



Baby Boomers and the New Age of Volunteerism

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National Service Fellow*

July 17, 2001

*Corporation for National Service
National Service Fellowship Program*

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- *The National Senior Service Corps (Senior Corps), the network of programs that helps Americans age 55 and older use their skills and experience in service opportunities that address the needs of their communities. Senior Corps includes the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Foster Grandparent Program, and Senior Companion Program.*

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Contract Number

CNSHQ00022

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This material is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National Service under a National Service Fellowship. Opinions and points of view expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Corporation for National Service.

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Acknowledgements

When we embark on a new journey in life, we often find ourselves surrounded by different individuals that provide support and guidance along the way. This was my experience throughout the nine months I had available to conduct this study. I am indebted to the Corporation for National Service and its staff for providing me with such a unique opportunity and especially want to thank Robin Dean, Deena Johnson, Jeff Gale, and Patrick Triano. I also want to extend my gratitude to Tom Fleming who introduced me to the program, and to Mike Berning, John Keller, Michael Mercil, David Miller, and Jan Newsome who shared their expertise and wisdom along the way.

Likewise, I appreciated the opportunity to work alongside such an amazing group of individuals that represented the National Service Fellows team. To my “Senior Buddies” Peter Gartland and Caroline Crocoll, who offered their friendship, humor and wisdom, I am truly grateful.

I am thankful for the support provided by my coworkers at Volunteers of America of Minnesota and my supervisor Michael Weber, who allowed me the opportunity to conduct the fellowship project along with my other assigned duties. My thanks also goes out to Bob Jackson, Sam Schuth and Sidney Campbell that represent the best of what a Corporation for National Service

state office can achieve. And to Jack Stratton and Susan Fisher from General Mills, Inc. who provided advice and assistance during the initial stages of my research.

To all the individuals that shared their time with me through interviews, focus groups and networking sessions – Thank You! Your insights and experiences guided the development of this manuscript. I am especially grateful to Jan Hively, who both challenged and inspired me when thinking of vital aging. My appreciation goes to Julie Belle White-Newman who provided feedback and direction to help create a “final product” of the best quality. And special thanks to Shannon Johnson who offered her artistic touch and design skills.

Lastly, to my friends and family who endured the long hours I spent at the library or sitting in front of a computer. Thank you for your encouragement and support.

Executive Summary

This research report focuses on the development of a model that recommends a new organizational infrastructure for the National Senior Service Corps to engage and recruit senior volunteers. The National Senior Service Corps has struggled in recent years to recruit new volunteers in its programs. Baby Boomers, the first of which have just turned 55 this year, represent the youngest of new recruits the Senior Corps programs is seeking to enlist. The question is 'how' to recruit this aging generation of potential Senior Corps volunteers.

The study was conducted in Minnesota to assess Baby Boomer involvement through current and past volunteer activities, in both the metro area and rural community. Using qualitative methodology approach, I sought to identify a list of new methods to recruit Baby Boomers for Senior Corps programs. Preliminary research was conducted through an extensive literature review to create the foundation for the study. This framework was then used to develop questions for individual interviews and focus group sessions.

Individual interviews were conducted with experts representative of both the volunteer and senior service fields. This included past and current senior corps staff; a vital aging educator from the University of Minnesota; and state officials from the

Minnesota Board on Aging, the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging, and the Minnesota Office of Citizenship and Volunteer Services. Questions were developed to inquire with each individual their view of how to increase Baby Boomer involvement in community service. At the completion of this process, it was evident that to increase Baby Boomer involvement would require more than just new recruitment strategies, but a new vision for supporting older adults in community service.

To better understand what type of infrastructure would support Baby Boomers in future community service, focus groups were conducted in Minneapolis, St. Paul and Mora Minnesota. Eligibility to participate in one of four focus group sessions included that an individual be born between 1946 and 1964. Equal representation between men and women was sought, along with individuals employed at non-profit, for-profit and government sectors. Demographic data did not include educational level, financial status, or cultural heritage. Six individuals were selected for each focus group based on their past or current participation in volunteer activity.

A total of 23 Baby Boomers were involved with the four focus group sessions. Information was gathered in three specific areas: motivations to volunteer, volunteer recruitment, and Baby Boomer's own view of

retirement. Each session lasted for one to one and a half-hour, with the length dependent upon focus group participants continuing discussion past the scheduled one-hour time frame.

Based on current literature, interviews with volunteer and senior service experts, and focus group sessions with potential Senior Corps volunteers, a new approach will be required to increase Baby Boomer participation in community service. The National Senior Service Corps should prepare to recruit Baby Boomers using the strategies of a) revised marketing techniques b) use of tangible and intangible incentives and c) appropriate volunteer opportunities. The following summary illustrates this change process to evolve as an organization that can serve the desires of all Baby Boomers seeking community service opportunities.

These recommendations can be utilized by National Senior Service Corps administrators that determine the strategic direction for Senior Corps programming and public affairs staff who create national marketing materials for Senior Corps recruitment. In addition, Senior Corps project directors can apply these ideas in local communities when seeking to recruit volunteers beyond generally accepted recruitment practices.

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Introduction

Each year approximately a half million older Americans share their life experiences, skills, and interests to address local concerns in their communities through one of the three Senior Corps programs.

How to Engage and Recruit Baby Boomers for Senior Corps Programs

By the year 2030, it is estimated that 49 percent of the population will be over the age of 55. This represents a unique opportunity to involve a large number of individuals to meet the needs of their peers and those in local communities. Organizations and agencies that utilize volunteers need to ask whether they possess the infrastructure to recruit and retain volunteers from this emerging generation. Many of the individuals in this age group are looking for more challenging opportunities, additional flexibility and unique experiences. The dilemma is how to attract this active and independent population to solve community issues.

Since 1965, the National Senior Service Corps has fostered community service for individuals age 55 and older through Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion, and Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) programs. Each year, approximately a half million older Americans share their life experiences, skills, and interests to address local concerns in their communities through one of the three Senior Corps programs. (Making our Mark) These numbers may seem staggering, yet, the Senior Corps programs have begun to experience a decrease in the number

of individuals ages 55 to 65 enlisting in program activity.

In September of this last year, I was awarded a fellowship opportunity through the Corporation for National Service to research new approaches for the recruitment of Baby Boomers in community service. I conducted a nine-month study to identify a range of recruitment methods to be used during the next 20 years. My recommendations are based on data collected from interviews with senior service and volunteer service experts, focus groups with individuals born between 1946 and 1964 who represent the Baby Boomer generation, and consultation with past and current Senior Corps staff. During my preliminary research, I found that an increase in Baby Boomer involvement in Senior Corps programs would require not only new recruitment strategies, but also a new vision for supporting older adults in community service.

The following summary recommends strategies for recruiting and engaging aging Baby Boomers in Senior Corps programs. It also suggests a change process for the National Senior Service Corps to evolve as an organization that can serve the desires of all Baby Boomers seeking community service opportunities. Interspersed between the chapters are examples of

I discovered that to increase Baby Boomer involvement in Senior Corps programs would require not only new recruitment strategies, but also a new vision for supporting older adults in community service.

organizations and programs that demonstrate their ability to provide unique and innovative experiences for Baby Boomer involvement. The National Senior Service Corps can adopt elements of these and similar activities for the expansion of future program opportunities.

Growth in Aging Population

According to the United States Administration on Aging (AOA), our country is facing the most significant increase amongst the aging population. An annual study conducted by AOA predicts that by the year 2030 approximately 70 million individuals will be over the age of 65. This is more than twice the number of the same older adult population represented in the year 2000. (*Profile of Older Americans 2000 1*)

These statistics are inclusive of those individuals born between 1946 and 1964, the Baby Boomer generation. These persons embody the most significant sustained growth in our country's history and will become the first generation to ever outnumber those individuals under the age of 18. As Baby Boomers continue to age, our country will experience a shift in our population that it has never encountered before.

