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Volunteerism Is Vital to the Success of Public Broadcasting

by Dorothy Pacella - WNET

The key measure for success in a not-for-profit media is the depth and breadth of relationships within a community. Public broadcasting volunteers are a dedicated corps of advisors for their local stations as well as the system as a whole. They are the essential link to a local community, basically reflecting a community's talents and resources.

Friends of Public Broadcasting (NFPB) is the premier national organization for volunteer development and supporting resources in the public broadcasting system. It is the central link between communities, stations and volunteers.

The NFPB Volunteer Leadership Summit held on October 1, 2003 in Denver, facilitated by Kay Sprinkel Grace, is a prime example of the depth and strength of the National Friends of Public Broadcasting. With financial support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, NFPB took a very important step in the reinvention process of the organization – to seek input from public broadcasting station volunteers and volunteer managers. To have the ability to bring together the coordinators, those who train and facilitate volunteers locally, along with key executive volunteers from public television stations across the country is the mission of NFPB.

At this historical one day summit, NFPB learned from 35 coordinators and volunteer leaders, (26 public television stations were represented, depicting different size markets and type of licensees) that volunteers are making a significant contribution to stations by their participation in on-air auction, fundraising, advocacy, outreach and day-to-day clerical duties. Coordinators listened and heard from industry leaders about the challenges facing stations today knowing full well that own stations have been forced to make serious cutbacks and have relied more heavily on the services of volunteers.

The consensus of the group is that volunteers can play an active role in a major gifts program. Several stations have a major gifts program in place with board members / volunteers working along with staff. The Summit validated that stations whose trustees and Friends' board members are called upon to help solicit a potential major donor have a very successful major gifts program.

A public television volunteer was identified as: board chairman, board member, trustee, lay representative; staff assistant, pledge producer; tour director, event planner, auction manager, grassroots advocate, and more. Not only do volunteers provide essential daily clerical assistance but they serve as leaders on station governing boards, advisory boards, and Friends boards. They serve on station government affairs committees, development committees, planned giving committees and business advisory committees. They are public television station ambassadors, taking public broadcasting's important message into the community.

(Continued on Page 2)

It's not too late to join us at the 2004 PBS DevCon in Orlando for workshops especially designed for volunteers and coordinators of volunteer programs. See Page 4 for details.

SPONSOR STATIONS 2003-04

Alabama PTV/Birmingham AL • AETN/Conway AR • Friends of KOCE/Huntington Beach CA • Friends of Thirteen/ New York • Friends of South Dakota PTV/Vermillion SD • KAMU/College Station TX • KCPT/Kansas City MO • KET—The Kentucky Network/ Lexington KY • KLVX/Las Vegas NV • KRWG-TV/Las Cruces NM • Lakeland PTV/Bemidji MN • Maine Public Broadcasting/Lewiston ME • Mississippi Broadcasting Network/ Jackson MS • Rocky Mountain PBS/Denver CO • Thirteen WNET/New York • W Virginia PTV/Morgantown WV • WCTE-TV/Cookeville TN • WETA/Arlington VA • WFYI/Indianapolis IN • WBGU/Bowling Green OH • WGCU/Fort Myers FL • WNIN/Evansville IN • WOSU/Columbus OH • WTTW/Chicago IL

From DevCon/Denver

Bea Brasel (WQPT) writes: “I really liked your brainstorming sessions. I was especially interested in Volunteer Coordinators who come from smaller stations. I learned many creative ideas on how to retain and get new volunteers. There is a wealth of knowledge out there in the PBS world. “ You may not be able to do the million dollar events that big stations can do, but you can take those ideas and scale them down to fit your station. There is something for everyone at the brainstorming sessions. Join us in Orlando and find out!

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National Friends of Public Broadcasting

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Back by popular demand . . .

Remember the unique pins sold by NFPB and RMPBS at our NFPB booth in Denver? They were such a hit that NFPB will once again be offering special pins to buy for personal use, to re-sell as station or volunteer program fund raisers, to give as special recognition gifts.

There will be three designs (all with an HDTV look):

- generic PBS pin
- PBS Volunteer pin
- commemorative Orlando pin

Stop by the NFPB booth to see the pins. Buy one, buy 100+ or anything in between. Ron Ackerman, RMPBS Volunteer Extraordinaire, will be on hand to take bulk orders for your station needs. See you in Orlando!

Don't Know Much About NFPB? The National Friends of Public Broadcasting is a support system for volunteers and coordinators of volunteer programs. *Join NFPB to connect with others who share your concerns and problems...and have solutions!* Membership levels are Individual (\$50), Friend of NFPB (\$100), and Sponsor (\$250). To request a membership application and for further information, contact Pam Smart, NFPB Membership Chair. E-mail: psmart@mpbc.org. Phone: 207-783-9101



Volunteerism is vital . . . continued

Here are some of the best practices of volunteers enhancing the value of their local stations in major gifts, outreach, and advocacy:

- **Friends' Board Members** represent diverse professions and civic interests and have strong ties to the community. Their influential standing in the community and the other organizations that they serve is a major plus for station. They have fundraising experience. Working together with the development staff they are able to identify other successful business leaders in the community as a possible revenue source.
- **Volunteers in State and Federal Advocacy** – volunteers along with the GM participate in APTS annual Capitol Hill Day to visit their MC. This is a major role for volunteers because volunteers are constituents, voters and are passionate about their station and public television.
- **Volunteers in Planned Giving** – Friend's board members who have made a Legacy Society gift to the station are asked to sign a letter inviting other board members and colleagues to do the same.
- **Volunteers in Major Gifts** – Friend's board members are asked to review lapsed patron (\$1000+) members to identify who they may know. A letter will then go out to the lapsed donor with a note attached from the board member. Board members also review foundation lists for input.
- **Patron Video Lending Library** – volunteer and donor relationship building for the station. Through telephone contact and meeting at station events, patrons become more connected with the station and feel that they are part of the family. Volunteers are also instrumental in renewing the lapsed patron.
- **Patron Travel Program** – executive volunteers works closely with the Events staff to plan national and international group excursions for patrons. The volunteer coordinates with tour specialists, secures print and on-air promotion and responds to patron inquiries.
- **Station Tour Program** – “Take The Station Out In to the Community” – volunteers offer this service to organizations, corporations and institutions. Tours are given at the station or the volunteers go directly to groups in libraries, conference centers, clubs and senior cents talking about public television.
- **Station Gift Shops** – maintain a small in-house store for staff and volunteer with logo items, videos, DVD and books. This store is not open to the public. Executive volunteers assist in researching new inventory and staff the shop.
- **Volunteers in Customer Service** – With special training volunteers assist in fielding telephone calls throughout the day, entering caller information, requests, suggestions, or complaints into the computer. Volunteers also assist in opening and answering viewer mail. Training for volunteers is essential in the customer service and an area in which volunteers are playing a key role and freeing up staff.
- **Membership – Thankathon** – provides volunteers with an opportunity to interact with donors in a conversation that is not about money. Volunteers are comfortable with this type of call and they have an opportunity to learn more about the donor. The donors are pleased and surprised to receive a call after they have made their contribution. This is about relationship building and moving the donor to the next level.

The 2003 NFPB Volunteer Leadership Summit validated for the Board of Trustees that there is an important role for a national volunteer organization in public broadcasting and that NFPB is that organization. NFPB is the only national organization that has been bringing volunteers and volunteer managers together to share best practices, to be a part of the larger public television family, to thank them and give them the tools and support that they need to do an even greater job at their station. After taking part in the Volunteer Leadership Summit, PBS DevCon and the NFPB workshops, the volunteers and volunteer managers returned home with ideas and enthusiasm to **BE MORE** and to **DO MORE** for their stations and themselves.



News from our stations . . .

Milwaukee 10/36 - Over 500 travel aficionados gathered Saturday, March 13 in the historic theater of Milwaukee Public Library's Centennial Hall to hear PBS travel host and writer Rick Steves talk about smart travel. Accompanied by a wonderful visual presentation of sights and experiences across Europe, Mr. Steves highlighted the societal gain of cultural exchange.



Presented by the Channel 10/36 Friends for the benefit of Milwaukee Public Television, the lecture was preceded by a special luncheon attended by members of the Friends major giving societies. Mr. Steves greeted throughout providing answers to Friends members' personal travel questions.

In addition to his lecture presentation, Mr. Steves was interviewed by Milwaukee Public Television's program host, Jim Peck, for a segment of *I Remember*. So impressed by the quality and professionalism of this program taping, Mr. Steves will now include this interview on all future issues of his travel videos and DVDs.

From our beginnings

Jan Mitchell, one of the founding members of NFPB, reflected on the archived historical facts about the founding of the National Friends of Public Broadcasting:

"It (the report) doesn't indicate the almost impossible task the Friends were asked to accomplish. The Carnegie Foundation, with Eli Evans in charge, made a five year commitment of fund sfor the development of volunteer groups for local public TV stations. What a can of worms it was for the formative committee!

The diversity of stations - large community, smaller community outlets, networks, colleges and schools - all with different goals and restrictions - some needed fund raising, others community outreach, high school and college classes - you name it. Some managers had strong antipathy for volunteers - fear of takeover.

Now add to that the thousands of miles separating the various stations. What would be the differences in methods of setting up an organization this unique? Should different stations with the same backgrounds and interests meet together? Should regional meetings be the plan? What type of conference would benefit everyone? How could men become involved at the local level? What about minorities? These were just a few of our questions.

With no prime examples from anywhere around the

Indianapolis WFYI - Suffice it to say, the Indianapolis 500 is an event of some significance and magnitude. Rabid racing fans have been flocking to Crossroads of America in droves for nearly 90 years to experience the greatest spectacle in racing.

And although I wasn't actually aware of this fact until very recently, folks also come from far and wide to run in a little race called the 500 Festival Mini Marathon. Indeed, there is more to the month of May than the thundering engine.

Well, as the name properly implies, the Mini isn't quite an entire marathon. Race participants impressively walk/jog/run/roll the 13.1 miles through the streets of downtown Indianapolis to the finish line at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

And like any good Hoosier, I've always enjoyed the electricity the race brings this great city. But let me not mince words, my friends. *I'm by no means a runner and I'm not particularly fond of getting out of bed before 5 a.m.* I am, however, a fan of Indianapolis' great WFYI.

So that is why I woke up groggy and disoriented a few weeks ago in order to find my way to a little water station on 10th street where I would fill little paper cups with water.

Oh, and fill we did. We filled little paper cup after little paper cup and we stacked them several rows high. We spent hours building our paper cup castles and once they were complete, the fleet of hard working volunteers stepped back to admire the work. "We have done a fine job," is what we told ourselves. We slapped one another on the back and gave congratulations for a job well done.

And then the runners came. And away our water went. Volunteers filled and filled at an incomparable pace. Water was flying in every direction. It was hot. Things got hectic. Things got crazy.

And in the midst of this chaos, I quickly realized we were having more fun than I could have ever imagined.

Written by WFYI Volunteer Alec Brinegar

country, I think the group did a remarkable job in selecting subjects for our first conference (held in New York). Selected were workshops on how to start a volunteer group, fund raising (at that time auctions were the big deal), community outreach, problems with volunteers, exchange of information between representatives. In addition several celebrities spoke encouraging words and added glamour to the event.

Were there mistakes and problems? Of course! With all expenses paid, many attended who were more interested in shopping and sightseeing. But I hope you realize what a remarkable job we have done. We've overcome difficulties and created public broadcasting volunteerism across the country.

Maybe we have "out-succeeded" ourselves by making stations self-sufficient to the point that many have staff leadership and don't need volunteers leaders as much any longer. So here's a pat on the back to all of us! Be proud!"

Thanks, Jan, for sharing this reflection from our past!

DevCon/NFPB at a glance . . .

Development Conference ~ 2004 September 29-October 2 ~ Orlando, Florida

Schedule

Wed 9/29	4-5:30 pm 6-8 pm	NFPB Welcome Reception Opening Reception
Thu 9/30	7:30 am 8:30 am 11:00 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm 3:45 pm 6:00 pm 7:30 pm 9:00 pm	Continental Breakfast General Session NFPB Board Meeting Roundtable Lunch Getting the Most from Your Board & Volunteers NFPB Annual Meeting Reception NFPB/PBS Awards Hospitality Suites
Fri 10/1	7:30 am 8:30 am 10:00 am 11:45 am 1:45 pm 3:00 pm 5:00 pm	Continental Breakfast General Session NFPB Brainstorming with Volunteer Coordinators CPB hosted Lunch NFPB Volunteers 101* Concurrent Sessions Evening on your own Magic Kingdom
Sat 10/2	7:30 am 8:30 am 10:30 am Noon 5:30 pm 6:30 pm 9:00 pm	Continental Breakfast General Session NFPB Special Events Brainstorming Lunch Pre-Banquet Reception Closing Banquet Closing Reception

Registration

NFPB Volunteers are eligible for reduced registration rate of \$360 for the PBS Development Conference.

To take advantage of the NFPB rate for DevCon, you should register by either faxing or mailing your registration form to Kitty Conners (Conference Chair) at KIXE, 604 N. Market St., Redding CA 96003 (Fax 530-243-7443). If you have questions, e-mail Kitty at Kitty_Conners@kixe.pbs.org.

For a registration form, contact Pam Smart, Maine Public Broadcasting (psmart@mpbc.org) or by phone at 207-783-9101).

NOTE: This special rate is not available via the on-line registration form. The on-line site only allows for PBS members (\$560) and nonmembers (\$995).

Housing

Housing is at the Orlando World Center Marriott (\$159 for single/ double - call 800-621-0638 (mention PBS DevCon). Deadline is August 27, 2004 although the block of special rate rooms may fill before that date.



NFPB/DEVCON Workshops designed to help volunteers and coordinators of volunteer programs:

Brainstorming with Experienced Volunteer Coordinators

Take advantage of over 400 years of experience offered by the members of National Friends of Public Broadcasting. Join our round-table discussions on a variety of volunteer management topics. We'll also have an open question session to be sure that we address everyone's concerns. So bring your questions – we'll get you the answers!

Special Events Brainstorming

Looking for something fun or a whole new approach? Don't recreate the wheel – join our award winning special event coordinators in this creative session. We will share information, evaluate events, explore ideas that might work at your station and help you avoid potential disasters!

Volunteers 101

The 3 Rs of volunteer management are *recruitment*, *retention* and *reward*. If you are new to the business of volunteer management, need to polish your skills or rejuvenate a tired program, join us for this crash course. We'll give you tips, direction and support.