

CALL TO SERVICE

A Publication of the Massachusetts Service Alliance

New Web Portal Helps Volunteers Connect And Serve

The Massachusetts Service Alliance, in collaboration with Governor Romney's office, is proud to launch **CONNECT AND SERVE**, the statewide web portal that matches volunteers with organizations offering volunteer opportunities.

The portal is a valuable tool for organizations wishing to advertise their volunteer opportunities to a statewide pool of talented residents. Individual volunteers may register, create a profile, and then sign up to receive regular emails with volunteer opportunities that match their profile.

"Volunteers are an integral piece of most any nonprofit organization," said Kristin McSwain, Chief Executive Officer of the Massachusetts Service Alliance. "We want everyone on this site to be able to find something close to home that interests them."

Governor Romney drew from his experience managing volunteers during the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics to help develop Connect and Serve.

"Massachusetts citizens have a lot to offer our communities. This website will organize those individuals and encourage them to make a lasting commitment to volunteerism," commented Risa Kaplan, Deputy General Counsel, Administration and Finance, Office of the Governor.

In conjunction with the launch of Connect and Serve, the Massachusetts Service Alliance will schedule training sessions for Volunteer Management. These training sessions, coupled with the Connect and Serve web portal, will help nonprofit organizations manage the volunteers that sustain their organizations.



To register as an organization
or volunteer, visit...

www.mass.gov/connectandserve

Helping Kids Do What They Do Best



A child enjoys craft time in a Horizons for Homeless Children Playspace

A homeless shelter is not a place where one would expect to find a bright, colorful space filled with laughter. But thanks to the work of Horizons for Homeless Children, hundreds of children living in Massachusetts homeless shelters now have access to beautifully designed and equipped playrooms called "Playspaces." Nearly 6,000 trained volunteers, known as Playspace Activity Leaders (PALs) volunteer two hours each week playing, interacting, and mentoring them in the Playspaces.

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“The bar has been raised on what people will expect from us in 2006.

As we reach for still higher goals... we'll need to provide...simple and rewarding ways to volunteer.”

Dear Friends

The holidays and the New Year are a time for reflection and planning. As leaders in the field of service and volunteerism, we have much to celebrate. Tens of thousands of people across the Commonwealth have been helped through service programs. Yards have been transformed into gardens; graffiti has been replaced with murals; struggling students have been tutored to the dean's list; abandoned lots are now new homes; and the uninspired have been inspired.

2005 also marked a new look for the Massachusetts Service Alliance with a new logo and brand; the launch of a new web portal to connect citizens with volunteer opportunities; and the passage of the Citizens Service Act, the Commonwealth's comprehensive call to service which, among other things, will require all students K-12 to participate in community service-learning as part of their annual curriculum.

Thank you for everything you did in 2005. The bar has been raised on what people will expect from us in 2006. As we reach for still higher goals and expand our programs, we'll need to provide the citizens of the Commonwealth with simple and rewarding ways to volunteer. Our new web portal is one of the simplest ways to engage citizens in new service projects. It's the gateway for volunteers to learn more about community service opportunities right in their hometown. We encourage all of the Massachusetts Service Alliance's nonprofit partners to register your organizations at www.mass.gov/connectandserve, and post your volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Together we can help grow this online community of service and make a difference one click at a time.

Thanks for a fantastic year and best wishes for a Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Judge". The signature is written in a cursive style.

John Judge
Board Chair

Horizons - continued from page 1

"A Playspace is an environment that encourages opportunities for social-emotional growth, learning, memory and cognition, and motor and sensory development. It actively engages in fun and educational play that benefits children's growth and development," said Lauren Paap, Playspace Programs Greater Boston Director. "Our volunteers, by simply making the commitment to come each week and play with the kids, are so fundamental because children not only learn through play; they learn how to learn through play. Without this type of quality programming, children fall behind academically, professionally, in relationships, and in many areas that affect quality of life."

Rolflyn Cazeau, a PAL of four years, recently shared that he always manages to find time for the kids in the Playspace, despite his busy schedule. "I love walking through that door," he said, "to find smiling faces on the other side. It's also a great feeling to be greeted with a hug from at least one child at the beginning of the shift. It really sets the tone for the rest of the evening." Volunteering as a Playspace Activity Leader (PAL) for two hours each week means a lot to Rolflyn. "Since becoming a PAL," he added, "I've learned to appreciate some of the things I used to take for granted. I've committed myself with an open heart to this, and in doing so, everything else has fallen into place."

Horizons for Homeless Children

Founded in 1988, Horizons for Homeless Children is dedicated to serving homeless children and their families.

Headquartered in Dorchester, they have created over 100 Playspaces in family shelters throughout the state.

Horizons' two Community Children's Centers provide child-care and early education for 126 homeless children and parent support services for almost 100 families each weekday. A third Community Children's Center will open early next year in Roxbury.

