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Volunteers, Nonprofits Match Up Through Web Site

BY RICHARD GENTILVISO

The Mayor's Volunteer Center, in partnership with the United Way of New York City, has created a free online site, VolunteerNYC.org. The Web site provides anyone seeking to become a volunteer with a way to search for volunteer opportunities and a method for nonprofit agencies to recruit volunteers.

In a presentation to the Queens Borough Cabinet, Amanda Rey, project manager for the Mayor's Volunteer Center, asked community boards to help get out the word to potential volunteers and nonprofit organizations.

VolunteerNYC.org can be used not only to recruit, but also to retain and communicate with volunteers, she said. "VolunteerNYC.org will maximize the impact of volunteerism by inspiring and mobilizing New Yorkers to volunteer and improve quality of life in our city."

Volunteers can use the site to search for specific opportunities by area of interest, location, skills or time availability by accessing a large network of volunteer opportunities. VolunteerNYC.org refers more than 5,000 volunteers each year to nonprofits throughout the five boroughs.

Nonprofit agencies can recruit volunteers for free using a Web-based tool that gives them access to a large volunteer base. The site lists thousands of volunteer opportunities in areas such as arts and culture, children and youth, disaster relief education, health care, hunger and homelessness, parks and recreation, seniors and other city nonprofits.

VolunteerNYC.org was first announced on Apr. 6, 2005 by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and United Way of New York City President and CEO Lawrence Mandell.

"Volunteering is a great way to bring people together and to give back to the community," Bloomberg said in the Apr. 6, 2005 press release. Bloomberg said the Web site was the first central database of its kind to list different volunteer opportunities in the city. "VolunteerNYC is a great tool to help New Yorkers find volunteer opportunities that are compatible with their busy lives," the release said.

Mandell, in the Apr. 6, 2005 statement, said, "Part of United Way's mission is to



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help strengthen New York City nonprofits, either financially or by helping build their capacity. This is a very easy, effective way for individuals to find fulfilling opportunities while giving agencies a greater ability to tap into the talent and energy of New Yorkers."

Volunteerism, by one definition, is the willingness of people to work on behalf of others without being motivated by financial or material gain. Volunteers may have special training, but most volunteers fill a need that they recognize.

Economically speaking, voluntary employment is, of course, unpaid employment. People respond to volunteerism through charity, community service or for the experience.

Volunteers read to children, help senior citizens to shop for groceries or deliver meals to the homebound. Essayist, philosopher and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson said of volunteerism, "It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life, that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself."

New Yorkers who do not have Internet access can call 311 or 212-251-4047 to speak with someone who can help to find a volunteer opportunity or help a nonprofit to recruit volunteers.

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