

Volunteerism: The Rewards May Be Greater Than You Think

First Published: March/April 2017 Journal

Written by: Julie Hakman, NAPBS Immediate Past Chair

It's springtime: Time to wake up, smell the roses, get engaged and step out of your comfort zone. As luck would have it, NAPBS has just the right opportunities to fulfill your budding dreams and unfulfilled sense of contribution.

According to a recent report on volunteerism conducted by the United Nations Volunteer Programme (UNV), over 1 billion people volunteer each year on a global basis. While the report was geared more toward governance, civic and society organizations clearly there were many applicable findings, as well as parallels, from which we can draw. One example of this would be technology. Organizations today are able to benefit from the modern tools and communication technologies available to volunteers. Mobile devices allow our volunteers to connect from anywhere, access and share information instantly and engage at a deeper level than 10 years ago.

You've heard the call ... at every conference, on our new website, in every Thursday Letter, "NAPBS needs volunteers. Our committees are hard at work and looking for fresh faces." At a recent conference, many of you may have even heard my opening remarks, "...ask not what NAPBS can do for you, but what you can do for NAPBS." Perhaps we should look at this from another angle. Let me rephrase. "Ask not what you can do for NAPBS, but what volunteering for NAPBS can do for you." The top ten benefits of volunteering are listed below. While many of these may seem obvious, several should make you stop and think... or at least pause and reconsider your availability for volunteering.

- 1. Improve Your Health.** This is true! According to a survey conducted by United Healthcare, 96% of people who volunteer say that it enriches their sense of purpose and 94% feel it improves their mood.
- 2. Build Your Career.** NAPBS membership offers a wealth of industry knowledge and networking opportunities, putting you in the driver's seat to connect with people "in the know." Committees are diverse. They include people from all levels of an organization, covering the entire country and all sharing a common interest. Add to your list of contacts while adding to your professional experience.
- 3. Learn New Skills/Interests.** Joining a committee that falls outside of your "day job," uniquely positions you to gain insight, exposing you to other aspects of the screening industry. This allows you to step outside of your comfort zone, branch out, pursue different interests and discover new talents.
- 4. Make New Friends.** Unless you arrived at your first NAPBS conference with an entourage you probably experienced the awkward feeling reminiscent of school days where you were the "new kid" and it seemed everyone knew someone except you. For some personalities, boldly jumping in is not a challenge, but for many others, building a network of friends and colleagues is a challenging and slow

process. Volunteering brings people from different backgrounds together for a common goal, instantly creating an instant support group, giving you the opportunity to form real, lasting relationships.

5. **Make A Difference.** Volunteers bring about change each and every day. Collectively, volunteering gives you the chance to truly make a difference. Looking back over the last 13 years of NAPBS history, our volunteers have made significant contributions that span from employer, CRA and consumer resources to impacting or enacting legislative and regulatory change.

6. **Give Back.** Volunteering for a cause you believe in pays back. Contributing to resources that benefit people around you creates a real sense of purpose, builds self-esteem and raises awareness of issues important to you. Volunteering gives you a break from your daily routine and opens the door to new ideas and other areas of interest. It's inspiring!

7. **Change Someone's Life.** Never underestimate the influence you have on others. You may have motivated, encouraged, or empowered someone without knowing it. You never know who's watching, listening or learning from you. Seasoned veterans become mentors and students can become teachers to complete the life cycle.

8. **Build Capacity, Influence Governance.** Influence decision making through participation. Joining a group helps individuals or unique groups gain a voice. When they raise their voices, volunteers can influence and challenge the status quo, broaden the debate and shape change. While this may not always be evident in the short term, it can shift opinion and lead to long-term change.

9. **Change Your Vantage Point.** NAPBS members are often on the frontlines, keenly aware of the issues and challenges facing our industry. Individually, that viewpoint may be very narrow, but participation with a group exposes you to issues, opportunities and perspectives you may not be aware of. Engaging in discussion or debate on an issue may broaden your understanding, allow room for multiple opinions and even shift or change your position entirely.

10. **Get ahead of being VOLUN-TOLD!** Sign up BEFORE someone else signs you up.