Policymakers and business leaders have predicted major challenges that will need to be addressed by our

society. Examples have included a deficit in social security funds, a shortage within the labor force, and insufficient funds to support increasing health care costs. These are legitimate concerns presented by observers, but they are not the only issues we will face as the aging population continues to grow.

The Baby Boomer generation will eventually embrace some form of retirement that will offer them the gift of time. These soon-to-be retirees possess a wealth of experience, knowledge and financial resources that can benefit our society. Marc Freedman suggests in his 1999 book, *Prime Time*, that older Americans may well be our only increasing natural resource. (17) Baby Boomers have an enhanced physical ability in comparison with retirees of just 20 years ago. They can be expected to seek activities that challenge them, provide flexibility, and an opportunity to volunteer in partnership with family and friends.

The impending growth in our aging population creates a rare occasion for expanding civic engagement. Baby Boomers can help meet the growing needs of our changing population, including the needs of their peers. Most volunteer administrators and their agencies are perplexed, however, about how to successfully recruit these same individuals in

volunteer service.

Infrastructure to Support Baby Boomers

From its 1999 national survey of giving and volunteering in the United States, the Independent Sector reports that the number of seniors volunteering is at its highest rate ever (America's Senior Volunteers). If this trend is to continue, social service agencies across the nation will need to determine if they possess the infrastructure to support the influx of older adult volunteers. Some of the questions they will need to ask include:

- 1) Will staff be available to orient, train and supervise senior volunteers?
- 2) Is there diversity represented within the volunteer positions offered to senior volunteers?
- 3) What types of incentives, both tangible and intangible, are available for older adult volunteers?
- 4) Do marketing materials adequately represent and target the Baby Boomer generation?

Baby Boomers have said that they anticipate maintaining a busy schedule during retirement, even though they will no longer be committed to a 9-to-5 job. This generation will be seeking volunteer opportunities in which they can

make a meaningful contribution, in a shorter amount of time. It is important to note that in this same survey the average number of hours contributed by senior volunteers was on average 3.3 hours per week. This amount of time reflects the urgency for organizations to reflect on the potential short-term opportunities that exist and determine if there is a role for senior volunteers to contribute.

The significance of volunteer administrators creating a well-orchestrated match between the volunteers' interests, skills and abilities and a volunteer position will be vital. Baby Boomers will not be satisfied with fulfilling a role based solely on the needs defined by the organization. They will be seeking activities that utilize their talents and desire to make a difference. The following example illustrates the necessity for conducting an effective match.

“Don Speiler, 64, had a good run. After 33 years at Kodak, where he had become president of the company’s Mexico operations, it was time to retire and return to his hometown of Rochester, N.Y. Speiler was excited by the idea. Like many executives his age, he saw retirement as a chance to give something back, to volunteer. In Mexico he had served on the national boards of Junior

Achievement and the Special Olympics. He was a two-term president of the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico. He figured nonprofit agencies in Rochester would be thrilled to get his combination of business acumen and volunteer experience.

So Spieler eagerly stopped in at the Rochester chapter of the United Way and met with the director, who seemed very happy to have him aboard. Spieler had envisioned joining a committee to evaluate the group’s grantees or sitting on the board of directors. It wasn’t until a couple of weeks later that a United Way staffer called with Spieler’s assignment: fundraising. “That’s not what I’m interested in at all,” Spieler responded, bewildered. He hadn’t even mentioned fundraising during his interview. “I was pissed off,” he says today (“Candy Striper” 156).

The organizational infrastructure that exists to support senior volunteers needs to respond to the diverse interests of a new generation of volunteers. Once a compatible infrastructure is in place, an effort towards volunteer recruitment can begin.

Volunteer Recruitment of Older Adults

In the same survey conducted by the Independent Sector, almost two-thirds of volunteers age 55 and over indicated that they had discovered volunteer opportunities through their place of worship, church, mosque or synagogue. The role that religious institutions play to influence the motivation for older adults to participate in volunteer service is critically important. I once had the opportunity to serve on the social concerns committee through a local church. The small group represented the interests of several hundred members, and made decisions that committee members felt were most appropriate based on our institutions commitment to support the community. Often, these decisions were influenced by the suggestions from the committee staff liaison that had relationships with local community and social service agencies. The committee selected only those activities to which church members could make a meaningful contribution, and where the church could confidently fulfill the obligations required by the agency, including the number of volunteers needed and hours contributed.

The second-ranking reason for older adults becoming involved in community service was that they had been asked. (Independent Sector 8) Volunteer administrators play a

key role by inviting seniors to become involved in their organizations. A personal invitation extended to a potential volunteer can increase the likelihood of participation in community service activities. Active volunteers also play an external role by encouraging friends, family members, and others to commit to the same or other organizations they are familiar with. This is often equated with word-of-mouth recruitment strategies.

Recruitment efforts often vary dependent on the targeted population and identified task. This is true for the current senior population, and will become increasingly important with Baby Boomers. Most statistics and surveys consider Baby Boomers to represent those individuals born between 1946 and 1964. In accordance with this definition, a Baby Boomer is part of a generation that spans 18 years. Is it effective to use the same recruitment strategies for someone at the earlier end of the spectrum versus the end? In comparison, one might ask whether you would use the same recruitment strategies to recruit someone who is 25 years old, versus an individual who is 43 years old? This example incorporates the same difference in age range represented by Baby Boomers of 18 years.

CNS Vision to Enlist Senior Volunteers

In October 2000, The Corporation for National Service distributed a publication entitled “Recommendations of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National Service to the President and Congress” that included the following recommendation as part of the organizations vision for success in the 21st century.

“Make service an expectation for people in later life by expanding service opportunities for all senior citizens.” (5)

There are three ways in which the Corporation for National Service Board believes this can happen: 1) Increase the options and incentives to attract a broader base of elders. 2) Increase the base of programs across the country, expanding to organizations that have not previously involved seniors, and add more that represent minority elders. 3) Expand current programs and remove legislative restrictions limiting senior involvement in Corporation programs.

New initiatives have been implemented to increase the involvement of new retirees in Senior Corps programs. As an example, two-year demonstration projects have been developed to provide more challenging

opportunities. Marc Freedman and Linda Fried describe in “*Launching Experience Corps: Findings from a Two-Year-Study*” that the Experience Corps model was developed in partnership with Public/Private Ventures and the John Hopkins University School of Medicine to involve seniors in local schools working with youth on literacy (13). There are no eligibility requirements, except that an individual must be over the age of 55. The program provides flexibility in scheduling, leadership opportunities, and financial support for transportation costs. This has been one attempt to address the recruitment of new retirees, yet it fails to identify a long-term solution for the National Senior Service Corps.

The necessity for developing a new organizational model for the future of the National Senior Service Corps has become vital. The Board of Directors of the Corporation for National Service and the executive staff of the Senior Service Corps agree that to involve the next wave of seniors in Senior Corps programs depends on redesigning its existing structure. Jim Scheibel, past Director of the National Senior Service Corps describes that there is a “need to find other vehicles for senior service and to change at an organizational level.”

Elderhostel Service Programs

"The first year we did this we had a little trepidation. I 'd outlined quite a bit of work to be done that week, but the Elderhostelers had it all finished in three days."

Elderhostel is a non-profit organization founded in 1975 that provides learning experiences for older adults. Non-credit courses are offered to individuals age 55 and older on a wide variety of topics combined with inexpensive lodging for participants. The program is available at 1,900 sites including all 50 states and 75 countries around the world. "In 1992 Elderhostel Inc. introduced Service Programs in which hostellers provide volunteer service to worthy causes around the world in cooperation with well established public service organizations" (Elderhostel History). Projects have included environmental research, teaching English, and helping children with serious illnesses.

The following describes the experience of one individual working with Elderhostel members through the Service Programs initiative.

"Frank Hays, regeneration specialist for Grand Canyon National Park, claims he gets 600 hours of solid labor out of each 20-person group. "The first year we did this we had a little trepidation. I'd outlined quite a bit of work to be done that week, but

the Elderhostelers had it all finished in three days. That's been the general trend ever since; they always exceed our expectations" (Tennessee 34).



The combination of an educational experience, conducted in areas throughout the world, could be implemented at a more local level throughout Senior Corps programs. Volunteers could combine a learning experience in their own communities, or in other areas around the country they want to explore. For example, a volunteer could attend courses on urban planning. After an introduction to urban development, the volunteer would then work alongside city developers to learn first hand the decision making process for the expansion or improvement of local neighborhoods. Volunteers could then work in partnership with service agencies to assist those affected by decisions made by city developers such as transportation, low-income housing and recreational sites for children. Opportunities to reflect on what the volunteer had learned would be incorporated throughout the experience.

IV. Profile of Baby Boomers and the Relationship to Volunteer

To increase older adult activity in community service, we must first possess a better understanding of Baby Boomers, more specifically their interests and motivations.

As every generation before and after them, Baby Boomers are distinguished by certain characteristics that represent their age group. To increase older adult activity in community service, we must first possess a better understanding of Baby Boomers, more specifically their interests and motivations. This knowledge can assist organizations and agencies seeking to increase the number of Baby Boomers serving in volunteer roles.

In 1998, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and Roper Starch Worldwide Inc. conducted a nationwide survey of 2,001 Americans between the ages of 33 and 52 to gain a better understanding of Baby Boomers and their interpretation of “retirement”. (Executive Part I). Through pre- and post- focus group sessions and an extensive telephone survey, they discovered an emergence of five very distinctive groups. (Executive Part II) Each segment has specific characteristics that distinguishes it from the other four.

The Strugglers (9%) – Of the five Baby Boomer segments, the Strugglers are the lowest income group, with a median household income nearly \$30,000 below that of the average Baby Boomer. This group is disproportionately comprised of females (64%) rather than males (36%). The Strugglers

are saving virtually no money for retirement, because they simply have no money to save. The Struggler, it seems, are not even in a position to prepare for retirement. Compared to other groups, they report having given relatively little thought to retirement (where they will live, what they will live on). A majority say they look ahead to their later years with very little sense of optimism.

The Anxious (23%) – The Anxious are best characterized by their sense of apprehension when they look ahead to their later years. Although they fall below the average Baby Boomer’s household income level (by approximately \$10,000), with their limited means, they currently strive to put some money aside for retirement. But the Anxious do not expect to be rewarded with financial well-being when they retire. Indeed, many do not expect to be able to stop working. In addition to their anxieties about their retirement finances, the Anxious also express great concern about their health care coverage during their retirement years.

The Enthusiasts (13%) – Unlike the Strugglers and the Anxious, who fear not having enough money in retirement and look forward to their later years with very little optimism, the Enthusiasts could hardly be more eager to reach their retirement years. A defining characteristic of

this group is that Enthusiasts, without exception, do not plan to work *at all* during retirement. Indeed, they envision having plenty of money and plenty of time for recreation. For them, retirement promises to be a time free of the rigors of working.

The Self Reliants (30%) – The Self Reliant segment, which boasts the highest income and educational level of any group in the segmentation, has the resources to save and is aggressively putting money into retirement- oriented investments. However, in contrast to the Enthusiasts, the Self Reliants want to continue working at least part time after they retire. Indeed, the contrast with the Enthusiasts could not be more striking: whereas all of the Enthusiasts expect to stop working, only 1% of the Self Reliants expect not to work at all. What motivates the Self Reliants to continue working is not the pay, but rather the interest and enjoyment that work provides.

Today's Traditionalists (25%) – In describing this group, who make up one quarter of the Boomer population, the word traditional comes to mind. This segment, in many of their attitudes toward Social Security and Medicare, seem to have a stronger sense of confidence and less of an attitude of uncertainty than the other segments

Baby Boomer Segment	Incentive (value added)	Incentive(social)	Incentive (financial)
The Strugglers	Flexible schedule, less challenging	Group camaraderie	Stipend, reimbursement for volunteer expenses, discount for medical expenses or prescription drugs, food/ banquet recognition, discount cards/ certificates/ coupons
The Anxious	Flexible schedule, special project, short-term, 1-day, or weekend opportunities, resume builder	Family opportunities, meet new people/ potential employers	Stipend, reimburse for volunteer expenses, support for health care expenses, accrue points/dollars to be cashed in for other services, prescription discount cards
The Enthusiasts	Flexible schedule, high impact opportunities, leadership or decision making opportunities, design own volunteer opportunity, cause oriented projects	Recreational and social activities (fun), self esteem builders, media recognition (newspaper, radio)	Chances/ drawings for cruises, trips, cultural activities, educational reimbursement, gift certificates to trendy restaurants
Self Reliants	Fulfilling and meaningful opportunities, utilize time and skill, challenging and self-starter positions, self-directed assignments		Reimbursement for volunteer expenses (travel, meals), recognition dollars allocated to nonprofit of choice
Today's Traditionalists	Flexible schedule		Support for medical expenses, exchange of services

Table 1

displayed toward these programs. But this group is not totally traditional: Today's Traditionalists plan both to work and to rely on Social Security and Medicare during retirement.

This survey indicates the diversity represented within the Baby Boomer generation as it spans nearly 20

years. It clearly defines how each segment will be motivated by different factors and will seek volunteer opportunities that fit within the context of their employment and financial status. They will also be enticed by a variety of incentives offered through their community service, both tangible and intangible.

As an example, Table 1 describes the type of incentives that might attract a Baby Boomer according to the characteristics for each segment as identified at the beginning of this section.

These are suggestions when considering the characteristics of each segment as outlined by the AARP/ Roper survey. It is important to remember that these are generalizations. “Perhaps the strongest message to be taken from the segments is that in the new millennium, Americans cannot expect a one-size-fits-all retirement; nor will it be feasible to offer one-size-fits-all retirement solutions” (Executive Part III). How does this relate to volunteer recruitment strategies for Baby Boomers? Precisely as described above. You cannot create a one-size-fits-all recruitment strategy for Baby Boomers. If you attempt to recruit everyone, you will recruit no one.

An organization must develop a variety of recruitment tools. We know from the Independent Sector report that the two most predominant forms of recruitment methods noted by older adults were through their religious institution and by being asked, but how is that information passed on and what other forms of recruitment have been successful with older adults?

Master Internet Volunteers

This has been a successful volunteer opportunity for older adults in the community who can learn a new skill, teach others what they have learned and offer flexibility in scheduling.

The Master Internet Volunteer program is coordinated through the East Central Regional Library located in Cambridge, Minnesota, a small rural community with a population of approximately 3,000 persons. Developed by the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the program enlists local volunteers to teach seniors the basics of how to access the Internet and to increase their proficiency in surfing the world wide web. The training is conducted at the library, which provides public access to computers and the Internet for limited periods of time. The Regional Library Director, Bob Boese, and volunteers from the Master Internet program reported that most users primarily seek access to email. (Master Internet Volunteers)

Rural community members, specifically the older adult population, do not necessarily possess their own personal computers. Those individuals who own computers may not be able to access the Internet due to the limited availability of direct service lines in rural communities. Master Internet Volunteers can assist those seniors who want to communicate with friends and family, and to increase

their proficiency in computer use.

Master Internet volunteers participate in six, 3-hour sessions before they begin to provide training to individuals enrolled in the program. Seniors registered in the program pay a nominal fee of \$65 that provides them with four, 3-hour sessions. Volunteers from the program said that most participants did not have their own computer before enrolling in the training. Upon completion of the program, most students have considered purchasing a computer for the first time or have already done so.

This has been a successful volunteer opportunity for older adults in the community who can learn a new skill, teach others what they have learned and offer flexibility in scheduling. It has also been successful in the community where it has now expanded into 2 local schools and the local community college. This type of activity offers three strong incentives for Baby Boomers of the future seeking community service opportunities: a develop an interest, time flexibility, and the opportunity to teach others.

IV. Strategies to Promote Volunteer Opportunities

The original design of the program, to assist the financial needs of seniors, is significantly less important than it was 35 years ago.

National Senior Service Corps Overview

The National Senior Service Corps began with the inception of the Foster Grandparent program in 1965. Foster Grandparents serve children with exceptional needs including mentoring troubled teenagers, to helping abused and neglected children. To be eligible as a Foster Grandparent an individual must be 60 or above and low-income. The volunteer serves 20 hours a week and receives a stipend of \$2.55 an hour. In addition, the Foster Grandparent receives accident, liability, and automobile insurance, if needed, as coverage during their assignment.

Five years later, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) originated to match older Americans willing to help with local problems. RSVP volunteers choose how and where they want to serve and determine the number of hours they want to contribute. RSVP volunteers help to tutor children, build and renovate homes, teach English to immigrants, and so much more. They do not receive a stipend for their service, but may be reimbursed for some out-of-pocket expenses including mileage and meals. In addition, RSVP provides insurance coverage for volunteers while on assignment.

The Senior Companion program was initiated in 1973 to assist older Americans to live independently.

Senior Companions provide assistance with daily living tasks for frail and homebound individuals, most of them elderly. Often they help clients with chores such as paying bills, buying groceries, and finding transportation to medical appointments. The same eligibility guidelines and benefits for Foster Grandparents are applied to those individuals serving as Senior Companions.

Originally, the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs were designed to meet two basic needs. The first was to involve seniors in community service, specifically working with the youth and elderly. The second was to provide financial assistance to low income seniors through a small stipend. According to John Keller, Director of Senior Corps Demonstration Projects, “over 30 percent of the senior population was living at or below poverty level”. Today, less than 10 percent of the same population is living in poverty. The original design of the program, to assist the financial needs of seniors, is significantly less important than it was 35 years ago.

The challenge now faced by The National Senior Service Corps is how to meet the needs of a new emerging senior population. They have been successful in assisting low-income seniors of the past through the provision of monetary support and increasing their involvement in

The challenge now faced by The National Senior Service Corps is how to meet the needs of a new emerging senior population.

community service, yet the needs of Baby Boomers are significantly different from those of their elders. As an example, in today's society our perception of wealth has become increasingly important. We now possess homes with three-car garages that serve to protect \$30,000 vehicles owned by each homeowner and a recreational boat for lake cruising. We model the latest fashion trends or designer label clothing to create an appearance of wealth. We place emphasis on owning household items that are "new", such as furniture, kitchen gadgets and stereo equipment. If this is true, why would an older adult, especially a Baby Boomer, want to associate with programs that are designed for low-income persons? The first step is to re-define what the National Senior Service Corps programs are, as a marketing product, according to the desires of their targeted audience, Baby Boomers.

Senior Corps Public Relations and Marketing Materials

The National Senior Service Corps has not relied solely on word of mouth strategies to recruit volunteers. They have developed marketing materials that project directors nationwide can utilize when promoting their programs. These items include everything from tri-fold brochures to videotapes profiling existing Senior Corps volunteers in action. Materials such as these can reinforce details that may be

discussed in one to one conversations with prospective volunteers. They can also be left as a reminder in local establishments for individuals who are not present or who may visit on an occasional basis. These forms of advertisement help to entice older adults to serve in senior corps programs, yet, do they accurately portray Baby Boomers?

Jan Newsome, Public Affairs officer for the Corporation for National Service, developed the most recent Senior Corps materials that were distributed to Project Directors across the country in November 2000. The project was initiated by the impending 2000 National Senior Corps conference to be held in Orlando Florida, and the necessity for something "new". Both the current program videos and brochures had not been re-designed in over 5 years. Newsome recommends that every 2 to 3 years, new materials be produced to accurately portray program activity and its members. Utilizing limited resources and time, local focus groups were conducted to solicit participant's commentary on three key issues related to current public relations materials, specifically program brochures.

- 1) What do you like/ dislike about the brochures?
- 2) Is the font (type) too small?
- 3) Do the images (pictures) accurately portray Senior Corps volunteers?

Based on these responses, Newsome began the process of re-designing brochures for each of the three programs including Senior Companion, Foster Grandparent and RSVP, and an overview brochure describing all three. She also sought the opinion of local project directors and executive members from Senior Corps program associations in developing final drafts.

Newsome expressed a goal she established at the beginning of the project, which was to steer away from a "government" look. Past materials had been created with only two colors: blue and grey. Photos depicting volunteers were printed in various shades of grey and left a "cold" and uninviting feeling for viewers. In addition, the font was relatively small for senior readers and was laden with text.

The final brochures offer a vibrant and colorful description of Senior Corps programs that can be used to attract older adults for community service. They are significantly more appealing by one single virtue: color. The font size has been increased for



easier reading, and at the same time, has reduced the amount of text used to describe program activity and origination. A unique addition to each brochure is the inclusion of quotes from Senior Corps volunteers. They eloquently and succinctly describe their experiences, as in the two following examples.

“I’ve always felt I could get inside people and help them. I take each person as an individual, and see how I can help them get better” – Senior Companion Hercules Johnson (Senior Companion)

“Volunteering is a way of life for me. RSVP shows me how much good we can do for the community.” RSVP volunteer Dorothy Yonemitsu (RSVP)

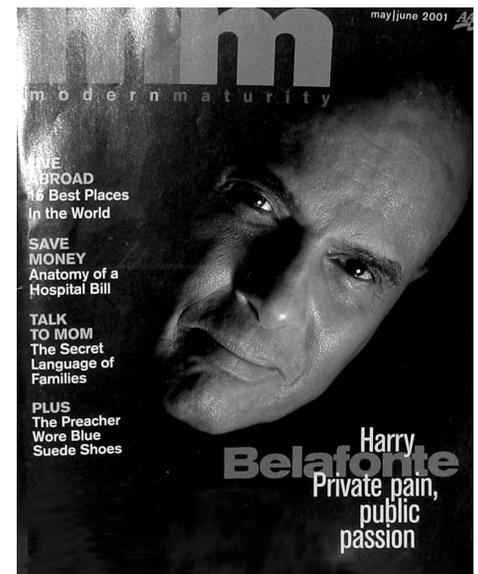
These materials are a significant improvement for promoting Senior Corps programs to current older adults, but will they be effective in recruiting Baby Boomers? I inquired of Ms. Newsome whether any consideration was given to the Baby Boomer generation in developing the most recent public relations materials. She indicated that only the RSVP items were considered for incorporating specific elements that might captivate Baby Boomers. There may not be reason for concern if new products are developed every two years, although, other organizations have begun to address this more aggressively, most notably AARP.

