



## **Volunteering for You**

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Americans have a long tradition of being generous in their volunteer activities, and with that history comes the notion that volunteering is a benevolent activity that should benefit the greater good. And to this day, the best volunteering involves the desire to serve others.

There are as many reasons to volunteer as there are volunteer opportunities; from altruistic motivations and wanting to “give back,” to cause-driven activities like volunteering on a campaign, to building a social network or personal status. Whatever reason motivates you to raise your hand and volunteer – you’re more likely to achieve satisfaction and success in volunteering if you yourself get something in return.

Over the past 15 years, I’ve had the privilege of working with thousands of volunteers, and one of the biggest benefits I’ve experienced from volunteering is the opportunity to gain and exercise leadership skills. What better incubator for developing and enhancing your leadership skills than working with a group of like-minded individuals for a common goal? Just as you advance your skills and abilities through your professional career, so can you advance your career skills through volunteering.

For example, I worked with a wonderful, extremely organized volunteer leader in another organization several years back. Her attention to detail and commitment to meeting deadlines were admired by all. She also wanted to advance in her job to a senior position – as well as advance in her volunteer role to that of an elected leader. She had all the requisite management skills except for one – being an effective communicator. Over the course of a year, we worked together taking advantage of every writing and speaking opportunity, including presenting at a leadership development seminar in front of her peers. Utilizing these volunteer opportunities provided her with the environment to advance her communication skills. She’s now owner of her own consulting firm – and has been elected to numerous boards of directors.

Volunteering and getting involved with OSPA can start you on your leadership development path. Whether it be working to advance OSPA’s advocacy initiatives or serving on a committee or task force, I encourage you to find the volunteer opportunity that offers you just what you’re looking for.