

**Strategic Conversations
Volunteer Presidents & Presidents-Elect
Redacted Minutes – Call #2: Membership
Fall 2016**

Facilitators:

Debbie McKinney, President, Volunteer Council
Becky Odland, President-elect, Volunteer Council
Cindy Kidwell, Secretary, Volunteer Council
Caitlin Whealon, Meeting & Logistic Coordinator, League of American Orchestras

Volunteer Participants:

Group 1: (2) Midwest
Group 2: (1) Central
Group 3: (2) Central, South
Group 5: (1) Midwest

IDENTIFYING COMMON THREADS

- 1) Lack of commitment from newer members
 - a. Presidents are relying on older members to fill missing leadership roles. Participants agreed that more people are working outside the home and taking on commitments other than symphony league volunteering.
- 2) Participants were asked why they became a member of their symphony volunteer organization.
 - a. Common thread: Someone had invited them to join and participate--there was an “ask”.
- 3) Challenges with leadership and membership
- 4) Participants were asked what they said as children when asked what they wanted to do when they grew up. Responses included nurse, first female President of United States, music teacher, judge, banker, concert pianist, and pop singer. Debbie noted that no one said “manage volunteers” – something on the call that everyone was doing.
 - In a report on volunteering in US, specific age groups were identified. Baby Boomers (49-67 years of age) is the one generation identified as the “give back” generation.

- Over the past three (3) years, 1 million volunteers have been lost each year in the Baby Boomer group.
- Volunteers typically have a higher education and are accustomed to working for higher salaries. Many want to teach or educate.

IDEAS FOR MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

“One and Done” Placement Option: Cindy Kidwell explained the program from her home organization called “One and Done” that helps keep active members in the Women’s Symphony League of Tyler, Texas.

- Membership in WSL requires that each active member have a placement, participate in a fundraiser, and attend two out of five meetings each year.
- Placements can be time consuming with committee meetings, programs and projects, so One and Done is an option for members who find themselves facing a year with limited time to volunteer.
- The program allows members to choose an option that fits into their schedule and with a four-hour shift, the member completes her placement requirements for the year.
- There are a limited number of openings for One and Done typically 35 per year. It is available on a first-come, first-serve basis, so individuals wanting One and Done must be among the first to submit their membership dues and packet in the spring.
- A One and Done Chairman receives communication from WSL project chairman who are requesting extra volunteers on a particular day. The One and Done Chairman immediately sends out a text or email to those volunteers assigned to One and Done, and the first to respond is assigned to the project.
- The project chairmen who requested the extra volunteers is responsible for communicating back to the One and Done Chairman to let her know that the One and Done volunteer satisfactorily completed the job.

Newsletters & “Help Wanted” Ads:

Newsletters, whether electronic or traditional paper, can be an effective way to secure volunteers through “Help Wanted” ads. Some volunteers dread signing up for a traditional project, concerned that it will “never end”. Help wanted ads can give a description of what will be done and the specific time it will require.

Sponsorship – By assigning potential new members to sponsors (sponsors are current members within the volunteer organization), who guide them through organizational responsibilities, answer questions, and introduce them to other members, these potential members feel engaged right away and gain a better understanding of what’s expected as a member.

Value of Volunteer Time: Debbie noted that volunteers want to know how their time is valued.

- Currently, the generally accepted dollar amount is \$23.56 per hour for volunteers.
- If a group of volunteers spends 500 hours working on an event, a banner could thank volunteers and state the dollar amount this gift of time reflects.
- Leagues/guilds can show how volunteer efforts feed into the organization's mission by stating, "Your time today will help our League give \$100,000 to our orchestra this year."

Midwest:

- Volunteer organization presented a "check" to the orchestra based upon the number of hours volunteered by its members. The figure impressed musicians and made them more aware of what is happening behind the scenes on their behalf.

Be Creative! Some organizations are attracting new volunteers in unique ways. One arts organization sent out an invitation via YouTube filmed on a cell phone inviting people to come to a meeting.

Appeal to Health: Baby boomers are very concerned and involved in health. An appeal that might attract retirees is the importance of staying active by volunteering in the community. An idea is to insert in your newsletter is "Volunteering is good for your health".

First Hand Opportunity to See Impact of Music Education

One organization hosted a luncheon accompanied by a speaker, which followed a children's concert. The event attracted new members as they were able to watch children interact with a narrator, listen to the composer discuss his work, and hear firsthand how the class instructor discuss the importance of children's music education. At the conclusion of the event, an ask was made for any contribution amount.