

# **The Volunteer Leader – Good for Business**

**By Karel Murray, CSP**

The energy in the passenger compartment of the airplane was palpable. Waves of excited chatter surged up and down the aisle as a group of Habitat for Humanity volunteers discussed how they planned on helping build a few homes in the New Orleans area. The hurricane damage occurred years ago, but the need for adequate housing continued to be in high demand. The overall feeling of support and community really connected these individuals quickly and solidly. Their genuine joy in tackling the intense planning required overcame any reservations the volunteers might have had in regard to their skills to do the work necessary. Blind faith and trust in the site manager's ability to adequately assign tasks made the whole process a wonder to behold.

I learned about volunteerism at a young age. Watching my father be the Master of Ceremonies at the annual North Iowa Band Festival Day Parade and corresponding beauty pageant, I discovered that participation in something bigger than myself could actually be fun. I have to admit, I hated riding in the convertible and waving at the crowds along with my dad, but it was a small price to pay for being in the thick of things.

There is an energy that is hard to deny when collective hearts and minds come together to create, support or re-design a project for the general betterment of their community, association or company. Voices of all kinds mix it up in lively discussions that usually result in a collaboration that is effective and efficient. Watching something become concrete can be inspiring all in itself.

As I drive by my high school and see the rectangular slab with the school name in steel letters, I sigh in recognition of the accomplishment. As a senior and President of the Student Council, I worked with committee members to meet with the school superintendent and school board insisting that a school of our caliber and size really needed to have a sign announcing its name to the community. They listened and a budget was modified to accommodate the request. The power of being part of something bigger than me burns bright even to this day.

Often, we have no clue what we could do for an organization. Or whether we even have the skills or time to participate at a level that has meaning. That's the fun part of volunteering...you determine what you can offer and how much time you can dedicate to the cause. The level of commitment is always defined by the volunteer. Granted, many organizations are desperate for people to step up to the leadership positions, but it doesn't mean you have to leap in with both feet initially. Test the waters, learn about

the other volunteers, and determine whether the organization you are considering is really one you wish to commit your resources and energy.

Check your calendar, do an inventory of your skill sets, and start visiting some organizations like Rotary, Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce, Habitat of Humanity, or any number of charitable organizations. Talk to current members, read their newsletters and set time aside to actually meet the leadership team. Inspiration can't be forced. Passion and commitment can only be ignited when the cause, your skill, and the opportunity to write your own legacy merge.

You are needed. There is nothing like becoming an active member of something dedicated to a concept greater than yourself. When it's right, it's right. Don't be afraid to jump in.

*Karel Murray, author, humorist and business trainer speaks nationally and internationally. She is the author of "Straight Talk – Getting Off the Curb", co-author of "Extreme Excellence" and publishes a monthly online newsletter, "Think Forward® which has thousands of subscribers, The Profitability Blueprint Series: Career Building Concepts for the Real Estate Licensee and numerous articles in local, regional, and national publications. You can listen to exciting interviews at <http://www.JustForAMomentPodcast.com>. You can contact her at [karel@karel.com](mailto:karel@karel.com) or call 866-817-2986 or access her web site at <http://www.karel.com>*