we'll all be better off," Litow said. ■

*Kathryn McConnell is a staff writer with the State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs.*



©St. Petersburg Times/Gail Diederich/The Image Works

A desire to share knowledge with strangers from distant lands animates many American volunteers. Many U.S. senior citizens volunteer as tutors and mentors to schoolchildren.

## Additional Resources on Volunteerism

### Websites

**America's Promise: The Alliance for Youth**  
<http://www.americaspromise.org>



**International Rescue Committee**  
<http://www.rescue.org>



**Corporation for National and Community Service**  
<http://www.nationalservice.gov>



**National Volunteer Fire Council**  
<http://www.nvfc.org>



**Habitat for Humanity International**  
<http://www.habitat.org>



**The UNV Online Volunteering Service**  
<http://www.onlinevolunteering.org/en/index.html>



### Videos

#### Volunteer Vacations: Rebuilding New Orleans

<http://www.youtube.com/americanagov#p/search/2lo7rX-VzeOEM>



For Americans, leisure isn't just a time to relax; it can also be a time to come to the aid of others. And many Americans feel a special responsibility to help the people of New Orleans who were devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2008.

#### Playing Midnight Basketball

<http://www.youtube.com/americanagov#p/search/3/FAO89Gis6nw>



An inner-city program in Richmond, Virginia, teaches the value of hard work and cooperation giving at-risk youth hope for the future.

#### Youth Volunteers

<http://www.youtube.com/americanagov#p/search/0/2LNcp0PyFpo>



Students and teachers talk about the value and benefit of helping others in their schools, the local community and around the world. The speakers are students and teachers at West Springfield High School, a secondary school in Northern Virginia.

#### Walking to End Hunger

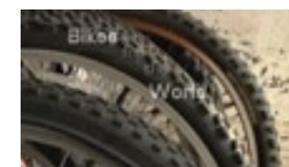
<http://www.youtube.com/americanagov#p/search/1/N800T5w-4js>



The annual Hartford Walk Against Hunger is the largest fundraiser dedicated to fighting hunger and malnutrition in the state of Connecticut. Each year, secular and religious groups join together to raise money.

#### Bikes for the World

<http://www.youtube.com/americanagov#p/search/2/g91-rEtYUBU>



A bicycle can give someone the opportunity to get to work or school or start a business. American volunteers for Bikes for the World collect used bicycles and ship them to developing countries where they make a dramatic improvement in people lives.

#### GlobalGiving Fundraising Efforts for Japan

<http://www.youtube.com/americanagov#p/u/140/QeWP40L7IB8>



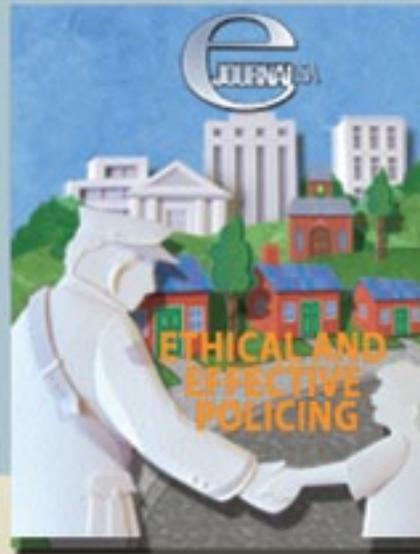
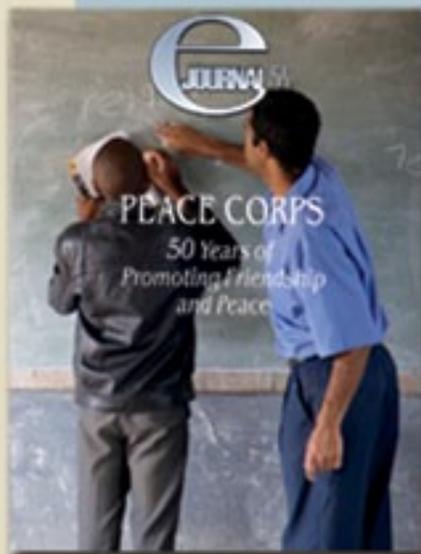
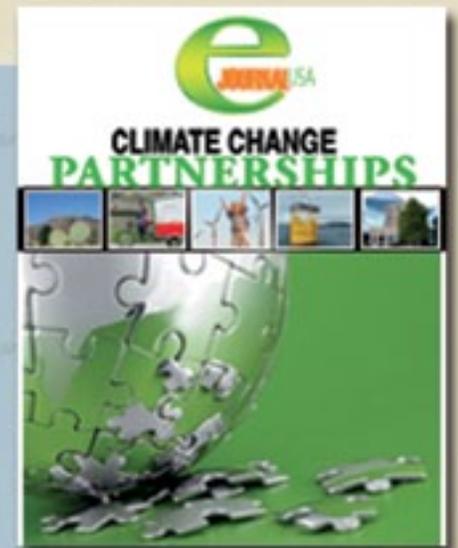
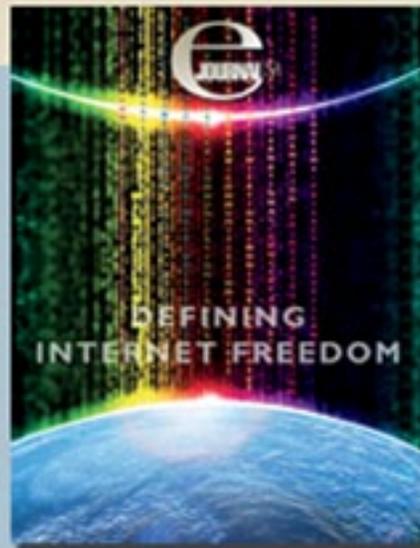
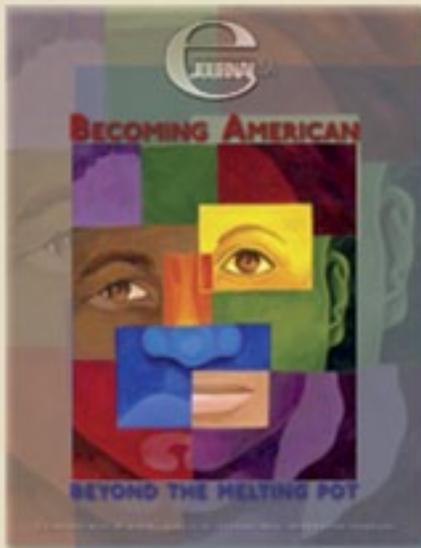
Mari Kuraishi—Co-Founder and President of GlobalGiving—speaks about the fundraising efforts being coordinated by her non-profit organization in support of Japan.

*The U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and availability of the resources listed above. All Internet links were active as of December 2011.*



JOIN US ON  
**facebook**

[facebook.com/eJournalUSA](https://facebook.com/eJournalUSA)



Монгол English 中文 Français Português 한국어 Українська 日本語  
Türkçe Tiếng Việt Pashto Urdu یسراف یبرع Русский Español



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS