



1700's

1800's

1900's

1930's

1940's

1950's

1960's

1970's

1980's

1990's

2000's



Volunteer Centers: A History of America



POINTS
OF LIGHT
FOUNDATION
&
VOLUNTEER CENTER
NATIONAL NETWORK



Volunteering has a long and proud history in America. Our roots in service extend all the way back to the first colonies, when volunteers provided for others in times of strife. From the very beginning of our nation, in wartime, times of tragedy and times of need, Americans have banded together to help each other.

Volunteer Centers have long been the link between volunteers and service opportunities. Their history extends back to the first Volunteer Bureau in Minneapolis, MN in 1919. Over the years, the mission of Volunteer Centers has evolved from simply matching volunteers with volunteer opportunities to serving as a comprehensive community resource for positive change.

Volunteer Centers mobilize people and resources to deliver creative solutions to community

problems. By serving as leaders in volunteer recruitment, management, outreach, and community problem solving, Volunteer Centers have become the central agents for creating change within their communities.

The vision of the Volunteer Center National Network is to strengthen the nation by igniting volunteering and social action through Volunteer Centers in local communities. Reaching 170 million people in thousands of cities, this Network connects nearly 2.5 million people with over half a million opportunities to serve annually. Each Volunteer Center is not only defined by its own community - but also as part of a larger, sweeping movement for social change. The future of volunteering calls on us to expand this valuable service to our nation.

1700's

1736
Benjamin Franklin began the first volunteer firefighting company.

1775 – 1783
Revolutionary War volunteers organized boycotts of British products and collected funds for the war.

1800's

1830's
The Great Awakening leads students to community work through various religious groups.

1857
First university-based YMCA is founded at the University of Michigan.

1861 – 1865
Ladies' Aid Societies are created to make bandages, shirts, towels, bedclothes, uniforms, and tents for the Civil War.

1881
American Red Cross is established by Clara Barton.

1887
First United Way organization is founded in Denver, CO to plan and coordinate local charitable services.

1900's

1910
Rotary Club is founded.

1916
Kiwanis Club and Lions Club are founded.

1918
American Association for Community Organizations, the predecessor to the national United Way, is formed.

1919
Bureau of Volunteer Service founded in Minneapolis, MN to mobilize those released from war service, is the first Volunteer Bureau in America.

1930's

1930's

Great Depression led to creation of volunteer-based activities including soup kitchens and bread lines.

1932

National Committee on Volunteers is formed to address the overwhelming demands of the Depression.

1933

Civilian Conservation Corps is formed by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Renewing the nation's decimated forests and employing millions of young men, the Conservation Corps planted an estimated 3 million trees between 1933 and 1942.

National Committee on Volunteers becomes an associate group of the National Conference of Social Work, which is charged with addressing the overwhelming demands of society: unemployment, poverty, and the social turmoil of the Great Depression. The group encourages volunteering and sponsors the creation of Volunteer Bureaus.

By the end of the decade, Volunteer Bureaus exist in 28 cities, including St. Louis, Boston, and Indianapolis.

1940's

1941

Office of Civilian Defense is formed to organize civilian support for World War II efforts.

National Committee on Volunteers suspends operations due to World War II.

Volunteer Bureaus in 50 cities become part of the newly formed Defense Councils. The Councils help organize, recruit, and train volunteers for wartime programs such as Rationing, Recruiting Offices, USO, Hostesses, War Emergency, Nursery Schools and War Savings.

1943

4,300 civil defense volunteer offices operate nationwide to recruit volunteers for defense-related activities.

1944

Association of Junior Leagues of America and the Community Chests and Councils of America (forerunners of the United Way) jointly finance a study of postwar plans to mobilize volunteers.

1945

The Office of Civilian Defense is disbanded.

The Advisory Committee on Citizen Participation is formed by Community Chests and Councils of America with National Social Welfare Assembly.

1950's

1950

Volunteer Bureaus exist in 81 cities across the United States and Canada.

1951

National Association of Volunteer Bureaus is formed, creating a network of volunteer bureaus. It offers training in volunteer management, develops standards of excellence for volunteer programs, and promotes volunteering in local communities.

The first national meeting of Volunteer Bureaus is held in Atlantic City.

