

VOLUNTEER CENTERS OF MICHIGON

An Overview of Programs and Services

- **INTRODUCTION**

Volunteer Centers of Michigan (VCM) is a state association of 31 member volunteer centers. VCM exists to support local volunteer centers in their efforts to mobilize people and resources to deliver creative solutions to community problems. The mission of VCM is to strengthen existing volunteer centers, to provide leadership in developing new centers, and to promote and strengthen volunteerism statewide.

VCM is affiliated with the Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA). The mission of MNA is to promote the awareness and effectiveness of Michigan's nonprofit sector, and to advance the cause of volunteerism and philanthropy in the state. MNA serves as the fiscal agent for VCM. VCM member directors serve as the VCM Operating Council, and are represented on the MNA Board of Trustees.

Through its affiliation with MNA, VCM also works closely with Michigan Campus Compact, an association of Michigan universities and colleges which promotes citizenship by encouraging service experiences for students.

In addition to these affiliate organizations, VCM works closely with the Michigan Community Service Commission, Council of Michigan Foundations, and United Way of Michigan in coordinating a number of services and programs.

VCM has been in existence for ten years. It began as an informal network for peer support and assistance. In 1993, VCM affiliated with MNA (then the Michigan Nonprofit Forum), creating a full-time staff position to support the network. VCM staff currently consists of a Director, National Service Manager and Assistant National Service Manager, sharing support staff, office space and equipment with MNA and MCC.

VCM member centers pay annual dues, which is used entirely for member support expenses (mailings, phone, meetings, etc.).

- **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

Network Support

VCM provides ongoing support to volunteer centers and the volunteerism field through the following services:

- ✓ **RESOURCE LIBRARY:** including over 100 volumes on all aspects of volunteer management, nonprofit management, and streams of service; also includes the University of Colorado Volunteer Management Certificate Program videotape series.

- ✓ **MEMBER MAILINGS:** monthly updates/fax alerts on current state and national initiatives, funding opportunities and legislation; promotion of local events and celebration of local center accomplishments.
- ✓ **QUARTERLY MEETINGS:** for volunteer center directors; feature a morning business meeting and afternoon work session focused on a current issue or topic as identified by the directors.
- ✓ **ANNUAL RETREAT:** for volunteer center directors to plan strategically for the organization; discuss pertinent issues; network and relax.
- ✓ **MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATORS:** MAVA is a statewide association of volunteer administrators representing a full range of agencies, organizations, and programs. The mission of MAVA is to serve as a statewide voice for concerns affecting the voluntary sector and to promote volunteer administration as a profession. Managers of volunteer programs, leaders of volunteer organizations and others who support and promote volunteerism are eligible for membership. MAVA members have access to all VCM/MNA member benefits and services.

Training and Technical Assistance

VCM and MNA work to support the volunteerism sector in partnership with local volunteer centers.

Examples of their training and technical assistance include:

- ✓ **REGIONAL TRAININGS:** VCM and MNA offer a minimum of two regional training series annually. The fall series is typically an overview of the Basics of Volunteer Management, with the spring series taking on immediate needs identified by the sector (i.e., Spring 1997 covered legal and accounting issues).
- ✓ **VOLUNTEERISM SUPERCONFERENCE:** VCM is host to the statewide Volunteerism SuperConference, held every two years. The SuperConference is a two-day event bringing representatives from all segments of the volunteer field together for workshops, networking, and resource sharing. The 1998 Volunteerism SuperConference had over 1,400 participants, featuring keynote speakers General Colin Powell, David Sawyer, Dr. John Kretzmann and Marcia Bullard. The SuperConference is held in conjunction with the Governor's Community Service Awards Dinner.
- ✓ **LOCAL TRAININGS/CONSULTATION:** VCM works with local volunteer centers to develop/secure training opportunities that meet local needs.

