



## Michigan Voices for Volunteerism Lansing – May 6, 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 Lansing, 24 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 Lansing’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.

- Limited promotion of volunteer opportunities and services for volunteers
- Lack of ability to promote to diverse population
- Finding ways to bridge gap from government to volunteerism
- Finding answers to liability issues facing volunteer groups
- Transitioning between generations of volunteers
- Transition from paid position to volunteer position
- Growing disconnection between college/university and communities
- People propose simple and ineffective solutions because they don't understand the people or the root causes
- Michigan is the epicenter of the economic down which is connected to most issues including:
  - Employment
  - Community health
  - Community services and infrastructure
  - Community/government resources
  - Housing
  - Education
  - Hunger
- Unemployment/underemployment
  - Misunderstanding of the roots of unemployment
- Foreclosure
- Broken education system and funding for that system
- Poverty
- Activities for youth/recreation
  - Delinquency
  - Dropout rate
  - College access/retention
- Disparity and inequity
- Elderly assistance
- Transportation
- Environment
- Under skilled workers

## **2. Successes**

How are volunteers currently addressing critical challenges in your community?

- Parents are now volunteering more in schools
- Nonprofits and volunteers are matched through United Way systems

- Nonprofits are partnering with colleges and universities to place college volunteers
- One of the benefits of unemployment is a highly skilled pool of volunteers will to provide their talents
- Volunteers are starting own programs, acting as advocates for community needs as they arise
- Volunteers are working to raise awareness and call citizens to action in facing community challenges
- Volunteers are finding their own funding
- National service
- Learn and Serve
- Colleges/universities providing volunteers and resources
- Churches/faith-based organizations
- K-12 volunteers
  - Afterschool programs
- Commission on Aging (Meals on Wheels, etc)
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates)
- Prisoner Re-entry
- Volunteer Centers
- St. Vincent's
- Distribution of needed goods/resources

### **3. Resources**

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

- Work programs as not being fully utilized and often do not have the infrastructure to place volunteers appropriately or effectively
- Clear communication about the volunteer opportunities
- Social media
- People are not managing the technology they are using or keeping it up to date
- Unemployed and recently retired demographic are not properly engaged
- Union employees and management not fully engaged
- Students/youth (K-12 & college)
- Volunteer Centers
- Skilled volunteers
- Training
- 211
- Boomers/retirees
- Local organizations (vs. international/national)
- Under/unemployed
- Corporate volunteers

- People with disabilities

#### **4. Capacity**

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

- Make certain organizations know how to show appreciation and recognition
- Appropriate funding and staffing (3)
- Technology and training (i.e. webinars) (2)
- Staff dedicated to volunteer management
- Leadership development
- Focus on retention of volunteers instead of just focusing on recruitment
- Increase promotional activity
- Provide volunteers with power to control own positions and activities
- Adapting/shifting lines of thought within in an organization so that they can better work with volunteers and have open conversation
- Not more staffing but better trained staff with more knowledge of proper volunteer management
- Collaboration between organizations in the field
- Resource sharing
- Acknowledgement (local and other)
- Need full-time volunteer coordinator
- Train-the-trainer
- Marketing of volunteer benefits
- Sharing of best practices
- Building relationships with volunteers
- Put volunteers in positions that match their skill set
- Form NGOs to fill government gaps and work around the “red tape”

#### **5. National Service**

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

- Programming needs to improve public image and promotion
- Improved story telling to engage public and make a larger impact
- Improve communication between program members
- Use national days of service to market and promote volunteerism and help people make connections/build networks
- Keep informed by using Volunteer Centers of Michigan and Hands on Network
- National service members can collaborate with each other easier then others can so they need to do it and provide a model for collaboration within a community
- More part-time positions
- Cross-stream training provides valuable insight
- Loudly promote volunteerism

## **6. Impact**

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

- Develop leaders among our volunteers and in our nonprofits
- Match volunteers with community needs/issues
- Tell the story through the media (3)
- Partner more
- Relevant, meaningful, local opportunities to serve
- Bring communities together for their own betterment and grow communities together
- Focus on neighborhoods not just individual people or homes
- Nonprofits must focus on aligning their mission with community needs and not just chasing funding (2)
- Making or connecting clearing houses of volunteer opportunities
- Re-evaluate assessment techniques to properly measure impact before project begins
- Increase tools available to evaluate impact
- Increase organizations collaboration to deal with changing themes
- Fundraising for operations!
- Step out of a niche or solutions that work for a single nonprofit into community solutions
- Evaluate both volunteers and management
- Word of mouth and person to person recruitment
- Recognize programs and volunteers (2)
- Build a volunteer network to share volunteers with other organizations where organizations can refer volunteers to different opportunities if their skills don't match up to the organization
- Practice good volunteer management
- Build an expectation of service in all institutions (work, school, church)
- Customer service
- Quick responses to volunteer inquiries