

THE REWARDS OF VOLUNTEERING

By Bob Mueller
Vice President of Advancement at Hosparus

I have volunteered for many different organizations over the years including Hosparus, Home of the Innocents, Rotary, and various churches. Each time I volunteer, I receive far more than I give. We have some 400 volunteers at Hosparus of Louisville. They constantly give thanks for being a hospice volunteer because of all they receive from the experience. We are grateful for their work and are humbled by their willingness to serve.

Several years ago I attended the WLKY Bell Awards, honoring ten adult and two teen volunteers from the Kentuckiana area. At the event the twelve honored volunteers are each asked to say something to the large crowd that attends. It wasn't one of our two Hospice volunteers, but an older gentleman who volunteered at another non-profit who simply said, "Get off your butts." And then he went and sat down. And that's what volunteerism is, getting outside of yourself and making good things happen.

I love Erma Bombeck's quote, "Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation's compassion, unselfish caring, patience, and just plain loving one another." The most precious time we will ever have is the time we give away doing volunteer chores to help others get more out of life. There is no material wage for this kind of work, but a host of emotional rewards. The height of volunteer giving is performing an act of kindness or love so quietly that none but ourselves will ever know we had a part in it.

What great humility this can bring to us, who live in a world where selfish people often insist on credit for all their deeds, often things they had nothing to do with. All we need to do is think of all we have received without deserving it or asking for it. By taking part in the giving end of life, we find the true wealth of our own generosity.

Volunteerism is the perfect way to give back to the community for all blessings received. Volunteerism is putting faith in others into action. Volunteerism is unconditional love expecting nothing in return. When we express love and kindness to others, we feel more love toward ourselves. Though we may not understand just how it works, we can be certain it does. The more of anything we give away to others, the greater our own rewards will be.