

VOLUNTEERS

Partners in Education

By Patricia A. Revolinski

Adelpian Junior Academy has 70 students. Compared to the enrollment of many public elementary schools, this may not seem like a large student body. But during the 1988-1989 school year more than 100 persons volunteered their time to help at this Michigan school. These loyal supporters organized the library and helped with carpentry, cleaning, painting, and general repairs. Classroom assistants listened to students read, supervised drills, and assisted with a variety of other tasks.

Results from a 1989 Gallup poll indicated a 31 percent increase in volunteer/charity work in the United States since 1984. In view of this increase in interest and involvement, Seventh-day Adventist schools should tap these resources.

Finding a Volunteer Coordinator

The first step is to locate someone who can coordinate the volunteer services. Often the Home and School organization assumes the responsibility. However, the principal may oversee the program.

The coordinator's duties include:

- Outlining basic procedures for implementing a volunteer program,
- Maintaining communication between school and volunteers,
- Keeping the school board informed,
- Monitoring the progress of the program, and
- Making adjustments as needed.

Assessing the Needs

Once you have chosen a director, have the principal and teachers identify areas where volunteer assistance would be helpful. This should include long-range planning for the entire year. A request form such as Sample A¹ can be helpful for this purpose. The *Small*

*School Survival Guide*² also offers suggestions for utilizing volunteers.

Interest Inventory

Next, assess the expertise and willingness of the school's constituents. A good way to do this is by using a questionnaire. Send the inventory to church constituents with the pastors' monthly letter or as a part of the school newspaper. (Also, remember to poll parents of non-Adventist students at your school.) Sample B³ suggests some items that might be included in an interest inventory.

Since the school's needs may change

Volunteers can assist with the school program in many ways.

during the year, periodic reassessments can be helpful. Be sure to contact individuals who move into the area after the initial questionnaire has been sent.

As shown by the sample questionnaire, volunteers can assist with the school program in many ways. Not everyone wants to work in a classroom environment, but many people will be willing to drive a small group of students to a witnessing activity or on a field trip. Others may choose to help with fundraising.

Don't assume that people who work full-time or part-time cannot participate in the volunteer program. Ask them to assist during nonschool hours. They can help with a variety of activities like telephoning, costume making, recording stories or vocabulary words on tape, or cutting out bulletin board letters. This will save the teachers many hours of work.

The uses of volunteers are limited only by the imagination of the school personnel. One two-teacher school needed new library books catalogued. The teachers contacted three individuals—one with library knowledge, one with typing skills, and a third who could file cards and shelve books.

The teachers kept a box for books that needed to be classified. The person with library skills picked up the box, took it home, and gave each book the correct Dewey decimal number and other classification information. She took the box of books to the typist's home, where the cards were typed.

The books were then delivered to the third volunteer, who glued on the pockets and due-date cards and returned the books to the school. Within a few months the library was reorganized. Very little teacher time and almost no money had been required!

Schools often rely on parents as the core of the volunteer program. Some teachers like to give parents firsthand exposure to the total school program. Others feel uncomfortable about having parents in their classroom on a regular basis.

But parents are not the only resource persons schools can utilize. Other church members also support the school and have a genuine interest in the success of the instructional program. Older church members have a great deal to contribute. Be sure to utilize the skills and talents of these individuals.

Orientation

Once you have matched the services to individual teachers' needs, you must train your volunteers. If volunteers are knowledgeable about their tasks and feel comfortable about the school's expectations, they will be more likely to commit themselves to long-term participation. It would be helpful for school

TEACHER REQUEST FORM FOR VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE

Please complete the following:

Teacher _____ Date _____

Date Volunteer Wanted _____ Time _____

Briefly Describe Task(s) To Be Done _____

List Any Special Skills Needed _____

Number Of Students Involved _____ Grade(s) _____ / _____

If special planning is needed, when are you available to meet with the volunteer?

Would you prefer parents of students in your classroom?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Makes no difference

Do you know of any persons willing to volunteer? If yes, please list.

Please do not write in shaded area - for Coordinator use

Volunteer Assigned _____ Phone No. _____

Comments: _____

volunteers can tutor students in various subjects.

personnel to compile a handbook for volunteers. One item that might be included is the "Suggestions for Volunteers" shown in the box on page 35.

Both volunteers and students need orientation. Students must understand that volunteers, like other guests in the classroom, are to be shown respect.

In some instances volunteers have become discouraged or lost interest because they felt uncomfortable disciplining students. If the volunteer will serve in the classroom on a regular basis, discuss discipline and proper behavior during the orientation process. Outline the respective roles of the volunteer and the teacher in dealing with discipline. Share effective techniques for classroom control and other helpful tips with your volunteers.

