

The Journal of VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION Volume 20 Number 3 2002

Ms. Julia Lam, Service Development Head of AVS represented Hong Kong to attend the 1st Asia Pacific International Conference on Volunteer Administration held at Busan, Korea on 24-27 April 2002. She had organized a workshop on the theme of family volunteering and to share with her experience on this project management and volunteer administration. Overseas volunteer administrators put high recognition on this pilot idea and the host (Association for Volunteer Administrators – AVA) invited AVS to publish the ideas in this Journal.

The Ideas that Work

“Bring Learning Home through Family Volunteering”

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Family Volunteering Scheme was jointly organized by Committee on Home-School Cooperation of the Education Department and Agency for Volunteer Service (AVS). It aimed to promote active family learning through volunteering. The project was launched for 9 months in 2001 for 500 families (about 1400 participants) coming from kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. During the period, they had to go through training, programme planning, service organization and implementation, service de-briefing and evaluation, submission of reports and volunteer recognition programme, etc. The presentation is going to illustrate the organization of such a large scale of projects, such as its managing system, organizational structure, networking of resources, facilitating skills, etc. But most importantly, how to bring learning home through family volunteering is the main focus to be demonstrated and discussed.

Objectives of the Scheme

1. To provide the family a valuable platform to learn, share and mutual exchange through volunteering
2. To mobilize family members as a tremendous volunteer force to serve the needy

Profile of Participants

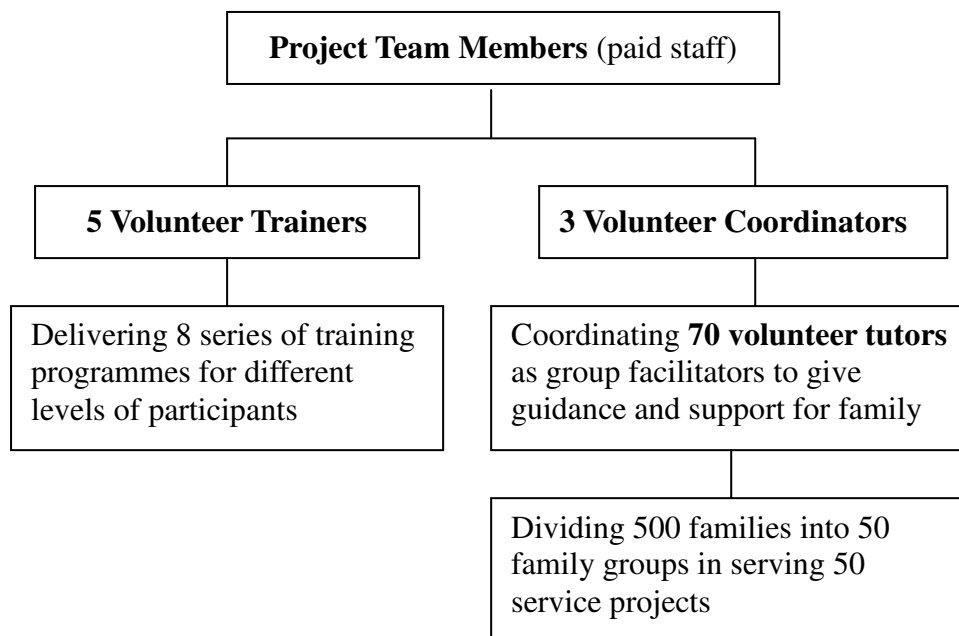
Parents' Involvement	% (640 parents)
Couple + children	31%
Mother + children	67%
Father + children	2%
Total:	100%

Children's Involvement	% (757 children)
Kindergarten	30%
Primary schools	54%
Secondary schools	16%
Total:	100%

Programme Organization

Organization Structure

To mobilize nearly 1400 family members in this programme, a large scale of manpower had been involved in programme administration and implementation, such as providing training, service matching, coordination and communication, supervision and service monitoring, etc. Below is the illustration of the manpower structure:-



Roles of Volunteer Tutors in Service Guidance

70 volunteer tutors were recruited, selected and contracted on one-year basis. They had to give guidance and support to families throughout the project duration. One

tutor was placed in each family group with a combination of ten families. During the process, the volunteer tutor had to attend all planning meetings, service implementation and evaluation. They mainly played the role as facilitator to provide guidance and support to group members. The volunteer tutor also acted as a monitor to ensure the service quality, to accomplish the tasks on schedule as well as to enhance their work competence. More importantly, they were the advisors to guide and demonstrate family members the skills of de-briefing and reflection from their learning.

