



Introduction

Dear Volunteer,

One of the most important things we can do as individuals is work with the community providing mutual benefits for society. Volunteering provides citizens, students and seniors opportunities to take initiative, have a voice and build community. During a time of world crisis, volunteerism needs to be seen as a powerful tool in reassessing values and activities and in building constructive relationships between individuals, cultures and nations.

Volunteers provide expertise, guidance and valuable time assisting, supporting, fundraising, etc. Without these committed people, organizations could not function effectively. Volunteers can be the key to a successful health care organization.

President Bush announced the establishment of the Freedom Corps during the 2002 State of the Union Address. The program is designed to highlight volunteerism and especially programs of national service like Peace Corps, Americorps, and VISTA. There is also interest in promoting the federal senior programs such as RSVP, Foster Grandparents, and the like. The White House recently stated "President Bush and about 40 top members of his administration are heading for college campuses to push the president's call for graduating students to volunteer in their communities." The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has been charged with the responsibility of working with governors, mayors, and emergency management staff to build a corps of citizens who can respond locally in case of a disaster or terrorist attack.

The Virginia AHEC Program with an initiative from the Virginia Primary Care Association is implementing a Volunteer Opportunities in Action: A manual for health care students & professionals - Caring for Healthy Communities in Virginia. Initial implementation of this volunteer handbook will include sites for health professionals, students, and seniors listing some volunteer positions. Future projects include design and development of a website; promotion, coordination and collaboration with Virginia's educational health care institutions and medical schools of the volunteer program; and a volunteer management policy and procedures training manual for site locations.

In addition, to gaining valuable experience, volunteers may also develop and implement community projects that benefit the site and surrounding community. Contact is initiated by the student or volunteer to the sites listed in the handbook.

If you have any questions, please contact my office at 804.828.7639.

*Sincerely,
Woody B. Hanes, Andrea Arthur, and Linda Bohanon*