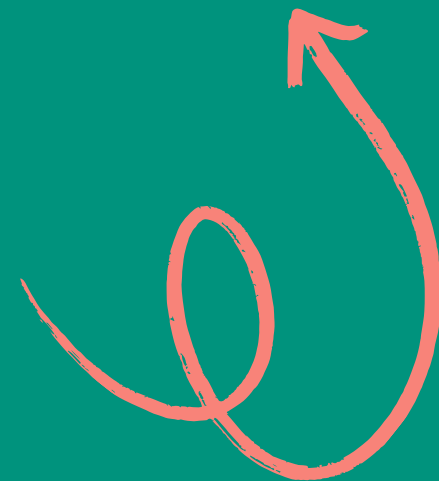


Seeking and Keeping Volunteers

Kelly Bevan
Community Partnerships Lead
Community Bank Buninyong




Background

- Community Development and Grants Management
- Volunteer program management
- 11 years at Sovereign Hill Museums Association
- 6 Years at Royal South Street Society
- Managed large volunteer teams for Good Friday Appeal at Melbourne Exhibition Centre
- Recruited and managed 200+ volunteers for the FISA World Rowing Masters Regatta



Volunteering – Can it solve many of the pressing challenges of a modern world?

Here's a snapshot of evidenced-based data:

- Oman, Thoreson, and McMahon (1999) followed individuals over the age of 55 for 5 years; those who volunteered for 2 or more organisations had a 44% lower likelihood of dying – 14% lower than those exercising 4 times a week.
 - Giving is a strong predictor of increased mental and physical health into adulthood, and reduced adolescent depression and suicide risk (Post & Neimark, 2007; Schwartz, Meisenhelder, Ma, & Reed, 2003; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001).
 - Giving has a significant impact on teenagers' mental health, increasing happiness, hopefulness and social effectiveness (Billig, 2000, 2007).
 - Just 5 minutes of gratitude can shift the nervous system toward a calm state of parasympathetic dominance, which is where the heart, breathing, blood pressure, brain rhythm and electrical potential of the skin are synchronized (McCraty & Childre, 2004).
 - Even when the giving is 'enforced' the benefits remain; students who were exposed to service learning end up volunteering more afterwards (Billig, 2007; Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier, & Benson, 2006).
- 

What is your single biggest volunteer challenge right now?

Is it...

...difficulty recruiting the right people?

...utilizing their valuable skills?

...acknowledgement and making sure they feel valued?

...matching their motivation to the tasks?

Volunteering Trends



- Post COVID – Formal volunteering rates in Victoria saw a significant drop (a 50.2% decline in participation rate early in the pandemic). Rebuilding takes time and new strategies.
- Volunteers are less willing to commit for the long-term. Many are now seeking a mix of occasional/fixed-hour roles and prefer local, community-focused opportunities.
- There's an increase in virtual and skilled volunteering. Can your treasurer volunteer remotely? Can someone design your social media graphics from home?
- Many organisations report that the increase in background checks and paperwork causes some volunteers to leave...Keep your onboarding process as simple as legally possible.
- The rate of volunteering is typically higher in regional areas than in capital cities.

Model for Engaging Volunteers



Traditional Model

Need for a 'costumed presence' in the museum (more passive type of volunteering)

Versus

Contemporary Model

Building capacity to engage highly skilled volunteers in specialised roles

Social Demographer Bernard Salt
"Golden Age of Volunteering"

One Size Fits All Approach

What do you think are the core problems with a "one-size-fits-all" approach to recruitment?



It Ignores....

- Experience
- Skill Set
- Interests
- Motivations
- What else?



