



Michigan Voices for Volunteerism Houghton – April 27, 2010

In April and May of 2010, the Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC) hosted a 10-city listening tour, “Michigan’s Voices for Volunteerism.” The listening tour provided an opportunity for community stakeholders to share their thoughts on how to expand service and volunteerism to help address our state’s biggest challenges such as: hunger, unemployment, illiteracy, high school dropouts, and the environment.

Tour stops included:

- Benton Harbor
- Cadillac
- Detroit
- Flint
- Grand Rapids
- Online*
- Houghton
- Lansing
- Muskegon
- Saginaw
- Sault Ste. Marie

**More than 70 people participated in the listening tour by responding to an on-line survey.*

People who attended the 10-city listening tour represented the following groups: K-12 schools; aging networks; colleges/universities; faith-based organizations; nonprofit agencies; public safety; community based organizations; community leaders; businesses; healthcare; elected officials; concerned citizens; foundations; corporations; service organizations; state government and; media.

In Houghton, 13 people lent their diverse voices and thoughts to discussions that centered around community challenges and how volunteerism and national service programs can be expanded and utilized more effectively to improve the quality of life for citizens in these and other communities throughout Michigan.

Listening tour participants were asked a series of questions related to communities, volunteerism, resources, capacity, national service, and impact. The themes that emerged from Houghton’s stop are listed below.

Note: Many bullets below may be accompanied by a number in parentheses. This indicates multiple individuals/groups responded with the same/similar thoughts.

1. Challenges

What are the critical challenges or issues faced in your community? Please list.

- Volunteer Support
 - Funding – for materials for volunteers
 - Transportation for volunteers & clients (young and older volunteer licensing issues)
 - So many volunteers volunteer at a multitude of places – provide experience and leadership skills
 - Community Development
- For Public
 - Educational issues (including funding issues for after school programs, bussing, etc.)
 - Internet issues – internet usage (internet not available for long enough hours or no access to internet)
 - Food distribution/hunger/homelessness
 - Transportation
 - Healthcare for uninsured
 - Hospice Care
 - Domestic abuse
 - Humane Society
 - Support of elderly – large aging population
- Add cohesiveness by not taking side and actually being the community together

2. Successes

How are volunteers currently addressing critical challenges in your community?

- Volunteer & Service Organizations:
 - Service groups – meet the challenge
 - Schools parent volunteer – Booster Clubs
 - Churches
 - Little Brothers coordinate transportation
 - BHK – bus monitors
 - Parents volunteering in schools – and early childhood classrooms, boards, councils.
 - BBBS – lunch buddies
 - RSVP
 - UPVolunteer.org
 - HeadStart
 - UPCAP, RSVP, Little Brothers, Salvation Army, etc.
 - Rotary, Kiwanis, Knight of Columbus, Mason, etc.
- Specific Efforts/Actions
 - GOISD effort
 - Libraries – Media Center – keeping up with technology

- Unemployed individuals are volunteering as a way to do something meaningful
- AMCAD – provide senior meals
- Department of Correction – community service
- Communities & Boards offer leadership and organization of service.
- Work collaboratively to provide cohesiveness and community development
- Volunteers fundraise to keep organization functioning.
- North Woods Conservation – for public access and utilization
- Parent councils promote parental involvement
- AmeriCorps also recruits other volunteers to engage them in community service project.
- Community Development – historical sites

3. Resources

What resources are not being tapped to support volunteering in your community?

- What isn't being done?
 - Network among nonprofits
 - Volunteer task force
 - Faith based organizations not at the table
 - Identify needs as a whole across the community
 - Fully utilize public owned facilities
 - Utilization of media for quick recognition
 - Nonprofits need to share more, collaborate
 - Challenge people to volunteer in their own "communities"
- Demographic Groups
 - Teens, Seniors, Middle age
 - Media – service organizations
 - St. Vincents
 - Men
 - Colleges/Universities (MTU, Finlandia)
 - Corporations, businesses
 - Unemployed
- Barriers
 - Institutional bias
 - Technology is somewhat as restriction – can't go to BHK website and "click" to volunteer. Inherently this hinders tapping into certain age groups because this is their primary communication/interaction source
 - Media could embrace needs of community – they should be there

4. Capacity

How do we increase the capacity of organizations to engage more volunteers and do it effectively?

- Organizations Need:
 - Professional support of volunteers by nonprofits.
 - Better project management structure
 - More private sector support, Wal-Mart for example now shows what “big Wal-Mart donates not what their local contribution is.
 - Need more skilled volunteers; what training is needed?
 - Need more prep to work with volunteers
 - Ask staff what they need
 - Funding for volunteer recognition
- Suggestions/Ideas
 - Nonprofit Expo – “Nonprofit SuperConference for the UP”
 - Volunteer management policy for AmeriCorps members.
 - More promotion about VISTA and AmeriCorps
- Mechanisms
 - Technology – social networking
 - More volunteer recognition.
 - Unemployment check tied to documented volunteer service.
 - Social networking sites – to engage volunteers
 - Traditional recruitment – phone calls, radio stations, visit organizations, presentations about organization

5. National Service

How can National Service be used to enhance volunteer efforts and impacts?

- Current Benefits of National Service
 - Campus Compact – support academic service learning
 - National service groups (AmeriCorps) members bring a varied skill set and well education members as huge assets in engaging volunteers
 - Collaboration between national service organization and the smaller community groups
- Suggestions to utilize National Service
 - Share opportunity to afford costs
 - Need information up front – clear message
 - Cost
 - Opportunity
 - Impact – get information to those that can afford
 - More promotion to potential national service people
 - Media support and recognition again will help in service projects, etc.
 - Larger community service projects

- Actively promote tools that they are aware of as available.
- Greater exposure and reflection on what accomplishments have been previously made.

6. Impact

How do we as a community maximize the impact of volunteerism?

- LOCALIZED Regional Resources Centers
 - Shared efforts/results through
- Collaboration to mitigate competition; networking
- Centrally housed volunteer registration
- E-mails
- Advertising
- Preparation
- Retention – Recognition
- Coordinator/leader
- Recognition affirmation
- Find out volunteers interests/skills and match w/jobs
- Meeting – may be a waste of volunteer time for some
- Assign a task
- Some will donate money for goods