



Army Volunteer Corps

Philosophy on Volunteerism

Volunteerism and the Army

Volunteering is a defining part of the American experience. From the Minutemen at Lexington to today's all volunteer force, the Army relies on the fundamental connection between volunteerism and citizenship. The strength of the Army lies in its Soldiers, and the strength of Army communities lies in the talents and contributions of its members. Volunteerism stabilizes our Army communities by contributing to community cohesion, increasing self-reliance, and enhancing the well-being of our Soldiers and their families. The Army relies on volunteers to contribute to the well-being of Soldiers, civilians, and families.

Background and Context

The twenty-first century brings new challenges for our Nation and the military. The Army is undergoing monumental transformation to increase the force's relevance and readiness to face the uncertainties of today's global challenges, enabling it to pursue ways of war that are increasingly rapid, simultaneous, and non-contiguous. So too must the Army transform its volunteer programs to remain relevant to an Army increasingly deployed and capable of meeting emerging needs. This new reality drives the need to transform volunteerism within our Army communities.

Organizations utilizing volunteers in our Army communities have found themselves challenged to fill volunteer positions. Changes in the Army community such as the increasing number of dual income families, rapid pace of today's life, and increasingly deployed force, have decreased the traditional pool of volunteers. Today people seek new ways to volunteer, often looking for short-term commitments or volunteer opportunities with their families, from their homes, and during evenings and weekends. The Army and the organizations that utilize volunteers must seek new ways to engage people to continue to harness the power of people who believe that one person can make a difference.

The Survey of Army Families IV, conducted in 2002, showed that volunteerism in the Army was lower than in the civilian community. Understanding the value of volunteer service to both the individual volunteer, the Army, and to Army communities, the Chief of Staff, Army, directed that a summit be held for the purpose of revitalizing volunteerism in the Army. The Volunteer Summit was held in September 2002 and included MACOM commander and command

sergeants major spouses, volunteers, program managers, and representatives from non-profit organizations and associations such as YWCA, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Association of the United States Army, American Red Cross, the Drucker Foundation, and Points of Light Foundation. These participants developed an action plan that called for formalizing the Army's commitment to volunteers, improving support for volunteers, creating a corporate identity, and linking all volunteers to the Army - and they called it the Army Volunteer Corps.

The Army Volunteer Corps

The Army Volunteer Corps (AVC) will be the Army's agent of transformation for volunteerism. The AVC is an umbrella that encompasses all volunteers and organizations using volunteers. The Army Volunteer Corps will communicate the vision of Army leadership to promote an environment that values volunteers - one that is characterized by mutual respect, institutional support, and opportunities for personal growth. The mission and vision for the AVC communicates the Army's commitment to volunteerism.

Fundamental to this transformation is the defining principle that all who volunteer in Army communities share a commonality of purpose – improving the well-being of Soldiers and their families. No matter where or how they choose to serve - be they family readiness group volunteers with the National Guard, Army Family Team Building (AFTB) volunteers in the US Army Reserves, or coaches or chapel volunteers on an installation - they are making life better for Soldiers and families, they are improving Army communities, they are Army Volunteers.

Linking organizations utilizing volunteers and increasing flexibility to meet emerging needs, the Army Volunteer Corps will leverage existing structures and resources to develop the integrative presence of the AVC throughout Army communities. Although recognizing their autonomy, the Army Volunteer Corps provides a framework to link all volunteer organizations throughout the Army community. While still identifying with individual organizations, volunteers are united through membership in the Army Volunteer Corps. The Army Volunteer Corps will ensure that volunteer programs are relevant and volunteers are ready to meet the challenges facing Soldiers and their families.

The Army will support the Army Volunteer Corps by:

- Providing a professional approach to volunteer management to include training and resources for volunteer leaders, certification for volunteer managers, and a Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for volunteers.
- Developing alliances and relationships with organizations that will create opportunities to “work beyond the walls”. Linking all volunteers within the Army community to each other and to the civilian community will promote collaboration and partnerships that will enhance the effectiveness of

volunteerism throughout the Army, increase volunteer opportunities and potential volunteers.

- Creating a corporate identity for all volunteers that instills pride in being an Army volunteer. The AVC emblem demonstrates the connection to the larger community – the Army community – as an Army volunteer.

The Army Volunteer Corps will be resilient, responsive, and forward-looking. It will enable the Army to respond to changes in volunteerism and changes in the needs of the Army community. Working together, volunteers and Army staff will seek flexible approaches to local needs and creative solutions for future challenges.

CALL TO SERVICE

At its heart, the Army Volunteer Corps will be an agent of transformation - changing the communities in which Army volunteers live, changing the lives of those whom volunteer efforts affect, and changing the lives of volunteers themselves. The Army Volunteer Corps continues the proud tradition of volunteer service in the history of our Army and extends it into the future, transmitting Army values and pride in our nation, one generation to the next. Volunteers, wherever they provide service to the Army community, stand prepared and ready to serve our nation as proud members of the Army Volunteer Corps.