AARP Targeting its Members

James R. Rosenfield, a leading speaker and writer on marketing and direct marketing, wrote an article in August 1998 for **Direct Marketing** titled “Boomers and branding: the agonies of AARP”. In the article, Rosenfield illustrates the challenges faced by AARP in attracting a diverse Baby Boomer generation. He describes the distribution of a recent mailing by AARP that advertised free software, coordinated in partnership with AOL. The front cover of the mailer depicts a black and white photo of a couple jitterbugging, while the back displays a color close-up of the left tail of a 1955 Thunderbird with the words “If you danced to The Beatles, cruised in a Thunderbird, or tuned into Dick Clark you have earned...” Rosenfield goes on to explain that the dichotomy between all of the scenarios portrayed could not be more diverse. “Experiencing adolescence in the 50’s (Thunderbird, Dick Clark, photo of jitterbuggers) was a mite different from adolescence in the 60’s (The Beatles)” (Rosenfield). The extreme diversity between the two age brackets needs to be separated. Once they are blended together they lose their effectiveness in attracting either party.

More recently, AARP has begun to take an aggressive approach for attracting Baby Boomers. In the Fall of 2000 they announced that their magazine “Modern Maturity”, would

evolve into 3 publications distributed to its members. (AARP targets) The first would be the addition of a new publication titled “My Generation” for those individuals between the ages of 50 and 55. The other two magazines would be titled “Modern Maturity”, although redesigned for its audience members. The first edition would be for individuals between the ages of 55 and 65, the second edition would



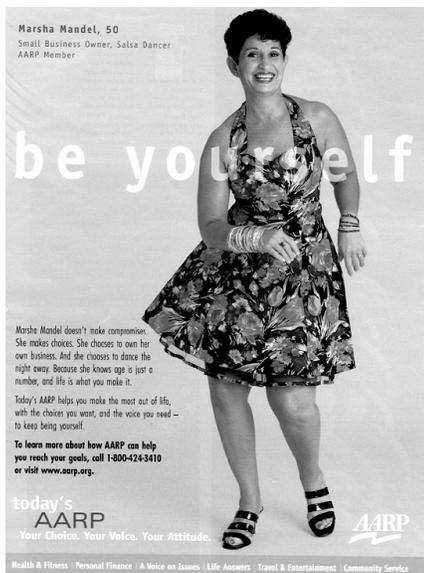
“Modern Maturity” magazine, May/June

be for anyone over the age of 65. Everything from the pictures that grace the publication cover, to the articles featured within the magazine, is geared to its targeted audience.

The oxymoron is that Baby Boomers are aware of aging, but deny the physical signs that are attributed to getting older such as gray hair, baldness, and wrinkles. In some sense though Baby Boomers are no different from any other aging generation that

often retains a self-image that lags by nearly 10 years. A recent advertisement promoting AARP membership in the April 2nd edition of **People** magazine depicts a 50 year old woman who is identified as a small business owner, salsa dancer, and AARP member. She is prominently displayed wearing a bright, sleeveless, flower-print dress against a subtle gold backdrop. She shows little sign of aging, which becomes most obvious when reviewing one specific physical feature: a head of black hair absent of anything remotely gray.

As consumers we identify with those images that most closely resemble our own self, whether they truly exist or not. If Baby Boomers deny societal stereotypes of ageism, how will they



AARP Advertisement-2001

perceive marketing materials that promote complacency with growing older? Will they be motivated to take

action or brush it aside. If we know that this generation is more active and independent, and are not content with the historical definition of retirement, we need to determine how to better portray their own view of aging and incorporate that image into marketing materials.

Labels and Definitions Applicable for Aging Adults

In our society we have a tendency to name things. We apply these terms to nearly everything we can see, touch, or hear that enables us to communicate with others in relative terminology. This also applies to our status as we continue to age. There are several words used to describe our transformation into each new phase of life such as newborn, infant, toddler, adolescence, young adult, and middle age. What lingers in the minds of many communication and marketing professionals is what expression to use for Baby Boomers as they make the transition from middle age to older adult status.

Peter D. Hart Associates conducted a national survey in 1999 for Civic Ventures titled "The New Face of Retirement: Older Americans, Civic Engagement, and the Longevity Revolution". They conducted a poll among 803 older Americans age 50 to 75 that included 452 retirees and 351 non-retirees. One of the earliest questions in their survey was related to the topic of a label for individuals over the age of 65. When asked what

label they preferred in describing people age 65 and over, a third of the respondents chose 'Seniors'. Other selections included Older Adults, Older Americans, and Retirees. The question that followed sought which label they found most objectionable. The first two choices by over half of the respondents included The Elderly and Golden Agers.

Establishing a label for Baby Boomers as they continue to age will be extremely difficult. Using terminology that more accurately describes each age group over 65 would seem appropriate. As an example, while riding the El Train in Chicago, I noted a sign that requested seated passengers to relinquish their chairs if children or seniors were on board. What might be more appropriate is to replace the word 'seniors' with 'elderly'. To illustrate this example, I witnessed during that same ride, a petite woman with shoulders hunched forward, shuffled aboard the El and took a seat next to the entrance of our car. In observing her, I found that describing her as a senior would be appropriate, but the term elderly would more accurately describe her frail state.

Terminology is just one side of the coin. If we flip the coin over, we also find that each word possesses a definition that provides meaning and relevance to each expression.

Brand Identification for Senior Corps Programs

Certain words can stir images in our mind that help us to identify with specific products, services, institutions, brands, or businesses. These images may or may not correspond with reality or actuality. Sometimes the image of “what is” can be more important than “what actually is”. Institutions seek to distinguish their services from other providers. What makes them unique is their brand.

A brand is your image, your identity; it’s who you are. Your brand is part of a total experience each time a consumer is in contact with your organization. “Important and very visible focal points for your brand include advertising, logos, and slogans.” (VOA Communication Guide 2) The importance of consistency and accuracy can never be underestimated. It assists to build the identity of your organization or program in the community.

The National Senior Service Corps as a whole has struggled to gain the same name recognition as other senior and community service providers. Part of this may be dependent on a variety of factors including a name change that occurred in 1993 when the Senior Corps programs that originated under Action, evolved into the National Senior Service Corps. This occurred as part of the reauthorization of the Domestic

Volunteer Service Act in 1993.

Two of three Senior Corps programs have proven more successful in gaining public recognition, including Senior Companion and Foster Grandparent. Their success may be dependent on one factor: the simplicity of their name and how it relates to the “action” of the volunteer service. Both programs are simple to define and can easily be envisioned by consumers based on their namesake alone. The third program, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), has struggled in attaining the same distinction.

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program provides a wide array of services in partnership with numerous community agencies and organizations. RSVP volunteers might serve as construction workers at a Habitat for Humanity project, read to children at local schools, visit patients in area hospitals, and so much more. Due to the variety of services provided by RSVP volunteers, it is difficult to recognize their service in one distinctive manner.

In addition, due to the multiple partnerships utilized to support local RSVP programs, community members can associate with the program through several entities. As an example, RSVP is part of the National Senior Service Corps, but also affiliated with a sponsoring

agency that provides administrative support to the program. The program has also established partnerships with local agencies and organizations where RSVP volunteers spend their time. This can be very confusing as volunteers and community members try to determine the identity of RSVP.

Also, there has been significant discussion amongst program directors regarding what their program name portrays. If Baby Boomers are not satisfied with being identified as retirees or seniors, how appealing is a program titled the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program or Senior Companions. To alleviate this situation, RSVP Program directors have increasingly used the acronym for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program to avoid any misinterpretation or speculation that a potential volunteer might envision.

Lastly, marketing materials created for each of the three programs always include the National Senior Service Corps logo. In some regards they are marketing multiple brands. Should this be considered as a form of co-branding, or as some marketing professionals might call it, third party endorsements? It may be the best avenue to gain organizational recognition among consumers, but it may also create confusion for constituents trying to distinguish individual program services.

Community Barter Network

The 64-year former garment worker smiled when four women entered her room with flowers and reassuring faces...The visitors were not family or longtime friends but participants in an unusual program based on the barter of volunteer services.

