



## Current Initiatives in Volunteerism at the RGK Center for Philanthropy & Community Service

**MISSION STATEMENT:** The mission of the RGK Center is to build knowledge about nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, and volunteerism, and to prepare students and practitioners to make effective contributions to their communities.

One of the distinguishing features of the nonprofit sector is the engagement of volunteers in all aspects of organizational work. Volunteers perform important policy work through their participation on boards of directors, they advocate for causes of significance, engage in planning and visioning committees and donate countless hours of direct and indirect support to clients and causes. Furthering the effective engagement of volunteers through high quality management is an educational, research and outreach priority for the RGK Center. These are a few of our ongoing initiatives.

### **SERVICLEADER.ORG**

Serviceleader.org strives to provide volunteers and the leaders of volunteer initiatives with high-quality information that furthers the study and practice of volunteerism. The site offers specialized resources for volunteers, leaders and managers of volunteers, and those interested in advancing the field of volunteerism and volunteer resource management through instruction, research, and study. Site content is developed by Center faculty, guest authors, and students engaged in the study of volunteerism. An upcoming addition to the website is a collaborative “bookshelf” of the best research in volunteerism curated by RGK faculty and our colleagues at Reimagining Service. As part of this effort, a preliminary draft list of guiding research, reports, articles, and opinion pieces has just been posted. Please visit: <http://www.serviceleader.org/>.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INDEX**

The Community Engagement Index (CEI) is a tool designed by RGK Director Dr. Sarah Jane Rehnborg and Faculty Fellow Dr. Dennis Poole to assess a nonprofit organization’s capacity and success in engaging community resources and volunteers in its mission. A statistically reliable and valid survey instrument based on extensive research and stakeholder feedback, the CEI evolved from a national quality assessment research project funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Continuing research indicates that higher levels of community engagement capacity are linked to financial sustainability. The RGK Center is working to develop the CEI as a tool nonprofits can use to examine their culture and operational practices and build capacity to engage, inspire, and support volunteers, to collaborate and network with other organizations and agencies, to build goodwill and mission focus in the community, and to maximize their potential to develop as service institutions.

### **STRATEGIC VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT GUIDE**

What do nonprofit and public sector leaders need to know to work effectively with volunteers? What systems and strategies need to be in place to effectively engage volunteers? What misconceptions stand in the way of more effective volunteer involvement? These are just a few of the questions answered in the e-book *Strategic Volunteer Engagement: A Guide for Nonprofit and Public Sector Leaders*, written by the RGK Center's Sarah Jane Rehnborg with assistance from project associates Wanda Lee Bailey, Meg Moore and Christine Sinatra. The guide looks at critical issues in volunteer placement, capturing the outcomes of a collaborative research project funded by the Volunteer Impact Fund with support from the OneStar Foundation. For more information, please visit <http://www.serviceleader.org/about/guide>.

## **UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SERVICE SCHOLARS**

The University of Texas Service Scholars (UTSS) program is a public service leadership program that challenges undergraduate students to complete 100 hours of community service each year during their sophomore, junior, and senior years of college. Scholars participate in bimonthly seminars held at the LBJ School given by a diverse group of LBJ faculty on a wide array of public service-oriented topics. UTSS is a joint initiative of UT's Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE) and the LBJ School of Public Affairs. The program will transition to an undergraduate credit-bearing academic course in the fall of 2013.

## **SERVICE LEARNING EVALUATION—JEWISH FEDERATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA**

The RGK Center designed a national evaluation to assess the impact of Jewish service learning programs on their participants. *An Analysis of Participant Jewish Identity and Program Characteristics* included surveys of over 400 volunteers working in a diverse group of programs. Findings from the study, which were shared at a meeting of more than 50 representatives of service providers, foundations and Jewish institutions, have implications for participant recruitment strategies of service learning programs that aim to strengthen their participants' ethnic or cultural ties.

## **RESEARCH**

Voted 2009 ARNOVA best book of the year, *Volunteers: A Social Profile* (2007) provides a detailed look at volunteer motivation using the largest dataset on volunteerism in the nation. The book was written by RGK Faculty Fellow and UT Associate Professor in Sociology Marc Musick and colleague John Wilson, Professor of Sociology at Duke University, and was published by Indiana University Press. Acquisition of the dataset was underwritten by the RGK Center.

Center faculty and faculty-led student teams are available for policy, research, and evaluation projects and consulting. Examples of a few recent initiatives include:

- development of an outcomes measurement system for the Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc.;
- statewide evaluation of AmeriCorps\*Texas to analyze the impact that AmeriCorps programs have on their communities and why some programs produce more benefits than others; and
- additional projects for state and local foundations and organizations involving nonprofit sector mapping, local needs assessments, and facilitated discussion groups.

The RGK Center offers a University-wide minor in nonprofit studies with graduate level coursework in volunteer management, community engagement, and board governance. For leaders in the nonprofit community, the RGK Center provides Executive Education programs engaging expert faculty and facilitating meaningful discussion about critical leadership issues and effective management. Clients include St. David's Foundation, Dallas Foundation, OneStar Foundation and others.

## **RGK CENTER FACULTY & STAFF**

### Core Faculty

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*A Full listing of Faculty Fellows appears at  
<http://www.rgkcenter.org/about/facultyfellows>*