

Featured Business Profile - Volunteers in Action



Facilitating Volunteerism



Linn Hogg acknowledged that it is an odd situation to be in. As director of RSVP and Volunteers in Action, she is well aware that local individuals and businesses want to share their time and talent with the community.

But she oftentimes can't find a spot for a prospective volunteer in a timely fashion. Therefore, Hogg finds herself seeking help from non-profit entities. "We are asking our local non-profit organizations to view volunteer opportunities a bit differently," Hogg said. "We need to understand their specific needs and know the specific times these needs must be met.

"If we are aware of certain tasks that people could volunteer for, we can help connect non-profits to the right person."

However, non-profit entities don't have to go it alone. Hogg will visit an agency and show staff members how to create volunteer opportunities. "We will learn what they are doing and offer suggestions about what they could be doing to connect with people who truly want to give back to their communities," Hogg explained. "Since a big part of this is preparation, we can help them get a handle on what volunteer services they need and when they need them."

Preparation also involves creating a brief job description, assigning a supervisor and maybe offering a little training. "Once we open these lines of communication, we can start planning together how best to take advantage of volunteers," Hogg commented. "We call this capacity-building.

"This is a big push not only here but across the country. Since non-profits often can't afford to hire extra staff, volunteers could be a solution. And we can help non-profits navigate the avenues to finding the right people." *Cont. on Page 8*



Above - Students from Barton Community College assembling Boxes of Love for seniors.



Left - Tax preparation volunteers.



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Hogg noted she is always dismayed when people call and indicate they are available to volunteer for something right away. "When we don't know what agencies need, we can't follow through with the volunteer," Hogg said. Non-profits should also consider two other factors: when they seek grant funding, volunteer services can be included as in-kind matches; and volunteers often become financial donors.

RSVP and Volunteers in Action, 1025 Main, look for volunteers of all ages in Barton and Pawnee counties. The two entities were

combined into a volunteer center in 2013. It currently works with about 330 active volunteers. Ideally, Hogg said, 500 would be a good number.

Barton Community College sponsors the center, which is a United Way of Central Kansas partner. In addition to federal funding, its budget is supported by the Barton County Commission, Great Bend Commission on Aging and Emergency Aid Council. All funds from these local entities are earmarked for the medical-transportation service. "This is one of the biggest things we do," Hogg said. "There is a critical need for volunteers to provide transportation to medical appointments here and out-of-town."

Other services at the volunteer center include: Meals on Wheels; Medicare counseling through Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK); AARP tax preparation; senior centers; and the Thrift Store in Hoisington.

It also seeks volunteers for hospitals and other healthcare facilities, as well as governmental entities such as various city and county departments. *Cont. on Page 9*



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Since the volunteer center wants to make it as easy as possible for volunteers, it is now using a program called SignUpGenius. This program simplifies the process of coordinating events and people by providing online sign-ups for individuals and organizations.

"We use it for medical transportation and Meals on Wheels," Hogg said. "People go online and see what is available and fill in the slots they prefer. We value our volunteers and want to find the right places for them."

RSVP and Volunteers in Action also used SignUpGenius for the recent Great Bend Farm & Ranch Show. It was the first time it was offered to an outside organization. For those who would rather talk to someone, instead of going online, the number is 620-792-1614. No matter what worthy cause people sign up for, Hogg noted they will soon realize they are not just helping their community. They are helping themselves too.



[Click Here to Sign Up](#)

"For instance, some volunteers have told us that if they don't get involved, they tend to sit home and fret about problems," Hogg said. "But when they get out of their houses and help someone else, they become involved and feel so much better."



"Volunteers come to realize how much there is to do in Barton and Pawnee counties. In addition, they make new friends and learn new skills. Everyone gets something out of it. Sometimes I think volunteers get more out of

sharing their time than the people they are helping."