The Community Barter Network (CBN) at Pillsbury House in Minneapolis, Minnesota is based on the "time dollar" concept, developed by Edgar Cahn of the Time Dollar Institute. The system allows for neighbors to provide each other services in exchange for credit where one hour is worth one credit. Credits that are earned can be "cashed in" for services or to purchase personal care and other items from a Time Dollar store.

"Members offer a wide variety of services, including massage, pet sitting, tutoring, jewelry making, plumbing classes, minor household repairs, tax preparation, cooking, and much more. Members and the services each offers are listed in a Directory that is re-issued periodically. In general, the consumer pays for materials, while the participant does a small-scale, time-limited service as negotiated with the consumer. The importance of good communication and ethical behavior is emphasized when exchanges are negotiated" (Collard summary).

Other organizations have developed the time dollar concept in their own communities. The following story illustrates its value.

"Elsa Martinez sat in her bed...Doctors had told her she had a brain tumor. Still, the 64-year former garment worker smiled when four women entered her room with flowers and reassuring faces...The visitors were not family or longtime friends but participants in an unusual program based on the barter of volunteer services. For several months Martinez had helped other seniors by shopping, cleaning and driving them around- earning along the way 20 hours of "service credits." Last year Martinez broke her leg and began "spending" the credits. Daily visitors, each earning points themselves, came to help her with chores. "When you're sick, they come," she whispered from her hospital bed" (Cahn 98).

Offering community volunteers the opportunity to earn credit for services could be an intriguing incentive for Baby Boomers. This could help alleviate fears that Baby Boomers might have regarding their financial status as they continue to age.

IV. Findings from Study

This process offered tangible evidence to support or challenge any assumptions regarding their (Baby Boomers) involvement in community service.

Research Design

Following my preliminary research regarding the motivations and interests of Baby Boomers related to community service, I conducted four focus groups with Baby Boomers to determine what they sought in volunteer opportunities. This process offered tangible evidence to support or challenge any assumptions regarding their involvement in community service. It also provided the opportunity to test the data collected from interviews with volunteer and senior service field experts regarding their supposition for involving Baby Boomers.

A total of four focus groups were conducted within a two-month period. Two were conducted in the Twin Cities Metro Area, while the other two were located in the East Central Township of Mora, Minnesota. This would assist to determine the interests of individuals representative of both rural and urban communities. Each focus group consisted of 6 participants, except for the fourth group that was composed of 5 members. The only criterion for focus group participation was that an individual be born between 1946 and 1964. Equal representation of males and females was sought.

I enlisted fellow students from the Organizational Leadership graduate

program at the College of St. Catherine for the first focus group. The East Central Minnesota RSVP Director selected various community leaders for the second group. Members for the third group were identified by the businesses Human Resource Director at a metro area business office from a list of all employees born between 1946 and 1964 and selecting every eighth person. The East Central Minnesota RSVP Volunteer Coordinator arranged the fourth group inclusive of friends and colleagues in extension service, religious institutions and local businesses.

The first group was conducted at the College of St. Catherine campus with graduate students representing three different business areas including non-profit, for-profit and government sectors. There were 5 females and 1 male in attendance. The second was conducted at the Mora Chamber of Commerce with 4 females and 2 males present representing both the non-profit and for-profit sectors. The third group was held in a metro area business with 1 male and 5 female employees who participated. The final group was located in the Public Service building in Mora that involved 2 female and 3 male individuals with representation from all three sectors. Most participants were employed full time. Two exceptions included a woman that had retired in the last

year and a woman in the third group who indicated that she had retired from her full time position, but had returned to work on a parttime basis.

A discussion guide was developed to ensure that each group was conducted in similar fashion, making the results more reliable. (Appendix A) Assistance to create the discussion guide was provided by a current and retired research specialist at General Mills, Inc. The first questions inquired about an individual's 'favorite' volunteer activity. The second sought information about each participant's involvement and recruitment in all community service activities. The final segment questioned each person's view of retirement. The questions were established to understand what volunteer activities were attractive to Baby Boomers, how they were recruited for community service, and what view they held of their own future. The following summary outlines the general themes that developed from the focus groups, and concludes with general observations made throughout the sessions.

Motivations for Volunteering

To begin the discussion with focus group participants regarding their involvement with community service, each individual was asked to share what he/she considered to be a "favorite" volunteer activity. A

majority of participants from all four groups indicated activities working with youth including mentoring children in school settings, coaching for youth sports, leading 4-H or Scout groups, chaperoning international mission trips abroad, and teaching horseback riding. Other activities without a youth focus included Red Cross, advocacy for families and children with learning disabilities, support for single women, assembly of hygiene products for shelters, collection of gifts for children of imprisoned persons, and dog training.

After having the opportunity to consider their favorite volunteer activity, participants were asked to describe why they selected that particular activity over all other volunteer activities. Their replies included the unpredictability of working with youth, an opportunity to try new things that one might not otherwise try, knowing that you provided information and options to an individual not aware of choices, stretching your own mind, setting an example for your own children, and getting involved with something that makes you feel good. One participant quoted, "If it made you

feel bad, why would you do it. Everyone gets involved because it makes you feel good!" Graph 1 summarizes the motivational factors, prioritized from greatest to least, described by Baby Boomers. The percentages indicate the number of responses clearly mentioned by participants according to the motivational factor.

Three of the four groups considered



Graph 1

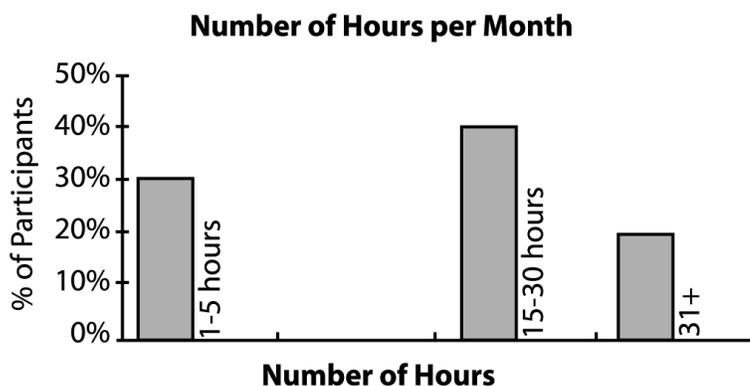
the amount of time they spend on average per month volunteering. Some of the participants were challenged to determine a monthly amount, while others were more confident. Responses were very broad, from 2 to 40 hours, and sometimes were dependent on the time of year. A woman from the third group indicated that she spent more time during the summer months because she enjoyed opportunities to work outside, in comparison with volunteering during cold, winter months. The third group had two members who

contributed 20 to 30 hours per month, primarily through their religious institution. Graph 2 provides a profile of their responses.

Volunteer Recruitment

The second part of the discussion asked participants to describe how they had been recruited for their volunteer work. Three of the four

through an association or religious institution. Religious institutions served as the vehicle to make a direct impact in the volunteers' own community. These organizations coordinated service activities that would benefit their own neighbors. Secondly, participants indicated involvement with youth activities such as mentoring and tutoring.



Graph 2

focus groups had an initial response indicating through a personal invitation. The first response by the fourth group was through their children's activities, the second was by being asked.

Table 2 identifies the four primary sources for recruitment as suggested by focus group participants. It distinguishes the collective responses between both rural and metro focus group participants. Each individual may have noted more than one source for recruitment.

The significant similarity among groups included involvement

Girls Club.

Each group had different views related to recruitment, more specifically, between the metro and rural groups.

