

Paper Presentation

Topic: Globalization and Volunteering

i and 愛 (Love) : How an Information Center Links with Volunteerism and the Whole World

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~Volunteers not just provide services, volunteers are the linkage and catalyst to make things happen and possible.~

By Tim Eing-Ming Wu



Abstract

In order to improve the interactions between local and international community residents, the BHRD (of Kaohsiung City Government) has established an i Center to serve the purpose. In this article, we will introduce the origin and development of an “Information Center” with volunteering service for the purpose of promoting “Friendly City”. Second, we would like to demonstrate the process of organizing volunteers from Kaohsiung-based international volunteers. Third, we will illustrate the project of improving local and international community involvement and multi-cultural learning through the facilities, services, functions and activities of an “Information Center”. Finally, we want to share the experience of assisting Kaohsiung in becoming an internationally-friendly city by the ways of volunteerism.

Body of Paper

The Kaohsiung City Government has devoted itself to build Kaohsiung into a friendly city for several years. In order to enhance the relation between local and international community residents, the BHRD (of Kaohsiung City Government) has established an i Center. This i Center is managed by Kaohsiung-based international volunteers who come from different countries. It is a friendly place provides home coziness as well as handy facilities. Through community events, the new friendship take shape, and community ties are strengthened.

We would like to share with you the successful experience on how the i Center, a

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government agency with organized international volunteers, and it links Taiwan with the world.

Origin and Development

The Kaohsiung City Government has devoted itself to build Kaohsiung into a friendly city for several years. *The Bureau of Human Resource Development for Civil Servants and School Teachers (BHRD)*, under the supervision of Kaohsiung City Government, is located in the Tsoying District, north of the Kaohsiung City. It is conveniently located, as a highway interchange, a High Speed Rail station, a Kaohsiung MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) station, and the Kaohsiung Main Railway Station are all within 5-minute driving distance. In addition, it is surrounded by famous scenic spots such as the Indigenous Botanical Garden, the Wetland Park, the Natural Ecological Park, and the Lotus Lake. It is delicately-designed, friendly, and humanistic environment, besides its function as an excellent place for both learning and recreational. With the resources and its surrounding facilities, there are more and more foreigners come to Kaohsiung. In order to make them aware the attractions, conditions and customs of Kaohsiung, feel amiable and comfortable, we plan to adopt an innovative approach to using our bureau as a model to make Kaohsiung City become an internationally-friendly city.

The i Center of the BHRD, which was transformed from a security guardroom, provides a multi-culturally and friendly gathering place to the public. We want to create a GloNaCal intensive network between local and international communities and enhance the interaction between local and international residents, visitors, and tourists through the operation of i Center.

Process

It is with the idea of encouraging and accelerating the exchange of information and opinions between the local and international community residents when i Center was established. *Access Kaohsiung*, founded by foreign volunteers who live in Kaohsiung City, directed the project through activities such as providing tourist brochure, information exchange, English learning curriculum, sport events, flea market, BBQ, live concerts, and cultural events. These international volunteers come from different countries, such as Taiwan, America, Canada, South Africa, England, and New Zealand. The coordinator of Access Kaohsiung is responsible for managing the project, arranging the volunteer's schedule, providing opportunities for getting involved. BHRD offers some functional facilities and place for the operation. It aims to organize an international volunteer team and increases the partnership between local and international communities.

Facilities and Services

We sincerely hope that people who visit/come to i Center will enjoy their stay and feel comfortable. As a result, we design it with a friendly multilingual environment for both local and foreign residents. In the i center, all inhabitants, citizens, investors, tourists, and visitors will find:

- English information and tourist guide about events in Kaohsiung
- Learning opportunities and modern living in Kaohsiung City
- Computers with free internet access
- An functional English library with books, magazines, and movies
- An information exchange board posted featuring jobs, wanted and sale items

- A television for introducing tourism material and shows
- The times of 12 worldwide cities show on the wall
- A coffee shop provides kinds of snacks and beverage
- A payphone, with international cards available
- An automated teller machine

On the grounds of the BHRD building, people will find:

- A patio where people can enjoy coffee and reading material
- An amphitheater where people are able to enjoy live music and theater
- A sports stadium where people are able to play or watch sports

Goals, Functions and Activities

i Center is dedicated to playing a proactive role to develop partnership with local and international community in Kaohsiung. Above apart, it focuses on encouraging communication and interaction. We look forward to the visitors and residents of Kaohsiung being a part of the community. It aims to achieve the following goals:

- Assist people to find out more information about community and Kaohsiung City
- Help people integrate into the culture within Kaohsiung City
- Foster a sense of belonging and acceptance
- Facilitate the communication between local and international community residents
- Provide a place where people can come and get involved

The functions of i Center are multi-facted. To ensure this, we cooperate with Access Kaohsiung and organize a range of activities.

Volunteers from Access Kaohsiung provide the need to make these events successful:

- Develop English learning programs for local community residents (daily conversation, reading newspaper, writing classes)
- Provide an opening space for people to showcase their skills and talents (live music area, exhibition area for art display)
- Design weekend programs (English corner) for families (storytelling, games, and activities)
- Organize ball games for teens and adults (basketball, badminton and table tennis)
- Host cultural activities for local and international residents (Cultural theme days)
- Develop plans for city introduction to new residents (orientation, culture shock seminar)

In a word, the i Center provides a friendly place where people feel safe, accepted and satisfy their demands. One of these examples is ball games. We take the advantage of the sport facilities to provide opportunities for people to know each other better. There are lots of foreigners who enjoy playing sports but have difficulty finding an effective facility to play in. We offer a place to attract people to come to join in the games and interact with the similar interests. The volunteers are responsible for organizing and managing of the events planned in this facility. This real enhances the interaction and development of the local and international community relationship. Through the sport events here, new friendships and alliances were made to further the community relations.

Conclusion

BHRD is quite pleased with the success of i Center, the project's international outreach and recruitment program designed to encourage both local and international community residents to participate in community activities. It also combines the resources and efforts from public and private sectors to work toward a new vision of the internationally-friendly

Kaohsiung City.

This i Center is, as far as we are concerned, one of the most creative ever undertaken by the government institution in Taiwan. Inspired by the success of i Center, a ROT (Rehabilitate, Operate, Transfer) project has been adopted by BHRD to strive for pursuing the most entrepreneurial partnership organization in Taiwan. The implication of the ROT project goes far beyond the effective use of government assets, rather, it signifies the positive transformation management of BHRD's structure into a training institute capable of bridging public and private partnership, developing knowledge-based industry, and improving dynamic civic development.