Public Relations

In an effort to promote the impact and opportunities for volunteerism within Michigan, VCM and MNA are examining how we can best be of service to our constituents. At present, the majority of our time is given to the coordination and development of:

- ✓ **ConnectMichigan:** ConnectMichigan is a multi-layer, statewide public relations campaign to promote volunteerism and community involvement. The ConnectMichigan campaign, as a component of the national Connect America initiative, includes a volunteerism hotline (POLF's 1-800-VOLUNTEER), television and radio public service announcements, written support materials, and outdoor advertising. ConnectMichigan billboard campaigns will focus annually around four major "seasonal" themes: Make A Difference Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, National Volunteer Week, and Michigan's Promise.

National Service

The opportunity to place National Service Members in Michigan communities for the support of local volunteerism was presented to VCM and MNA through both the AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA programs. We currently administer two statewide service programs:

- ✓ **VCM AMERICORPS: MICHIGAN'S AMERICORPS:** The purpose of VCM AmeriCorps is to promote and sustain youth involvement in volunteerism and community problem solving;

and to advance the goals of *The Presidents' Summit for America's Future* and *America's Promise* within communities throughout Michigan.

VCM AmeriCorps is designed to meet the needs of Michigan's young people, systems that affect them, and the communities in which they live. VCM AmeriCorps places teams of national service volunteers in volunteer centers and partnering agencies throughout the state of Michigan to actively engage youth during after school hours in efforts to solve community problems.

- ✓ **NEW PARTNERSHIPS VISTA:** The New Partnerships VISTA program places volunteers in four regions of the state to promote and support citizen-driven community problem solving through service and volunteerism. VISTAs support the New Partnerships concept for community problem solving through communication, citizen action and collaboration among private, nonprofit, and government sectors. VISTA efforts strengthen inter-sector partnerships and support citizen-driven community solutions, particularly related to school success and to youth development during non-school hours.

Public Policy

As well respected statewide entities, VCM and MNA realize a great potential to monitor and impact public policy. In addition to keeping our local constituents apprised of relevant issues, our key activities in this area include:

- ✓ **ADVOCACY:** VCM and MNA actively address public policy issues that affect volunteer centers and the nonprofit sector. Recent issues demanding our attention include the Volunteer Liability Act and the Youth on Boards Bill.
- ✓ **MICHIGAN PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVE:** MNA is also coordinating the Michigan Public Policy Initiative (MPPI) in partnership with the Council of Michigan Foundations. Michigan legislators are facing new challenges in light of term limits and devolution: MPPI is designed to educate legislators about public policy issues the impact the nonprofit sector. MPPI is responsible for the 1998-99 edition of Michigan In Brief and will be holding a series of informational forums highlighting current issues.

Financial Support

VCM and MNA support the network of volunteer centers and the broader field of volunteerism through the development and identification of funding opportunities:

- ✓ **GEORGE W. ROMNEY FUND FOR VOLUNTEERISM IN MICHIGAN:** To honor George Romney and to keep his vision of volunteerism alive, the Volunteer Centers of Michigan (VCM) and the Michigan Nonprofit Association established the *George W. Romney Fund for Volunteerism in Michigan* in 1996. This endowment fund will continue Romney's dream by:
 - building local infrastructure through the establishment of local volunteer center endowment funds,
 - providing mini-grants to support innovative volunteer projects and programs across the state, and
 - supporting an annual public relations campaign to spur participation in volunteer programs (ConnectMichigan).
- ✓ **VOLUNTEER INVESTMENT GRANTS:** VCM was instrumental in the development of Michigan's Volunteer Investment Grants (VIG). Administered by the Michigan Community Service Commission, \$1 million annually is available to community-based, volunteer,

nonprofit agency partnerships that designate and support an agency to function as a community volunteer resource center. VIG strives to meet two goals:

- Support and increase volunteerism and community service, and
- Leverage local funds supporting local community foundation endowments that help sustain the activities of a community volunteer resource center.

Development of New Centers

VCM supports the development of volunteer centers in local communities through individual consultation, which includes assistance in the areas of board development, strategic funding, collaboration, local need and asset assessments, and inclusion in the peer network of VCM member centers.

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