

401 West Arch Avenue
Searcy, Arkansas 72143
Phone: 501.268.2483
Fax: 501.279.1050

CITY OF SEARCY

Press Release

Contact: Mayor Belinda LaForce
Phone: (501) 268-2483

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
11 A.M., February 22, 2008

MAYOR REPORTS VOLUNTEERISM IS ALIVE AND WELL IN SEARCY

Volunteerism is the willingness of people to work on behalf of others without the expectation of pay or other tangible gain.

There are two major benefits of volunteerism:

The economic benefit of volunteerism reduces the burden on government spending. Activities that normally would have to be undertaken and funded by the government or by private capital, provides relief to the overall economic output of a community.

The community is benefited socially by building a more cohesive community, fostering greater trust between citizens, and developing norms of solidarity and reciprocity which are essential to stable communities.

Volunteers may have special training as rescuers, guides, assistants, teachers, missionaries, journalist, etc., but the

~ MORE ~

majority, work on an impromptu basis, recognizing a need and filling it.

The State of Arkansas recognizes the importance of volunteerism and has collected data for the past 23 years to determine the economic impact that Volunteerism has on our State. This is done through the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Volunteerism. In 2006 for instance the DOV surveys reported that 477,094 Arkansas donated time to the State.

The DOV categorize volunteerism into four major areas:

1) Direct Service (47%) Direct Service is defined as working directly with clients - such as monitoring telephones, delivering food such as Meals on Wheels, classroom aids, Habitat for Humanity, etc.

2) Indirect Service (32.4%) includes things like collecting articles for distribution, planning fundraising projects etc.;

3) Advocacy (11.1%); refers to speaking at meetings extolling the merits of volunteerism or lobbying for additional funding for various services and organizations;

4) Boards/Commissions (9.5%) Serving in an advisory capacity without monetary compensation for their time.

The State utilizes data from 14 different groups: state agencies, counties, cities, public school districts, United Ways, veterans groups, civic clubs, national service organizations, senior organizations, libraries, private/parochial schools, private

colleges and universities, faith based and community organizations and youth organizations.

(51% rates of return on surveys or 780 responded out of 1672 sent - 2006)

There is a monetary value in connection with Volunteerism and also increased availability of services offered by organizations.

Voluntary employment is basically unpaid [employment](#). It may be done for as [charity](#), as a [hobby](#), community service or [vocation](#), or for the purpose of gaining experience in a particular field of work.

Skills-based volunteerism is a term used to describe volunteering where the volunteer uses their professional skills. This is in contrast to generic volunteerism where specific skills are not necessary.

The average hour of traditional volunteerism for organizations is valued at \$18.04 an hour. Skills-based volunteerism is valued at \$100 an hour depending on the market value at the time, this would apply to people serving on boards and commissions and is based on an estimated average of hourly professional fees.

In the present era of diminishing funding to public agencies and schools, volunteers are giving their time to assist these organizations in helping to meet the needs of all citizens.

The 477,094 of statewide volunteers in 2006 that I just mentioned volunteered a total of 29,577,467 hours for a total value of \$580,094,672.

If the state had to fund the jobs to provide the services being provided by volunteers, an additional \$11,380,448,499 in personal income would be required to generate appropriate state revenues.

All state agencies, county and city organizations should make a concentrated effort to recruit volunteers as part of strategic planning for the future. (Stats taken from Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Volunteerism "Economic Impact of Arkansas Volunteers 2006")

* * * * *

Searcy just recently completed their survey of volunteer hours for 2007 and submitted to the State to be included in their next Economic Impact Study. I have some interesting statistics to report from our survey. From the 161 organizations contacted Searcy received a twenty-eight percent response. Those 45 agencies reported a total of 237,510 volunteer hours during 2007. Of those total hours reported:

- 1) 204,271 hours were in Direct Service: 3750 volunteers
- 2) 24,018 hours in Indirect Service: 351 volunteers
- 3) 5,018 hours of Advocacy service: 91 Volunteers, and
- 4) 4,203 hours served on Boards & Commissions: 80 Volunteers

The top 3 Volunteer Organizations in Searcy for 2007 were:

#1 Hospice Home Care, Inc. - 79,457 Volunteer Hours Reported

~ MORE ~

#2 Harding University - 66,753 Volunteer Hours reported

#3 Searcy Baseball Association - 11,000 Hours

In the Civic Club Category: Optimist Club- 10,000 Hours

In the Church Category was Our Shepherd Lutheran Church with 7,000 Hours.

In the Miscellaneous Category the highest volume was from Main Street Searcy with 1025 hours of volunteer service

Searcy's totals amounted to \$420,300 dollars in Professional Service Value and \$4,248,564.32 in Direct, Indirect and Advocacy for a GRAND TOTAL of \$4,668,864.32 Value of Volunteer Service.

Wouldn't you say we have a Volunteer Community!!

We are so fortunate here in Searcy and White County for the caring self-sacrificing attitude of our citizens. The utilization of volunteer services has become crucial in providing needed services to our community. There is no way our current level of funding and resources can provide for every need. To try and totally measure the impact of volunteerism on a community is not possible, but to be given a glimpse into a fraction of what these volunteers mean to us is why we collect the data and share with others, which is the purpose of this article. And in doing so hopefully, have encouraged you to engage yourself in some way to help make a difference in the lives of those around us and to work together for the common good of our community.