Training Programmes

Training for Kindergarten Level:

Basic concepts of volunteering with interactive mode and scenario teaching were found more appropriate to cater for the needs of lower aged children. With the guidance of their parents, the children had to express their views on helping concept through story telling, painting and drawing, etc. Moreover, the trainers had role played the situation and asked the children to indicate the appropriateness of the behaviour by raising a “✓” or a “✗”. The input of concepts and value of volunteering was affirmed through their active thinking and participation.

Training for Primary Level:

For the junior level, the trainers had introduced basic concepts of volunteering and communication skills learning through the teaching mode of case demonstration, playing games and experiential exercise, etc. With the support of their parents, the children had to make attempt to speak out and demonstrate effective communication skills in practice. In order to encourage new exposure, some pioneering projects were introduced. For example, some volunteers were invited to bring with their working partners - dogs or rabbits, to demonstrate the caring skills and to share with their experience in serving the patients suffering from terminal illness and blindness with the help of the animals.

Training for Secondary Level:

In order to facilitate their active involvement, warm up games on trendy “Para-Para” dance brought fun to the family. Basic concepts of volunteering, communication skills, and programme planning were emphasized as they had to plan and implement their service projects independently. Teaching methods of role playing, group discussion and sensitivity games were encouraged to stimulate their exchange and sharing among family members.

Training for Volunteer Tutors:

70 volunteer tutors were being screened and contracted for this scheme. Clear role expectation and job description were explicit and agreed by the volunteers in order to draw their commitment to assume responsibilities. A series of training programmes on programme planning, group leading and guidance skills were rendered. Moreover, regular meetings and consultation were provided for tutors to encourage mutual sharing and to find alternatives to handle the difficulties. Another three volunteer coordinators

(non-paid staff) also rendered intensive care and support to the tutors in handling crisis or frustration during the process.

Service Planning and Matching

For exploring different varieties of service opportunities for a large group of family volunteers, AVS had engaged partnership with 32 organizations to provide different types of service projects for participants to make their own choices according to their family's interest and self competence. Service scope covered visitation service for the singleton elders, recreation parties for the mentally retarded, fundraising for the deprived groups, conservancy works on environmental protection, befriending and logistic support for hospital patients, etc. 500 families were divided into 50 groups in serving 50 service projects. One example of active reflection from service was illustrated below:-

A Fundraising Project on Rehabilitation Programme for the Drug Addicts

There was restriction for the children aged 12 below participating the flag-day in selling flag (a sticker with the name of fundraising body) in the street. It was a trial attempt for the parents to accompany this aged group to get involved in the flag selling campaign. Family members treasured this valuable experience very much since they had the chance to get in touch with people from all walks of life. Their children had experienced the feelings vividly from the give-and-take process. The most exciting thing was, they had raised more funds for the deprived groups as the small kids were being more welcomed by the donors. As to further consolidate the meaning of their helping action, a follow-up programme was arranged for the family to pay a friendly visit for the drug addicts who were receiving the rehabilitation programme on the restricted island. The service recipients shared with their past failing experience and encouraged the children to reflect their learning and parent-child relationship in a positive way. All family members were deeply impressed from the journey.

Service De-briefing and Evaluation

In order to enhance mutual learning between parents and their children, some assignments were instructed such as, writing proposals, regular meetings to discuss on programme planning, clear division of labor and cooperation, submission of individual report on their experience and gains, etc. Active feedback and advice were encouraged to enhance mutual understanding and appreciation among family members throughout the process. A token system was introduced to reinforce their active learning and reflection. Every family was given a diary book and stickers with appreciation words such as "well-done", "excellent", "keep it up", etc. Each family member had to record their experience, special feelings and gains in the diary and the other member would use the sticker to give encouragement and support to those positive behaviours. Moreover, some photo stands were produced to encourage families to write down meaningful words on the photos with volunteer in action as their memorable remarks.