To learn more about the Horizons for Homeless Children volunteer program, or to make a donation, visit www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org or call 800-560-7702.



A Horizons for Homeless Children toddler enjoys playspace toys

SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE ANNUAL DAY OF SERVICE



Springfield College President Richard B. Flynn joins students performing a variety of community services on the college's annual 'Humanics in Action Day'

Springfield College's thirty AmeriCorps members played leadership roles in the college's "Humanics in Action Day," a concentrated day of service. On September 22, over 2,500 college volunteers helped at schools, shelters, churches, senior citizen facilities, city agencies, nonprofit organizations, and individual homes, primarily in neighborhoods surrounding the campus. The event is one demonstration of the college's humanics philosophy, which emphasizes education in spirit, mind, and body for leadership in service to others. Since 1998, more than 16,000 college volunteers have performed more than 800 projects.

Project Just Because

Project Just Because, founded by Cherylann Lambert Walsh in 1998, supplies adults and children in the Metro West area with donated goods such as clothing, toiletries, gift baskets, school supplies, and household items. Conceived in the family basement by an individual described by her colleagues as having one of the most generous and giving hearts, the project has since expanded to its own rented space on Route 85 in Hopkinton.

Cherylann's story is an inspiration to us all. Before starting Project Just Because, she had little concept of the pervasive need in her community. "With some simple research, I quickly began to understand that it's not just here in Hopkinton, but in all communities," Cherylann shared. "It's a quiet need, but a real one."

The project is constantly growing, and Cherylann's aspirations for expansion are boundless. Her goal is simple: reach as many needy families as possible. "A little child comes in the door with a hole in his sneakers, and we can turn around and give him a whole new pair. The sparkle in that child's eyes is so stimulating to the heart. It's a reminder that the hardships in my life are so small."

For more information or to contact Cherylann, visit www.projectjustbecause.org.

AmeriCorps Members Kick-Off Year Of Service



YouthBuild Lawrence Members enjoy their experience as a team

On November 4, more than 800 AmeriCorps members and program staff gathered at Faneuil Hall for Massachusetts' 2005 AmeriCorps Opening Day festivities. The annual event marks the commencement of a year of service in communities across the state. Josh Binswanger of CBS-4 presided as emcee over a lively morning rally which included, among others, a keynote speech by Robert Lewis, Jr., Executive

Director of Boston Centers for Youth and Families.

Following lunch in Quincy Market, Corps members took part in civic engagement activities at the Greater Boston Food Bank, Charles River Esplanade, Chestnut Hill Reservation, Moakley U.S. Courthouse, and the Massachusetts Statehouse.



Andres Gonzalez fires up the AmeriCorps crowd

Recent Governor's Points Of Light Award Recipients



Shown are Alliance Board Chair John Judge (c) and Gov. Romney (r) with Neil Boldrighini, Doris Kalter & Cathleen Shacoy

The Governor's Points of Light Award, administered by the Massachusetts Service Alliance on behalf of the Governor's Office, is presented monthly to individuals who exemplify the power of service and volunteerism in their community.

October 2005

Neil Boldrighini, Doris Kalter, and Cathleen Shacoy
Challenger Sports Program, Mansfield Public Schools

Ten years ago, Neil, Doris, and Cathy created the "Challenger Program", which provides weekly social and recreational activities for disabled children in the local school gym. Neil, Doris, and Cathy, parents of disabled children, drew the additional participation of many non-disabled children, who act as one-on-one peers in assisting in the success of the project. The Challenger Program has become a highly respected program since its inception and has had a tremendous impact on the children in the Mansfield community.

November 2005

Shirley Morrisette
Ashland Youth Advisory Council

Shirley has volunteered her time at the Ashland Youth Advisory Council for more than 20 years. She has assisted with everything from handwriting thank you notes to each individual donor of the AYAC to coordinating the Ashland Food Pantry. She voluntarily acts as the local contact for the fuel assistance program, taking telephone calls from concerned applicants each winter. Shirley has inspired countless Ashland residents to become involved in local community service activities.

Announcements

Notice Of Funding Availability

The Mentoring Request for Proposal (RFP) will be released on March 1, 2006 and will be posted on the Massachusetts Service Alliance website (www.mass-service.org) in the Funding Opportunities section.

Technical Assistance Sessions

The Massachusetts Service Alliance will host four technical assistance sessions for the Mentoring grant application. All sessions are optional and will run from 10:00-11:30 a.m. If you are unable to attend, individualized technical assistance by phone may be arranged. Please contact Beth Fleurant, Program Officer, at 617-542-2544 ext. 226.

Due to space constraints, it is very important that you pre-register for a technical assistance session. Registration information can be found in the RFPs and on our website. All locations are wheelchair accessible.