As an example, participants in the metro area indicated recruitment opportunities through various marketing tools such as roadside billboards, brochures in grocery

stores, and solicitation through phone calls. They also became involved through activities sponsored by their employer, most often 1-day or short-term opportunities. Those participants from the rural community did not mention marketing materials, but instead mentioned an invitation through child's activity or through a co-worker. Those members from the rural community also said that community needs are always apparent. One participant from the fourth group said, "The community values volunteerism. When debating whether or not to do something, there's enough support around you to encourage your involvement. If you don't say 'no', it becomes assumed that you will". Through further discussion, they expressed how trying something new in small community is much easier than attempting something new in a

Participants from the rural area supported 4-H activities, where members from the metro area spent time at the YMCA or Boys and

Source	Rural	Metro
Religious Institution (n=14)	50%	50%
Children Activity (n=19)	47%	53%
Employer (n=7)		100%
Marketing Materials (n=5)		100%

Table 2

suburban community, where individuals more experienced could fill specific volunteer roles more easily.

Three of the four groups were asked whether they had sought information on volunteer opportunities through the Internet. All three indicated that they had not and that it was unnecessary to seek information about what was needed in the community.

Incentives Now and for the Future

The first focus group spent the most significant amount of time contemplating what incentives, both tangible and intangible, would attract them in the future for volunteer service. One particular individual commented that, "Benefits will be a big thing to Baby Boomers." The following are some of their suggestions. Other groups described incentives in their past and current activities such as helping someone in the

community, working within a social network, and giving back. Several of the participants indicated the importance of doing something that was in their community so that they were able to make a direct contribution where they lived.

Baby Boomer View of Retirement

Throughout my preliminary research, and with the assumptions made before the start of this study, I understood the diversity and magnitude in which Baby Boomers' conceptualized retirement. Some individuals refuse to embrace the word retirement, while others have no reserve in defining their status at some point in life by that term. For those persons representative of the Baby Boomer generation that accept the expression "retirement", there is extreme diversity in how they

interpret its meaning.

The basis of my research was to try and define what would motivate Baby Boomers in the future. To better understand this, I inquired how each focus group viewed retirement, using whatever definition they attributed to the term. I prefaced this statement by explaining that there are numerous interpretations of retirement, but asked participants to explain what it means to them personally.

Throughout the focus groups, most individuals expressed that they would no longer be bound to a 9 to 5 employment status. They shared that there would be more time for participating in volunteer activities, although, selecting only those that made good use of their time. A member from the fourth focus group declared that retirement would be "getting up to do what you want to do, not what you have to do." Another participant from the same group stated that, "At that time, (I) can now say no." He further explained that it offers the opportunity to excuse himself from involvement.

Throughout each group, there was consensus that they would maintain a busy schedule and that volunteer activity would need to offer flexibility to accommodate a busy lifestyle. An individual from the second group described that they would no longer

Future Baby Boomer Incentives

Tangible:

- 1) Have someone return a service for a service. As an example, help with gardening, shopping, shoveling
- 2) Discount on prescription drugs
- 3) Accrue time dollars that can be "cashed in" for other services later in life
- 4) Frequent flyer miles
- 5) Free or discounted tuition
- 6) Provide transportation

Intangible:

- 1) Companionship or opportunities to volunteer as a group
- 2) Offering volunteer opportunities that can be done from home

do the same volunteer activities as in the past, such as serving on local boards and advisory councils. Several individuals indicated that they would not seek activities similar to their occupational careers, but would pursue volunteer work that was an interest or something new they wanted to try.

The two focus groups conducted in the metro community had members that contributed intriguing commentary based on experience and observation. A woman that worked part-time in a corporate environment had already “retired” from a full time position, but needed to return to the workforce because she had spent significant amounts of money on out-of-pocket expenses for her volunteer work. Her husband had persuaded her to return to work, so that she could “afford” her volunteer experience.

A male executive corporate employee shared that “retirement used to mean ‘quit work, play, and die’”. In today’s society it no longer retains that same definition, but conveys that retirement is not an end. His view was partially based on the recent heart attack he had suffered, due to a stressful environment at work. What he sought was to enhance his life experience each and every day since that time, especially through volunteering.

Overview

Recruitment of Baby Boomers will encompass more than just marketing materials. It is apparent from the focus groups that were conducted, that the type of opportunities and incentives available to Baby Boomers as they grow older will be a significant factor for their involvement in future community service. The importance of flexibility in time and opportunities that can involve an entire family or social circle will be more attractive to Baby Boomers than those volunteer tasks that are done alone or have restrictive time schedules. This generation will also seek opportunities where they can contribute directly in their community and can visually see what a difference they have made.

Most likely, Baby Boomers in the rural areas will continue to learn about community needs through their children’s and grandchildren’s schools, 4-H activities and religious institutions. These individuals have expressed apprehension regarding the amount of time they might contribute or whether they will participate in similar activities where they are currently sharing their time. Motivational factors will play a pivotal role in recruitment strategies. Efforts can be focused on flexibility and the opportunity to try something new.

Those individuals in urban settings will also continue to participate in volunteer activities through religious organizations, although it will be necessary to identify how to fill the void of awareness offered through employers. Local neighborhood associations may benefit from promoting community needs that can be addressed by residents living in the same area. Also, service organizations like the Senior Corps programs can promote the opportunity for Baby Boomers to contribute their time directly in their own community, possibly even within a few blocks of home.

Marketing materials utilized to recruit Baby Boomers will need to be developed that specifically target individuals from that generation. At each focus group, I used the National Senior Service Corps brochure to introduce my research as it related to the Corporation for National Service. Questions directly related to marketing materials, such as the brochure, were not incorporated into my discussion guide. The amount of time I estimated to collect data on each participant’s volunteer activity and future service restricted my ability to seek feedback directly related to public relations materials. Members of the first focus group loudly objected to the portrayal of individuals in the brochure, as it would relate to them in the future. One participant noted that an older

woman sitting alongside an elderly female in a hospital bed did not portray herself as she imagined in the future. The volunteer was too old and had too much gray hair. Others continued to explain that the brochure was completely inaccurate for the aging Baby Boomer population and that it did not appeal to them. Their generation was far more vital and youthful than what the brochure seemed to illustrate for their aging population.

The development and implementation of a change process to increase Baby Boomer involvement will not be easy. It requires the National Senior Service Corps to accept periods of tension and conflict as part of the learning process. Margaret Wheatley suggests, "Only chaos creates the abyss in which we can recreate ourselves" (Wheatley 119). Leaders of the National Senior Service Corps can achieve this transformation if they are willing to create their own path towards success.

Senior Attorney Volunteers for Discipline (SAVD)

This provides an opportunity for older adults to work alongside younger members of the state bar, and the ability to conduct work at a time of their choice when employed on a part-time basis.

The Public Law Section of the State Bar of California has sought participation by its members in the Senior Attorney Volunteers for Discipline (SAVD) program, as part of the Senior Lawyer Section. The idea was generated by Judy Johnson, Chief Trial Counsel, due to the continuing unmet needs within the Discipline System. Volunteer duties include the following:

- 1) **Probation Monitoring**, to assist the Bar and Respondent Attorneys in complying with court-ordered conditions. This volunteer activity is especially attractive to the 31,503 Inactive Member of the Bar because they would not be “practicing law” in this monitoring activity.
- 2) **Unauthorized Practice of Law (UPL) Cases**, to protect the public and the profession from unlicensed and unqualified individuals who practice law in California.
- 3) **6180/90 Cases**, to assume the jurisdiction over, and to secure the possession of, files of clients of disbarred, resigned, suspended, deceased, incapacitated (physically or mentally; alcohol or drug abuse)

attorneys in order to return active files to clients to protect their extant interests; to seek extensions of time limits in courts as necessary; to collect and protect trust funds and general account funds on behalf of clients; to obtain whatever orders are necessary to carry out the mandates of the statutes.