Motivations

	What they are seeking	How you can fulfil it
Values	To express humanitarian, altruistic or community values.	Constantly share the impact of their work. Remind them of your mission.
Understanding	To learn about the world, social issues or the people you serve.	Offer mini-workshops or invite speakers to talk about your cause.
Social	To meet new people, build social ties or feel part of a group.	Create simple social opportunities (a quick cuppa, a shared lunch).
Career / Skill	To gain experience, skills, or contacts for future employment.	Give them meaningful, resume-worthy tasks and provide references.
Enhancement	To feel better about themselves or boost self-esteem.	Provide genuine, public acknowledgment of their contribution and importance.
Protective	To escape personal problems or reduce negative feelings (like guilt/loneliness).	Provide clear boundaries and a supportive, non-judgmental environment.

Roles suitable for Volunteers



Determining what work should be done by paid staff and what work could be done by volunteers is not easy – and it's getting more difficult. No longer any hard and fast rules about this. What is paid work in one Not for Profit may be legitimate volunteer work in another.

Inspiring Volunteer Stories

Jude

Interpretive papers. Bringing static displays to life. Also led to giving presentations and historical refresher training to staff and volunteers.

Andrea

1831 Maria Foster Sampler. Involved research, charting original sampler digitally, sourcing materials as close as possible to original colours (before the original faded)



Virtual Volunteering

“On Your Bike” Exhibition

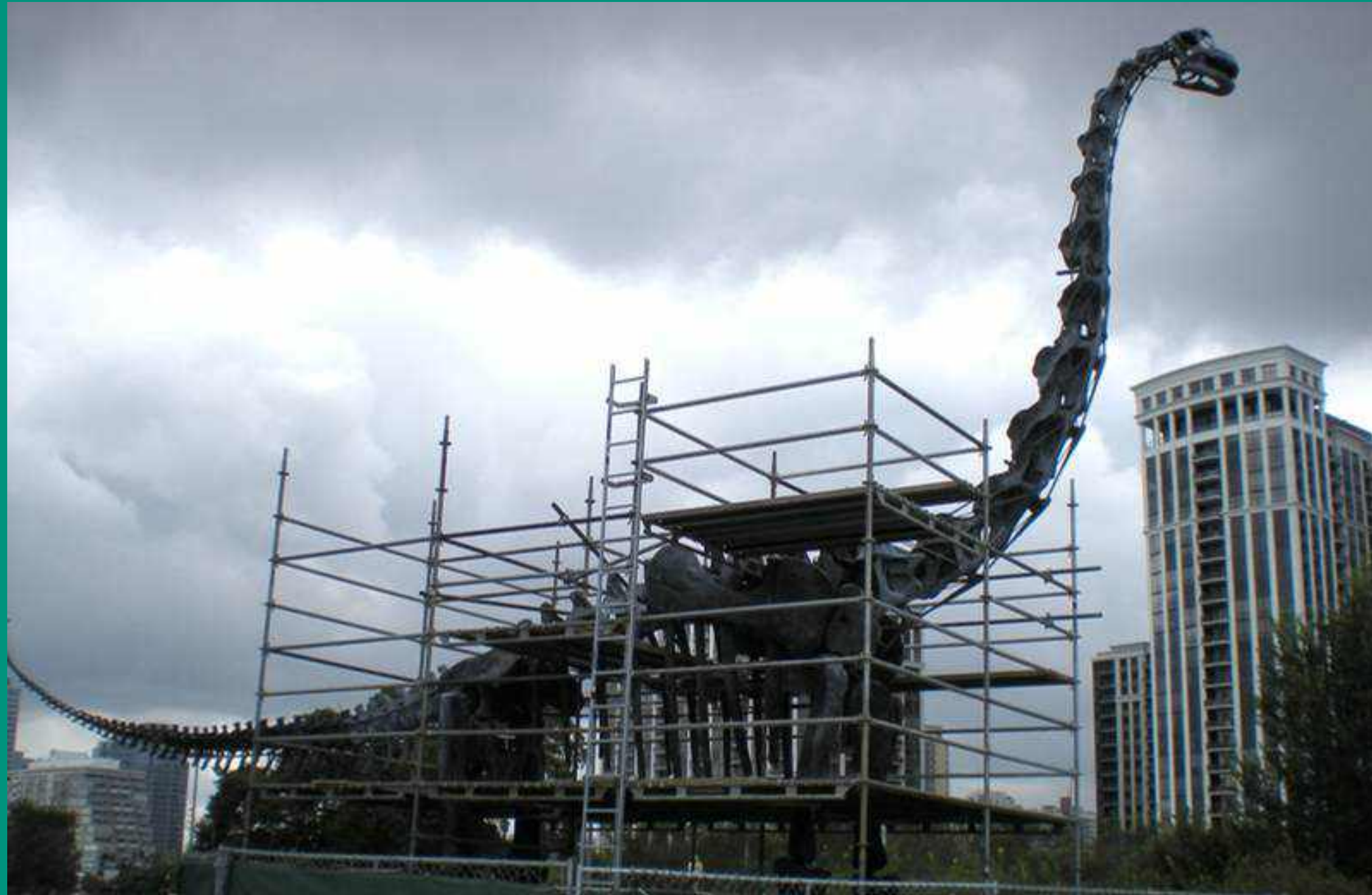
- Desire to produce an activity to engage families
- Limited time and resources
- “Sparked!” virtual volunteers to the rescue!
- 2 volunteers from the USA collaborated on project – Ben and Laura
- Graphic design student and copywriter
- Text panels and featured images were sent via Dropbox
- Laura created the questions using the info from the text panels
- Ben designed the flyer

