

# The Impact Of Local Volunteers

by: M. Louise Walters and William R. Griffin

They do it because they love doing it. They do it in spite of oppressive heat and bone chilling cold, and in spite of wariness and (sometimes) opposition. They do it for many reasons: to help, to make a statement, to advance a cause. It's their way of making a contribution and making a difference.

The "they" are the millions of people across America that support altruistic organizations. The "it" is the act of volunteering.



## VOLUNTEER DONORS

Volunteer donors give money and property to organizations.

At the top of many donors' lists are Goodwill and Salvation Army. Both organizations have donation centers, which makes it easy to donate personal property. *"Last year, we moved to a smaller home and didn't have room for everything from our old home. We made many, many visits to the Donation Center dropping off everything from clothing to outdoor furniture. The volunteer at the Donation Center was so nice that we gave him a Christmas present."*

Many residents at The Landings donate personal property to the Island's annual Flea Market. This popular Landlovers half-day event draws shoppers from all over coastal Georgia. Landlovers volunteer workers are the driving force behind the planning, donation in-take, pricing, staging, and implementing the Flea Market.

*"It's like a wonderful party, because the prospect of finding*

*a bargain treasure creates lots of excitement."* The money that's raised funds education scholarships.

If you're looking for a good deal on recycled French patio doors, spa bathtubs, lighting, hardware, tools, kitchen cabinets, construction materials, or furniture, you'll find it at Habitat for Humanity's ReStore. Everything in the store has been donated – either by individuals or by businesses. Some materials are recycled into home construction projects, while others are sold by ReStore to raise money for Habitat's home building projects here and abroad. Habitat For Humanity volunteers help build affordable, energy efficient homes for families in need housing. *"ReStore is a great place for hobbyists to find materials for all kinds of crafts, building, and remodeling projects."*

Movie-watchers and readers of books can rent or purchase books and DVDs from the thousands donated each year to the Village Library. The library is run by about ninety volunteers who each donate from 25 to more than 100 hours of their time each year. These tireless volunteers (some with 20 years of service) keep the library open and running

smoothly by checking books and DVDs in and out, and staffing the library's popular excess inventory sale. Proceeds go to operating and continually upgrading the facility.

## VOLUNTEER WORKERS

Volunteer workers help organizations run events, and they provide services to organizations. There is a huge variety of opportunities as well as a large demand for volunteer worker-bees.

Organizations like Local Outreach Volunteer Educators (L.O.V.E) and Reach Out and Read provide hundreds of volunteers to mentor students in reading, writing and arithmetic and other skills at K-12 schools. Service clubs such as Rotary and local places of worship recruit volunteers to pack food boxes at Second Harvest and Kiwanians hold chili cook-offs and pancake breakfasts to feed people as well as to raise money for their club projects. Volunteers help organize and prepare church dinners. A retired graphic artist provides "design time" to her church's publications while other volunteers enjoy leading Bible studies at their churches and in their homes.

### VOLUNTEERING BY THE NUMBERS

29	Types of 501(c) nonprofit groups (NPOs) classified by the IRS
1,300+	Nonprofit groups in Chatham County registered with the IRS
100+	NPOs with active volunteers that are Landings residents (e.g., L.O.V.E. [Local Outreach Volunteer Educators], Landlovers, 2nd Harvest, St. Joseph's/Candler, Habitat For Humanity)
25%+	Over 2,100+ Landings residents volunteer their time & expertise annually
94	Hours (2+ weeks annually) that each Landings volunteer provides

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## VOLUNTEER LEADERS

The volunteers who lead their organizations usually earn their stripes as volunteer workers first. The common trajectory is to come up through their organization's structure first as a committee member, then chair of the committee, officer, Chair-Elect, and, finally, Chair of the Board. These 'can do' people often serve on many area, state, and national boards and committees.

## MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO VOLUNTEER

A long-time volunteer offered the following thoughts: *"This is a 3-part recipe for success for anyone who wants to volunteer. First, many volunteers come from industry and government, so they're skilled.*

*Now that they're retired, they have time and energy and the*

## BEFORE SAYING "YES" MAKE SURE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE COMMITTING TO

If/When you're approached and asked to donate money or property, before you say "Yes," determine if you're interested in the basic mission of the organization. Ask for a face-to-face meeting with a representative of the organization to find out what it will do with your money or property. Will it be used to manage programs or pay administrative expenses? Look at the brochures and reports that the organization publishes. Are they of professional quality and do they positively depict the organization?

If/When you're asked to become a worker, find out if a staff member is employed who coordinates volunteer workers. Define what role you'll have and if you'll be trained. Determine the level of commitment you're expected to provide; like when you'll be needed to work and if you have schedule conflicts with other things you're doing. Also, if you're expected to incur expenses, find out how you'll be reimbursed.

If/When you're asked to take on a leadership role (such as filling a board seat), ask yourself why the organization wants you. Do you have a particular skill that the organization needs (e.g., accounting or law)? Find out who's on the board. Read the charter /articles of incorporation and the by-laws. Find out if you're expected to make a monetary donation. Determine when the board meetings are held. Aside from filling a board seat, be aware that you may also be expected to serve on committees and attend other organizational events for which you will be expected to purchase tickets (like fundraisers and annual meetings).

*expertise to make a meaningful contribution. Second, many local organizations are well positioned to use those volunteers to advance their missions. Third, there are people and organizations in our area who are in need of help. So, if someone wants to volunteer, there are many opportunities to do so locally and make a real contribution."*

## WHAT PARTS OF VOLUNTEERING DO PEOPLE ENJOY THE MOST?

A recent informal telephone survey about volunteers and their activities found that for many, volunteering is an important part of their lives:

*"I love working with first graders."*  
*"I enjoy raising money for good causes."*

*"I like spending time with people who are smart and good natured. Working as a volunteer is a good way to meet them."*

## The Leadership Center's Core Team



**M. Louise Walters**  
PhDC, MSM, BS, IOM

Louise is a career professional nonprofit organization executive, academic scholar & longtime volunteer whose timely Doctoral research illuminates perceptions held by nonprofit CEOs about Board Chair relationships & impacts on their organizations. Her emphasis areas are strategy, strategic planning, change, leadership & governance.

Reach Louise at:  
louisewalters@theleadershipcenter.com



**William R. Griffin, Esq.**  
JD, MSM, MSE

Bill is an attorney, university professor & engineer. His career includes two decades in industry & government & two decades teaching collegiate courses such as ethics, business law, human resources & management of nonprofit organizations. His emphasis areas are organizational documents & structure.

Reach Bill at:  
billgriffin@theleadershipcenter.com .

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