- 4) **Contempts**, to enforce Supreme Court and State Bar Court disciplinary orders re: suspension from practice.(SAVD)

The SAVD Program is available to all state bar members, not only Senior Law members. This provides an opportunity for older adults to work alongside younger members of the state bar, and the ability to conduct work at a time of their choice when employed on a part-time basis. In addition, it provides support within a system of government that is severely understaffed. Similar programs might be adapted to the special talents of other professional groups, such as Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) for retired executives.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Organizations such as the National Senior Service Corps must re-define who they are to meet the desires of this new and emerging generation of older adults, Baby Boomers.

Creation of Infrastructure to Support Baby Boomer Volunteers

At the onset of my research, I sought to identify a list of new approaches that could be utilized in the recruitment of Baby Boomers for volunteer service. I quickly discovered that recruitment strategies are only one part of a much broader issue. Organizations such as the National Senior Service Corps must re-define who they are to meet the desires of this new and emerging generation of older adults, the Baby Boomers. If they continue to recruit using the same marketing materials and place Baby Boomers within existing programs, they will fail to involve a much larger proportion of individuals representative of this generation.

The process of creating a new infrastructure to support Baby Boomer involvement in Senior Service programs will demand the involvement of all stakeholders. The implementation of new incentives and volunteer opportunities that provide flexibility can help in the design of a new organizational infrastructure to engage newly retirees in Senior Corps programs. “We must embark on a major marketing effort communicating that the aging of America is a great opportunity for individuals and society, a massive call to action that replaces the long-standing message

that older adults are superfluous with one that conveys to these individuals that they are not only needed but also have an essential contribution to make” (Freedman 233). The National Senior Service Corps can become an organization that meets the desires of Baby Boomers, but first it must address the population they are seeking to involve and the infrastructure that is in place for their participation.

Revised Marketing Techniques

When the National Senior Service Corps developed new marketing materials to recruit volunteers, they also created a 7-minute video for each program that provides a visual tour of each program. Throughout each brief overview, volunteers are shown sharing their time in local communities while conducting a variety of tasks. There is a mixture of messages during each presentation using visual imagery, written text, words spoken by volunteers, and background music. I found each video engaging, conveying the significance for volunteer involvement that could be applied by Baby Boomers.

At the same time, I became concerned with some of the messages that might reach the audience at a more subconscious level. For example, the Senior Companion video has one volunteer

The National Senior Service Corps can become an organization that meets the desires of Baby Boomers, but first it must address the population they are seeking to involve and the infrastructure that is in place for their participation.

who provides testimony on her experience and why she got involved. She expresses that one reason she became a Senior Companion volunteer was that she can befriend someone locally in her own community, and hopes that in exchange someone is doing the same for her mother who lives much further away. She also says that when she becomes older, she hopes that someone else will be there to befriend her. If Baby Boomers envision themselves as a much younger generation, far away from an elderly state, and not necessarily interested in seeing what they will become, would they be motivated to share time with an elderly member of their community that will remind them of their impending elder state? The message should remain focused on how to make a difference within the community, and the incentive that Senior Companion can provide for friendship.

In an earlier section, I mentioned the significance of diversity represented within the Baby Boomer generation. We know that characteristically they are segmented into five groups that can serve to identify motivational factors. This 18-year span that they embody is extremely broad. Now add another generation that spreads over 17 years. The total between the 2 generations identifies an age range that expands over 35 years, the same age range for individuals eligible for

Senior Corps program. How can the National Senior Service Corps effectively and accurately recruit to such a broad age range spanning nearly 35 years? Also, with the growing rate of the aging population, we now see volunteers well past the age of 90 helping out in community service, expanding the age range even further for attracting Senior Corps volunteers.

The National Senior Corps program videos portray older adult volunteers, but not enough to distinguish among different age groups. It is far too challenging to depict such a diverse population within a single advertisement. The National Senior Service Corps must create a variety of recruitment tools that portray separate age groups, segmented characteristically and by motivational factors in order to be successful in attracting a greater number of Baby Boomers for community service.

Implementation of Incentives and Volunteer Roles Attractive to Baby Boomers

The transformation of the aging population foreseen in the next 20 years will dictate the necessity for increased volunteer involvement in all service areas. The effects of these changes have not yet been realized, but the opportunity to identify how to adjust our existing methods is

more essential than ever. The National Senior Service Corps can demonstrate this new model for senior involvement through its own programs.

Throughout this summary, overviews have been provided of organizations and programs that have been successful in recruiting the younger, older adult. They possess elements related to volunteer roles and incentives that can be implemented in Senior Corps programs. The following lists some of the preliminary steps that the National Senior Service Corps can take to begin this process.

Volunteer Roles:

- 1) Develop unique opportunities that offer volunteers educational learning experiences and tuition reimbursement.
- 2) Incorporate an exchange program for snowbirds living in different locations throughout the year (a network within the National Senior Service Corps).
- 3) Establish short-term volunteer opportunities that offer flexibility in scheduling.
- 4) Increase intergenerational activities for Baby Boomers seeking to work with youth.

Incentives:

- 1) Offer volunteers an opportunity to "build a bank" of hours or dollars that can be cashed in for

-
- their own personal benefit.
- 2) Create a "buddy system" that allows volunteers to be absent on a short-term basis, but provides coverage for their position while gone. It also provides an opportunity for camaraderie and friendship.
 - 3) Provide incentives that address the growing concerns of Baby Boomers such as discounted prescription drugs or reduced health care costs.

Senior Service Corps is prepared to embark on a new journey, for creating an environment that can welcome all older adults in community service.

To determine if these or other initiatives would be successful in Senior Corps programs, the continuation of demonstration projects must be supported. This would be through the provision of allocated funds to conduct these and similar activities on a short-term, trial basis.

New Vision for the National Senior Service Corps

The National Senior Service Corps needs to identify how it envisions itself in the future to support the aging population. These and other suggestions made throughout this summary are recommendations. Experts in the volunteer and senior service fields, past and current Senior Corps staff, and Baby Boomers themselves have suggested how to address the involvement of this extremely diverse and aging population. The question that remains is whether the National

Appendix

A) Discussion Guide

(Appendix A)

*How to Recruit Newly Retirees in Community Service
Focus Groups
February-March, 2001*

Introduction

Introduce self and purpose of groups: By the year 2030, it is estimated that 49 percent of the population will be over the age of 55. This research is being conducted to better understand how to recruit newly retirees in community service, specifically the Baby Boomer generation, and their motivation for involvement in volunteerism.

Cover ground rules: Taping, candidness, everyone participate
 Don't raise hand to speak, and don't have side conversations
 6 members present, 1/6 of conversation from each participant
 Be honest, not all will agree

Participant introductions: Name
 A favorite leisure activity

Discussion of Favorite Volunteer Activity:

Tell me about your favorite volunteer activity.

What made you select this particular activity besides other ones?

What do (did) you enjoy most about this volunteer position?

Examples: Meet new people, want to do something good, learn new skill, opportunity for training/ education

General Volunteer Activity:

On average, in a typical year, approximately how many hours per month do you volunteer?

Is your volunteer work similar to your occupational career?

How have you been recruited for your volunteer position (s)?

Examples: Spouse/ Advertisement/ Employer/ Friend/Organizational Website/Religious Organization

Retirement

People have different interpretations of retirement. Can you explain what it means to you? What images or thoughts come to your mind when you think of retirement?

After you retire from your main job or type of work, do you plan to work for pay at another job, that is, a job other than the one that you retire from? Do you plan to work at that job part-time or full-time?

When you retire, do you expect your involvement in volunteer or community service activities to increase or decrease, or stay about the same?

Will your volunteer activity during retirement be similar to what you do now?

Where have you sought advice when planning for retirement?

Examples: Employer/ Consultant/ Family / Friends/ None

Wrap Up

THANK YOU!

Will send you summary of focus group

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