www.vollie.com.au



Scaffolding

Creating a structure of support around an individual or project



Field Museum of Natural History Dinosaur Scaffolding

Benefits of Contemporary Model

Volunteer...

- is motivated, energetic and excited about the program
- brings skills, knowledge and networks that they have accumulated through their careers and lives
- has ownership of a project/responsibility
- can train and mentor others
- can make a difference to the organisation's mission

Challenges

- Time and effort to keep a volunteer engaged and continue to offer fulfilling opportunities
- Ongoing support to keep projects on track, compliance, etc.

Recruitment

Action Area	Strategy	Practical Example
Targeted	Focus on <i>roles</i> and the <i>motivations</i> that fit them. Don't ask for a "volunteer"—ask for a "Social Media Star" or a "Grant Proofreader."	Need help with a mailout? Target a parent group for a "2-hour, one-off assembly team" (Social Motivation).
Micro-Volunteering	Break large, open-ended roles into tiny, specific, short-term tasks . This fits the modern desire for flexibility.	Instead of "Volunteer Gardener," ask for a "Weed-Pulling Blitz Team" for one Saturday morning a month.
Where to Look	Go where the people are already congregating.	Local community Facebook groups, school newsletters, CWA, regional library, local café noticeboard, etc.
Role Description	Create clear, simple role descriptions that state the time commitment, required skills, and the impact they will make.	"Sort 10 boxes of donations on Tuesday mornings (9am-11am) to ensure 50 local families receive essential supplies."



Setting up for Success

- Onboarding experience
- 'Welcome' Checklist / Volunteer Passport
- Clear role description and a tour
- Introduce by name to key staff/volunteers
- Show them the basics: toilets, tea/coffee area, essential equipment, where they store belongings
- A simple task they can complete on Day 1 to build confidence and ensure they feel useful
- Code of conduct, safety procedures (OH&S), and confidentiality expectations
- Volunteer Agreement
- Buddy System

Training & Development

- Online Corporate Induction
- Face to face Orientation Day
- Volunteer Manual
- “Creating Connections” training program
- Peer to Peer Mentoring
- Digital Resource Library
- Skills and knowledge sharing days
- Monthly workshop, presentation or tour
- Interpretive papers
- Facebook group
- Specialised training sessions for volunteer children



Creating a Positive Experience



Check-Ins, Not Check-Ups

Ownership over their tasks

Volunteers want to feel like contributors,
not just free labour.

Listen to Barriers

Accepting that their ability to commit will
change over time

Ensure they have the correct tools, a
functional workspace, and access to any
information they need to do their job
properly.

Saying “thank you” is so important but what other ways can we acknowledge volunteers?