

## Volunteer Engagement in United Way of Henderson County

### 1.0 - INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

October 2015



**Origins of This Study**—In April 2015, while attending a reception for Denise Cumbee Long, the new Executive Director, I raised the question with some United Way of Henderson County (UWHC) staff members of why there our United Way does not have an active program enabling local volunteers to find suitable opportunities to be of service, even though “Volunteer” is one of United Way’s cornerstones both globally and locally.

I was told it was due to having limited funds and staffing for what has been a very labor intensive program in the past. I proposed looking into ways HCUW might strengthen its advocacy program in that area with minimal resources. In response, UWHC subsequently commissioned me to conduct a study to determine the best practices of United Ways having strong volunteer programs, and to report on my findings this Fall. This report is the outcome of many hours of research in the ensuing two months online, on the phone and in person. I trust it will prove useful to United Way and to our community.

*Sandy Westin*

#### **Yesterday’s United Way..... Volunteer Center for United Way Agencies**

- In the 1980’s and before, many local United Ways in the US established Volunteer Centers which recruited and matched volunteers with nonprofit service agencies funded at least in part by donations collected and allocated through United Way.
- The process of recruiting volunteers was done predominantly through in-person interviews with the volunteer candidates, and direct solicitation of opportunities for volunteering with the agencies. The staff time and other resources required by this process was extensive.
- Some Volunteer Centers dissolved their connection with United Way so they could serve the volunteer recruitment and management needs of agencies and organizations other than those funded through the United Way allocation process.

Source: Conversations with Ms. Marlene Wilson, Founder and Director (retired) of Boulder County Volunteer Center, Boulder, Colorado, and a noted author and national speaker on effective volunteer management.

#### **Today’s United Way..... Volunteer Resource Center for All Agencies**

- In the 21st Century, United Way has changed its focus in volunteer services significantly in response to changing times and technology. Services of active advocacy in promoting effective and professional volunteer management is now termed Volunteer Engagement in United Way.
- Today many United Ways serve as the primary community-wide advocate for volunteerism

### Today's United Way.... continued

- As of 2015, many United Ways serve as their communities' **primary advocate for volunteerism**, monitoring the greater community's matrix of needs and available human services—both those provided through United Way's funding and others, including governmental agencies.
- Thanks to the power of technology and widespread access to the Internet, the process of matching willing volunteers to the needs of agencies which can be served by volunteers is now able to be largely automated. **Using online services**, individuals can search for an opportunity to be of service to their community at any time of day or night from the comfort of their home or office. Using filters built into the software, they can limit their search by distance from home, days and hours they would be available, the impact area they wish to work in (e.g. working with animals, hospice patients, youths), and the length of their preferred service commitment.
- Likewise, agencies no longer need to contact United Way to announce the roles they have available for volunteers. With only basic instructions, they can **post their volunteer opportunities** in the online software at any convenient time, even well into the future. They can record all relevant parameters of the role in their postings, including the skills required. Agencies are therefore largely taking responsibly to recruit their own corps of volunteers. Some subscribe to online matching services directly, while others participate in such a software service through a pooled United Way resource
- Perhaps the greatest shift for United Way has been to change its focus on recruiting and placing **individual volunteers** to one of recruiting **groups of volunteers** through businesses large and small, as well as other sources.

### Volunteer Engagement in Tomorrow's United Way of Henderson County....

- This report includes a proposed program of Volunteer Engagement for United Way which incorporates many of the best practices uncovered during its research.
- Fundamental to the proposed program is the selection, implementation and promotion of an appropriate **online matching service**.
- Also of major importance is the recommendation that the proposed Volunteer Engagement program serve as an advocate and catalyst for **professional development of volunteer coordination** in area agencies, as well as within United Way itself.
- Details of the proposed program's developmental timeline, funding, budget and cashflow projection are included in an Addendum, which is under development as of Oct. 27, 2015 with an anticipated completion date of Nov. 15, 2015. The Addendum will include a comparison of several online matching software services including their features and relative costs.