Recognition

The contributions of volunteers cannot be measured in dollars and cents. But these people need to feel appreciated. Recognition may include certificates, plaques, a special dinner, or a display at the school (or church) show-

ing pictures of volunteers in action. Students can be involved in planning and implementing a special recognition program.

Evaluation

The volunteer coordinator and teachers should regularly evaluate the volunteer program.

Evaluation questions might include the following:

- Are the needs of the teachers and students being met?
- Do the volunteers feel their contribution is important?
- Are the volunteers meeting their obligations? Do they arrive on time and follow through with their assignments?
- Is there adequate communication between the school/teacher and volunteers?
- Have the needs for volunteers changed?

Ask the volunteers to suggest ways the school can operate more effectively. Some individuals may feel more comfortable talking directly to the volunteer coordinator. Allow them to respond anonymously or in writing if they wish.

After the evaluation has been completed, the coordinator may find it necessary to adjust schedules or personnel. Finding just the right match between volunteers and the school's needs is critical to the success of a volunteer program.

Unfortunately, one cannot always anticipate areas where personality conflicts may arise or where changes will need to be made to resolve such conflicts. These kinds of difficulties can be minimized by keeping channels of

Suggestions for Volunteers

Photocopy or retype this list and give it to volunteers to use as a guideline in their work in the classroom:

1. Be sure the students know your name.
2. Quickly learn and use the names of the students.
3. Have the attention of the students before beginning to talk, to ask questions, or to give instructions.
4. Give your instructions in a clear and concise manner.
5. Be aware of students with special needs.
6. Maintain confidentiality.
7. Ask the teacher for suggestions that will improve your presentation.
8. Contact the teacher if for some reason you cannot meet your classroom appointment.

SAMPLE B

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION AND INTEREST INVENTORY

Name _____ Day time Phone No. _____

Address: _____

What specific interests, hobbies or skills do you have that you would be willing to share at our school?

Please provide any information about your daily schedule which may help us in matching you to volunteer activities _____

Number in order of preference the period(s) of time you could help at school with number 1 being your first preference:

_____ morning _____ early afternoon _____ late afternoon

_____ evening _____ weekends _____ home projects

Place a check by your areas of interest

OFFICE:

- _____ General Clerical Duties
 _____ Typing
 _____ Phone

NEWSLETTER:

- _____ Typing
 _____ Writing
 _____ Mailing

COMPUTER:

- _____ Supervise Computer Lab
 _____ Data Entry
 _____ Word Processing At
 _____ home _____ school

GENERAL ACTIVITIES:

- _____ Carpentry, Repairs, etc.
 _____ Sewing, Costuming, etc.
 _____ Landscaping, Clean-up
 _____ Cooking

ARTS/CRAFTS AND DECORATIONS:

- _____ Floral Arrangements
 _____ Bulletin Boards
 _____ Lettering
 _____ Crafts
 _____ Decorations For Special Events

LIBRARY:

- _____ Classifying Books
 _____ Typing Cards
 _____ Shelving

CLASSROOM ASSISTANCE:

- _____ Substitute Teacher
 _____ Provide Transportation
 _____ Tutor
 _____ students at home
 _____ subjects for grades 1-4
 _____ subjects for grades 5-8
 _____ grades 9-12 math
 _____ grades 9-12 sciences
 _____ English
 _____ Spanish
 _____ Other _____
 _____ Grade Papers
 _____ AJY Class Work
 _____ Drama Program
 _____ Laboratory Assistant
 _____ Yearbook
 _____ Lunch/Recess Supervision
 _____ P.E.

communication open, reassessing the program frequently, and seeking flexible approaches to problem-solving.

Conclusion

A successful volunteer program requires the time, energy, and cooperation of many people. However, it offers numerous benefits. An enthusiastic volunteer is a terrific, low-cost public relations tool for your school. Volunteers who are excited about the school program are bound to tell others about the good things they see.

More important than the public relations value of volunteers or the assistance they provide to teachers, are the potential advantages for students. Through interaction with volunteers, students benefit from the skills and knowledge of many people in the

church family. Students also come to appreciate people from a variety of cultures and age groups. They will thus draw closer to the church and come to see the value of giving unselfishly to help others. □

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REFERENCES

¹ Adapted from Melvin Campbell, *Manual for Volunteer Programs in Seventh-day Adventist Schools* (Silver Spring, Md.: North American Division Office of Education, at press).

² *Small School Survival Guide — A Guide for Teachers of Small Schools* (Silver Spring, Md.: NAD Office of Education, 1988).

³ Campbell.