Volunteer Recognition

Besides facilitating appreciation in their daily practice, a formal recognition ceremony was launched to round up the achievement of their contribution as well as to grant awards to those families with outstanding performance. By collecting views from volunteer tutors, feedback from service agencies and self-rating of family members, some prizes of outstanding performance on programme planning, reports and outstanding families were presented by the Director of Education Department and Chairman of AVS. Some families were also invited to share special or invaluable experience gained from volunteering at the occasion. Moreover, a VCD was produced to record the scenery of their participation and a booklet was published to collect their pictures, feelings and fruitful experience learnt from the venture. The publication together with the VCD was widely produced and sent to all schools for reference. All teachers were advised to help spread the message of the programme as well as to use the materials as their teaching kit in the classroom learning.

Achievements

As reflected by most families, they treasured very much on grasping this opportunity to bring learning home through volunteering. In fact, through volunteer service, they could expose themselves to reach the deprived groups, to understand more the social problems and features and to contribute their time to serve the needy. It was an effective means to guide the children to foster a sense of citizenship and belongings to the society.

Throughout the process, under the guidance of volunteer tutors, every family had much time to reflect their thinking, learning and to equip new skills and develop talents. Frequent mutual share and support did enhance a lot their parent-child relationship and communications.

Participating families had to commit nearly 9 months duration in this scheme. It might be a big challenge to retain their commitment and participation for the whole family. It was appreciated that the drop out rate of this programme was found comparatively lower than other family activities. Finally, over 70% of the participants completed all services and assignments and were granted a certificate of appreciation in the volunteer recognition ceremony.

Upon the completion of the scheme, many family members promised to continue volunteering and to register as volunteers under AVS volunteer referral service. Some members developed their potentials and became a volunteer in their work site and school committees. Moreover, in order to sustain their friendship within the group, they had organized gathering programmes and service groups in a long run.

For AVS, it was a new attempt to mobilize a tremendous volunteer force from all sides in this scheme. In quantitative measures, the 1400 family members of 500 families had contributed 27,500 service hours to the 5,600 service recipients; 32 working

partners were engaged to provide 50 service opportunities. But most importantly, it also demonstrated a high quality of services in bringing fruitful learning experience for all family members throughout the process. We should, specially give the honour and credit to all the 80 volunteer trainers, coordinators and tutors who had contributed a lot of time and effort to this venture! ***Thank you very much for our volunteers!***

Go Ahead 2002

In order to go further step to develop and consolidate the achievement, the Committee on Home-School Cooperation of the Education Department had again invited AVS to organize a “Family Volunteering Promotional Scheme” in 2002. Besides recruiting 200 families from open recruitment, the project was focused on mobilizing 30 schools’ Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to plan and organize family volunteering programmes in their own schools. Some terms were contracted with the participating PTAs as follows:-

1. Signature of the school headmaster and PTA chairman to commit to endorse and give support to the programme;
2. To delegate 3 to 5 school volunteer leaders who could be teachers and/or parents to head the project as well as to receive the training on volunteer management provided by AVS;
3. An experienced and well-trained volunteer tutor was placed for each school and to provide professional support for the school volunteer leaders to plan, organize, implement and evaluate the programme during the whole period from April to December this year;
4. AVS would be the central body to back up the volunteer tutors, to develop operational system to monitor the work in progress, to control the service quality as well as to tailor training programme for family volunteers in each participating schools;
5. There was a contract for the school to recruit at least 50 families and to totally complete 500 hours of service during the period. With similar input of resources, the expected output in 2002 would be multiple at least 3 times from the previous scheme;
6. During the pilot period, a service model was introduced to the participating schools and they were expected to continue the family volunteering scheme by their own capacity. Moreover, they also acted as a demonstrated role to mentor other schools in the district to join this meaningful event in coming years.

Conclusion

From the promotional scheme 2002, AVS aimed to fuller utilize and develop the potentials of volunteers in self managing their own programmes. This was a way to maximize the resources and output of services, to bring closer links and support among family members in their own setting, to enhance a sense of belongings and sustain their commitment in volunteering. It was more important to study the outcome and impact for the family members’ participation and to measure how much they gained and learn from the scheme. This was actually, a challenge to experiment ***the gift of volunteer service management.***



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