1960's

1960

The American Association for Volunteer Services Coordinators (AAVSC) is formed.

1961

The Peace Corps is created by President Kennedy.

The Minneapolis Bureau of Volunteer Service hosts the convention of the National Association of Volunteer Bureaus.

1964

The War on Poverty becomes the beginning of several national service programs, including Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), the Job Corps, the Neighborhood Youth Corps and College Work Study Program.

1965

Michigan Governor George Romney meets with the Michigan State University Jim Tanck Campus Program and sees the potential for volunteering.

1969

President Nixon forms the Cabinet Committee on Voluntary Action, led by George Romney, then Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. The committee's service arm, The Office of Voluntary Action (OVA), conducts a nationwide study of volunteer resources and potential, and then concludes that a national, non-governmental structure is needed for volunteering.

The end of this decade marks the beginning of state-level volunteer offices. Washington State establishes the first Governor's Office of Volunteerism; Michigan and Illinois soon follow suit.

1970's

1970

In response to the OVA survey, the National Center for Voluntary Action (NCVA) is established. Henry Ford II chairs the first board of directors; President Nixon is honorary chair.

NCVA launches a major nationwide program to foster the development of Voluntary Action Centers, as local leadership organizations, to help people meet local needs through voluntary efforts. Major financial support comes from the Ford Foundation and the Federal government. The name "Volunteer Bureau" is changed to "Voluntary Action Center" nationally to convey a new image of doing. A national heart-shaped logo is developed and distributed.

1975

AAVSC changes its name to the Association for Administration of Volunteer Services (AAVS).

1976

The National Center for Voluntary Action sponsors the national Congress on Volunteerism and Citizenship in recognition of the Bicentennial of the United States.

1977

Jimmy Carter establishes the Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC).

The Association of Voluntary Action Scholars (AVAS) and the Association of Volunteer Bureaus (AVB) hold the first collaborative conference. AAVS and AVB join AVAS as co-publishers of VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION, the forerunner of the Journal of Volunteer Administration.

1979

The Association for Administration of Volunteer Services (AAVS) changes its name to the Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA).

The National Center for Voluntary Action merges with the National Information Center on Volunteerism in Boulder, CO. Together, they become VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement.

1980's

1983

More than 25 different names for Volunteer Centers are used across the country.

1986

Of the 380 Volunteer Centers that exist, 226 are members of the National Volunteer Center; 115 are internal divisions of the United Way; 90% of all other Centers receive a portion of their funding from United Way; 70% are independent; 20% operate as divisions or programs of a local United Way.

The 380 Volunteer Centers are in 94 of the 100 largest metropolitan areas. Together, they reach roughly 60% of the American population, referring or placing an estimated 500,000 volunteers per year. Volunteer Centers meet in 20 states on a regular basis.

International Volunteer Centers are also expanding rapidly, including 84 in Canada, 290 in Great Britain, 200 in Holland, 35 in France, and Centers in Hong Kong, Japan, Australia.

125 Volunteer Centers attend the annual National Conference.

1990's

150 Volunteer Centers are involved in special national demonstration projects, involving national grants from private foundations or government agencies.

1987

New York Cares launches the CityCares program model, creating volunteer opportunities geared toward young professionals.

1989

President George H.W. Bush creates a three-part strategy to make community service a national policy of the highest priority. He uses the phrase “a thousand points of light” in his speeches to emphasize the need for action.

The Daily Points of Light Award is established.

The Volunteer Center Development Project is proposed by the National Volunteer Center and funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

1990

In response to President Bush’s call to action, the Points of Light Foundation is created as an independent, non-partisan, nonprofit organization to encourage and empower the spirit of service.

1991

The Points of Light Foundation’s Youth Outreach program develops Youth Engaged in Service (YES) Ambassadors, engaging youth in community service.

The Points of Light Foundation merges with the National Volunteer Center.

1992

The Partnership for National Service is formed to develop private support for national and community service.

A Kellogg Foundation grant to study family volunteering leads to the creation of the Family Matters program through the Points of Light Foundation, encouraging families to volunteer together.

The President’s Community Volunteer

Awards are created, selecting 20 citizens from 3,500 applications to receive awards in a White House ceremony.

