

Do you have a Retirement Resume?

By Maureen McGarry

When the first Baby Boomers started retiring in 2007, many educated, trained professionals gave up the grind for calmer days and took with them many skills and talents. As social scientists and economists had been projecting, a major source of knowledge and expertise was being lost as retired professionals chose traveling, relaxing, or writing that book over continuing to work. However, that valuable resource has the potential to continue to serve the community through volunteerism.

According to an article published in the Stanford Social Innovation Review by members of the Corporation for National Community Service (2009), the nation's non-profits need to use retired volunteers as an under-used resource because of the leadership drain of older workers and the high turnover of younger non-profit staff. Expertise in technology, graphic design, community-organizing, medical knowledge can all be skills that can assist non-profits as well as many, many other skills.

Often, when looking for a volunteer job or activity, retirees have difficulty finding the right place to put their focus and energy. They don't want to go back to work, but are willing to help out where their skills can be useful. Some people want to do something completely different than their profession. Many retired teachers don't ever want to see a classroom again. Some miss it and return to volunteer as a tutor or mentor. As in many professions, retired people have skills in many areas even if they limited their profession to one field. When a doctor retires, he or she may also be an excellent gardener. An abundance of opportunities are available in community gardens around the county. A retired lawyer may also be a good cook and could help feed volunteers at Food for People. Retired professionals can volunteer in their field of expertise and mentor younger professionals, leading to improved morale, ability and efficiency in the workplace.

The Volunteer Center of the Redwoods is starting a new project to channel those talents into help for local non-profits. The **Professional Volunteer Registry** is a listing of retired professionals available to community groups to share their expertise in order to assist non-profits in the important work they do.

Although volunteering means there is no financial compensation, the value of volunteer time in California is \$24.75 as measured by the Independent Sector's Resource Center for Good Governance and Ethical Practices.

Larry Buwalda worked at Adventures Edge in Arcata for many years selling a variety of recreational equipment. He is now retired and has signed up as a Volunteer Trail Steward.

"I never thought about building trails myself. Sometimes when I would bike or hike in the community forest, I would see volunteers fulfilling the dream of developing the trail system. Now I feel I am paying it back. I'm going to use the trails in the future, but I am also a participant in making it happen. I never had that much time to help before."

Local photographer, Lorraine Miller-Wolf, has plenty of talent to offer and is the first to sign up for this new program.

“You pick and choose which volunteer opportunity resonates with who you are, and what time you have available,” says Miller-Wolf. She has been a photographer in Humboldt County for over 30 years.

She currently teaches OLLI classes in creative travel photography, portraiture, photography 101, and photo documentary. As a volunteer, she worked with Arcata House photographing families – first for the families, and eventually her photos ended up being useful as part of the public relations campaign for Arcata House. She has also provided photos for the Humboldt Senior Resource Center for their brochures.

“Everyone has skills. Stay at home moms could fill a page with skills such as money-management, scheduling, childcare, etc. Volunteer skills don’t have to be confined by what your job title was.” Miller-Wolf is willing to help provide photos that could be used in power point presentations for fundraising and outreach, and for use on websites and blogs.

Volunteers can always say “no” when asked, but the Volunteer Center of the Redwoods is seeking “Retirement Resumes” from community members to build this registry as a resource tool. Resumes can be sent to VCOR at 434 7th Street in Eureka. They can also be emailed to vcor@a1aa.org. So if you thought you’d never have to put a resume together again, here’s your chance to showcase all the skills you have never listed before along with the things you like to do from your professional life. Everyone has something to offer.

Photo below is Larry Buwalda helping build trails.

