

## Resident Volunteers

The importance of volunteerism can't be overstated. It builds social bonds, reduces isolation, provides the satisfaction of accomplishment, decreases feelings of powerlessness, gives residents a sense of control, and makes community associations vibrant and thriving places to live. This is the foundation for building a sense of community. Associations would have a hard time existing without volunteers; they're the lifeblood of any community.

Successful communities—those where residents are united by common goals and interests—are created by a broad base of active volunteers. This volunteer base brings essential diversity to the association through their unique view points, opinions, ideas, talents and contributions. The greater the number of people who participate in the community, the better the decision making and the smaller the workload for everyone involved. If you foster this type of atmosphere within your community, people will be less likely to burn out.

Finding, motivating and directing volunteers and maintaining their interest are demanding tasks for community association leaders and managers. Assigning association responsibilities to the right people, asking them to accomplish realistic tasks and making them glad they did add to that challenge. Even though all of this may sound like an arduous venture, many community associations have achieved success and shown that it can be done. The reward is a well-functioning community where residents are involved and the quality of life is notable.

Successful larger community associations also recognize the value of the partnership between vo-

lunteers and a professional manager or management company. The role of the manager in this partnership is to facilitate, support and encourage the work of the volunteers. Paid staff members are often essential, but it's the responsibility of residents to build a sense of community. Indeed, volunteers are sometimes more effective than staff.

Whether you're a manager working with community associations or a volunteer leader yourself, successfully recruiting and working with volunteers is an ongoing challenge.

Residents volunteer for many reasons that benefit themselves and the community association. People are complex, and their reasons for volunteering vary greatly. Opposite motivations like self-interest and altruism, or career advancement and idealism, can spur a person to get involved.

Recruiting volunteers is often no more difficult than asking residents to help: Most people will respond well to an honest appeal. The majority of associations have a diverse group of residents and many ways to ask them for some of their time.

Community associations must motivate residents and move them in appropriate directions. Understanding and supporting volunteers' needs will keep them working effectively.

People are more likely to participate if community associations publicize their accomplishments and let residents know they're needed. Residents need to see the leadership team as an active, important group that they want to be a part of.

Committees are the backbone of many successful associations. Organizing and supporting committees is an essential role of the board, and an excellent way to promote volunteerism.