



Special Announcement of a
**CONGRESS OF VOLUNTEER
ADMINISTRATOR ASSOCIATIONS**
December 4 to 6, 2006
Denver, Colorado

Plans are underway to convene a **Congress of Volunteer Administrator Associations (COVAA)** on December 4 to 6 this year. The following three pages explain why such a Congress has exciting potential and how it will be structured. The goal is to engage existing professional *associations* of volunteer management practitioners in considering what the field needs on a national level, as these associations are already the representatives of a large percentage of our field and have never been formally convened before. All sorts of collaborations are possible from such a Congress.

Please feel free to share this document with any interested colleagues, including posting this PDF to any relevant Web site or sending it out as an e-mail attachment.

More information is available at www.COVAA.org, with many more details to come. Watch for the next announcement!

August 3, 2006

NOTICE OF A CONGRESS OF VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATOR ASSOCIATIONS

Post-Seattle Planning

Lengthy discussions were held during the Points of Light conference in Seattle in June about what might serve the needs of the volunteer management profession after the dissolution of the Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA). An ad hoc group with a sincere interest in the success of a new professional association has been formed, all of whom participated in Seattle and want to continue the ideas and collaborative efforts that were started there. Specifically, there is a need to intentionally create a much larger venue for this discussion – not just as part of someone else's conference and not just via the Web. To begin the work towards such a gathering, the colleagues named at the end of this notice agreed to serve as the initial planning "team."

After careful consideration and input from the President and Executive Director of American Society of Directors of Volunteer Services (ASDVS, in healthcare), it was determined that the tentatively planned Philadelphia meeting in September (discussed in Seattle) was premature. After two conference calls, the team decided on a different approach – one that is exciting in its potential for the field of volunteerism. In an effort immediately to go beyond the ten of us and invite all interested colleagues to get engaged, this notice is being sent/posted today and a Web site has been opened for the "**Congress of Volunteer Administration Associations**" (COVAA) at www.COVAA.org (see below).

Here are the plans, based on the sense of the deliberative body in Seattle and subsequent discussions.

September Meeting Will Not Be Held

There will NOT be an open meeting in September, in conjunction with the ASDVS conference in Philadelphia. It is too soon to make that meeting productive. ASDVS has already notified their members of this decision.

New Focus: A Congress in December

We feel that the best and most legitimate way to proceed in discussing what a new American professional association might be (or even if we need one) is to convene a **Congress of Volunteer Administrator Associations (COVAA)**.

1. Our field today has many local, state, and regional associations of volunteer program managers (generic), as well as a number of field-specific "affinity" associations (such as ASDVS) with national and local groups. While these associations range in size and effectiveness, they clearly already formally represent a substantial percentage of practitioners in our profession. However, in the past, most of these bodies have rarely collaborated or even communicated, except for the few groups that joined the now-dissolved AVA as "affiliate" members.
2. Any such existing association is invited to send **one official representative – with voting authority – to a two-day meeting** in Denver, starting Monday evening, December 4 through mid-day Wednesday, December 6 (more details to be announced).
3. This two-day meeting will be structured and facilitated to allow participants to discuss such things as (the following is just a possible list):
 - What are existing associations already doing well and don't need a national organization to do for them? What might a national organization provide that is value-added?
 - What might a "congress" of associations permit existing groups to do together? Is the "congress" model the best choice for moving forward?
 - How might a "congress" encourage the formation of new associations in geographic areas without such a group now?
 - What might be the interrelationship between a national "congress" and local associations?

4. The option of engaging participants who cannot come on site via conference call, webinar, or possibly live video platform, is being explored and will be offered, if cost permits.
5. The immediate goal of the Congress would be to create a working network of associations with a designated steering committee to, in turn, carry any organization work forward.

There is a desire to reach out to all previous AVA individual members, colleagues who have chosen not to join their professional association, or those who do not have an association to join, and there will be future opportunities for individual colleagues to be involved. In this preliminary stage, the Congress will begin with a clearly identifiable group of perhaps 75-150 people who represent probably 3,000 to 6,000 practitioners through existing associations. Then, strategies can be developed for the engagement of individual leaders.