March 13, 2005
Massachusetts Service Alliance
Boston

March 14, 2006
Central Massachusetts Center for
Healthy Communities
Worcester

March 15, 2006
Tewksbury Public Library
Tewksbury

March 16, 2006
Springfield City Library
(Central Branch)
Springfield

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Assistance

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AmeriCorps Program Officer

MSA Staff Profile

Imari K. Paris Jeffries
Director of Programs & Partnerships

Describe for us your job.

As the Director of Programs and Partnerships, I manage the Massachusetts Service Alliance Investment team, a dynamic group of professionals who coordinate the distribution of state and federal funds to various nonprofit agencies around the Commonwealth. I also have the privilege of networking and forming partnerships with leaders of other organizations and corporations in order to promote service across the Commonwealth.

What's the impact of your work?

I feel like I can help direct the flow of money towards nonprofits that are making the biggest impact in communities. Whereas AmeriCorps is a more singular sort of service experience, I'm excited to support organizations that are integrated into communities and are invested every step of the way, from identifying a specific problem to presenting measurable outcomes.

What is the most difficult part of your job?

The most difficult part of my job is negotiating the challenges of reporting, calculating numbers, and data collecting, when at the core all we really want to do is see families, children, and individuals live fulfilled lives. I like to see the money that we administer find its way into the hands of the people, the community... who need it most, but the balance of everything that it takes to do that can become a frustrating part of the job. Having



said that, I have a team of program officers - Joe Braitsch, Beth Fleurant, and Kim Woodbury - who are incredibly adept at helping programs manage this complicated process.

What is the most rewarding part?

The best part of my job is seeing nonprofits making a difference - partnering up with these organizations, taking them through the grant process, and helping them figure out what to do when they receive the grant. I also love networking with other organizations and corporations in order to find common ground and ultimately move our various interests and agendas forward.

What do you see for the future of the Alliance?

I would like to live in a world where the challenges of everyday life are eliminated and people are able to successfully find their place without bias, prejudice, poverty, and misunderstanding. Until that day, I envision the Alliance being a leader in supporting nonprofits and other change agents in successfully making that day a reality.

Third Agers: Volunteer Resources or Resisters?

At the recent Massachusetts Conference on Service and Volunteerism, members of the Massachusetts Coalition on Vital Aging (MCOVA) presented several workshops related to the civic engagement potential of midlife and older adults. These discussions focused on the growing pool of resources that is emerging with the aging of the baby boomers, and how community-based nonprofits can entice individuals in this age group to nurture their civic spirit and give back to their communities as volunteers.

In order to be successful recruiting among this age cohort, nonprofits need to become more attuned to the interests and skills of today's midlife and older adults. Volunteer programs and opportunities may need to be redesigned in order to offer substance to attract this mature, well-educated, and active group.

We are learning that midlife and older adults appreciate having control over their volunteer experience, yet also enjoy working in teams with like-minded individuals. They expect recognition for their contributions, and like to be welcomed to the organization as if they were a member of the paid staff.

Deborah Shapiro, President of the Life Planning Network, points out that organizations need to be as clear about their expectations of a volunteer as they would be for an employee. There is no substitute for posting a detailed job description for a volunteer's position, and the volunteer should have access to ample leadership support, training, and performance reviews.

After all, not every older adult will consider civic engagement or volunteering as a viable option. Shapiro and Margaret Newhouse, Co-President of the Life Planning Network, suggest using "Third Age" in place of the word "retirement." This is a time when individuals will be looking for opportunities to engage in fulfilling and productive activities. The choice to volunteer will be competing with the choice to travel, study, or even begin a new career.

Readers interested in continuing an exchange of ideas about the potential of the "Third Age" for volunteers may consider joining the MCOVA network. For more information, contact Shirley Selhub at 617-542-2544 ext. 221.

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The Massachusetts Service Alliance is a private, nonprofit organization that serves as the state commission on community service. Our mission is to generate an ethic of service throughout the Commonwealth by creating and supporting diverse, high quality service and volunteer opportunities for all age groups, resulting in stronger communities and more active citizens.

We welcome news suggestions, article submissions, and announcements. To contribute, contact Pauline Jeong at pjeong@mass-service.org or 617-542-2544 ext. 227.

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**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

Nonprofit Leaders Convene To Share Best Practices in Service And Volunteerism

The Massachusetts Service Alliance recently had the privilege of hosting nearly 400 nonprofit leaders from across the Commonwealth for a day of inspiration and exchange. The Massachusetts Conference on Service and Volunteerism, held on November 15 in Marlborough, featured a moving presentation by keynote speaker Allison Black Cornelius and three workshop sessions on a variety of topics ranging from volunteer management to the use of technology in civic engagement. During the luncheon session, Governor Mitt Romney launched Connect and Serve, the statewide web portal that connects residents to volunteer opportunities.

Thank you to all of our speakers, workshop presenters, and volunteers for making this day a success. Keep your eyes and ears open for the next conference in 2007!



Ora Grodsky, Just Works Consulting, delivers a workshop on strategic planning

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