The Points of Light Foundation’s Seasons of Service campaign encourages episodic service.

CityCares is established as a national umbrella organization to expand the CityCares model of volunteering and provide a national network for sharing resources.

1993

Former Michigan Governor George Romney inspires the first national Volunteer Center meeting to develop a common vision to solve social problems. 294 Volunteer Centers meet at 17 regional meetings and one summit meeting.

President Clinton begins AmeriCorps, a national service movement engaging Americans in service to address the nation’s most critical problems.

The Awards for Excellence in Community Service are established through the Points of Light Foundation.

1994

VC 2000: Volunteer Center teams (280 in total) meet nationwide to develop individual community plans that help implement their new shared vision: “to mobilize people and resources to deliver creative solutions to community problems.”

1995

The first Capacity Builder Institute is held for 30 Volunteer Centers in leadership, collaboration, diversity, and marketing for VC2000.

The first Start-Up Academy is held for 20 communities who are starting Volunteer Centers of the future. They become the models for new Volunteer Centers that incorporate the new vision.

1996

The Points of Light Foundation’s Connect America partnership is developed.

The Points of Light Foundation’s Prudential Youth Leadership Institute is developed to train high school-aged youth to make meaningful, lifelong contributions to their communities.

1997

The Partnership for National Service merges with the Points of Light Foundation. Its Service as a Strategy Initiative grants \$2 million in Ford Foundation funding.

The Presidents’ Summit for America’s Future is held. Presidents Clinton, Bush, Carter and Ford, and First Lady Nancy Reagan (for President Reagan) attend the summit. Thirty governors, 100 mayors, 145 community delegations, and 5,000 concerned citizens also attend.

America’s Promise, chaired by Colin Powell, is launched to honor the Five Promises for Children and Youth created during the summit.

1998

The Corporation for National and Community Service, the Points of Light Foundation and the Volunteer Center National Network partner on three national service programs: the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), AmeriCorps*VISTA Literacy Connection, and AmeriCorps Promise Fellows.

The Corporation for National and Community Service joins the Points of Light Foundation as a sponsor of the National Volunteer Conference.

The Points of Light Foundation and Volunteer Centers nationwide form the Points of Light Foundation and the Volunteer Center National Network.

During National Volunteer Week, the Points of Light Foundation and the Volunteer Center National Network launch 1-800-VOLUNTEER, a national toll-free hotline that connects volunteers to service opportunities through their local Volunteer Centers.

1999

The Points of Light Foundation partners with the White House Office of National Service to develop an employee volunteer program for all branches of the federal government.

2000's

The National Volunteer Conference has a record-breaking 4,641 attendees for the third anniversary of the Presidents' Summit for America's Future.

In June, VolunteerConnections.org, a national portal that connects volunteers to Volunteer Centers, is launched at the 2000 National Community Service Conference in Orlando by former President George H.W. Bush. This website is in response to a 1999 survey of Volunteer Centers' needs in utilizing technology.

2001

The United Nations proclaims 2001 the International Year of the Volunteer. Nearly 1,000 national and international partners participate.

The Points of Light Foundation and the Volunteer Center National Network implement Standards of Excellence to increase the capacity of local Volunteer Centers and the quality of their programs and services by providing a continuum of development and a road map to excellence.

2002

The Points of Light Foundation and Annie E. Casey Foundation complete a five-year study on the role of volunteering in low-income communities.

2003

VolunteerConnections.org becomes 1-800-Volunteer.org, which enables the Volunteer Center National Network to realize its technology potential, produce a consistent and quality user experience across geographic boundaries, and measure community impact.

2004

Through a new strategic plan, the Volunteer Center National Network launches a new vision--"To strengthen the nation by igniting volunteering and social action through Volunteer Centers in local communities."

CityCares changes its name to Hands on Network.

2005

The Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network crafts with Volunteer Centers an official legal local/national Affiliation Agreement, unifying the programming, governance, and marketing of the Network and the Foundation.

There are more than 360 Volunteer Centers reaching 170 million people in thousands of communities. The Volunteer Center National Network connects more than 2.5 million people with over half a million opportunities to serve. Working in partnership with more than 80,000 organizations, Volunteer Centers work to engage America's future in volunteering.

as of 3/31/05