The Web as the Next Step in Planning

The challenge inherent in this plan is to identify and invite all existing professional associations in our field. To that end, Samaritan Technologies has made the generous offer of opening a new Web site focused solely on this project. The new site is at www.COVAA.org and is a work in progress, with new information to be posted as it becomes available. Contents include:

1. An explanation of the COVAA strategy.
2. An area in *which any volunteer administration professional association* may provide a profile:
 - a. There is a short form that asks consistent questions of each group, but the goal is to allow associations to self-select their interest and suitability at this stage.
 - b. COVAA wants to be inclusive. Examples of associations we'd hope would register would be:
 - Local "DOVIAs" serving particular cities or regions.
 - State associations of volunteer administrators, whether generic or serving specific fields or affinity groups.
 - National associations such as ASDVS, National Association of Volunteer Programs in Local Government (NAVPLG), National Association of RSVP Directors, VRM-Roundtable, National Organizations Volunteerism Network (NOVN), etc.
 - Organized networks of volunteer program managers within a specific national organization.
 - c. Submitting a profile on the site will NOT be a commitment to do anything. It will simply indicate an interest to continue to be informed of plans and to have the opportunity at any time to choose whether or not to participate in any event or effort.
3. As soon as all the details are known, a registration form for the Congress will be posted, through which an association can agree to participate in the Congress and to send a designated voting representative. Please see the FAQs on the site for more information about who may participate in the Congress.
4. An area in which *any interested individual* can also submit a profile, with his or her interest in being kept informed and being invited to any future activity open to individuals. Again this will be self-screened, with a brief questionnaire.
5. Announcements and the most current information related to the Congress will be posted **in advance** so that all participating associations can convene their own local meetings and discuss the questions posed. In this way, official representatives can come to the Congress with a good sense of what their colleagues think and want.
6. Other elements that might be needed as things move forward, including helping to identify leaders to assume long-term leadership in the formation of a new professional association.

The Congress and the Web site will be publicized as widely as possible, both on- and off-line.

Role of the Planning Team

The ad hoc planning team's sole purpose is to create a venue where representatives of volunteer manager affiliations can assemble in person. The desired outcome will be the creation of an empowered leadership steering committee to carry forth an action plan derived from decisions made at the Congress. With the assistance of others, we have agreed to carry out the following tasks:

1. Work with the Denver DOVIA to determine the logistical details of the Congress.
2. Publicize the Web site and the Congress broadly.
3. Design, post, and manage the Web site through the Congress.
4. Seek needed funding to support the Congress.
5. Design the structure for the 2-day Congress and find an outside facilitator.

We are the current team members:

- *Paula Beugen*, who participated as one of the off-site telephone participants in the Saturday Seattle meeting, at that time representing the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA)
- *Joan Brown* of Civic Center Volunteers in Marin County, CA, who was ad hoc discussion leader in Seattle for the Monday evening session
- *Victoria Eggleston* of Cedar Mill Community Library in Portland, OR, who compiled the conference survey responses
- *Susan Ellis* of Energize, Inc., who helped to plan the Seattle meetings
- *Audrey Harris*, Executive Director (in Chicago) of ASDVS
- *Pam Lemp* of the St. Luke's Episcopal Health System in Houston, TX and National President of ASDVS, who had originally offered their September conference as a site to meet
- *Todd McMullin* of Samaritan Technologies, who participated in the Seattle meetings and volunteered his company's Web services
- *Christine Nardecchia* of the City of Dublin, OH, who is representing NAVPLG (National Association of Volunteers in Local Government) and who took the minutes of the Monday evening meeting in Seattle
- *Betty Stallings* of Building Better Skills, who had offered to contact funders for the originally-planned Philadelphia meeting
- *Cat Trapp* of Girl Scouts Totem Council in Seattle, who was one of the VRM-Roundtable Leadership Team participating in the Seattle meetings but has now resigned that position

What You Can Do If You're Interested

- Go to www.COVAA.org and provide information about your association of volunteer administrators – or ask the right organizational representative to do so.
- Go to www.COVAA.org and enter your personal information as someone who wants to be kept informed.
- If you want to help with any of the ad hoc team activities in preparation for the Congress, please contact info@covaa.org.
- Tell as many colleagues as you know about this new effort.
- Keep checking www.COVAA.org for the latest information.