

# Nonprofits: Recruiting and Retaining Baby Boom Volunteers in Central Kentucky



An analysis of volunteer needs in Central  
Kentucky and best practices for recruiting baby  
boom generation volunteers

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Faced with tight budgets and expanding needs to serve and roles to play in the community, non-profit organizations have a shortage of volunteers. Especially desired are knowledgeable, passionate and dependable volunteers willing to serve on a regular basis. Although, the largest generation in our history, the Baby Boomers, which comprise 28% of American citizens and 77 million people, are retiring and acquiring increased free time, many are not being connected with volunteer opportunities.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that only one-third of those between ages 43 to 61 are serving as volunteers (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004). This indicates that two-thirds of Baby Boomers are not currently volunteering and could be potential sources of time, financial support, expertise and advocacy for these organizations. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, “they are untapped resources of extraordinary proportions. They are the largest, healthiest, best-educated generation in history- and they can leave an incredible legacy through service to others” (Eisner, 2007).

### **Research Question**

The research question that I seek to answer is, “How can non-profit organizations in Central Kentucky prepare to utilize the time, talents and resources of a retiring Baby Boom generation?” I seek to identify the current levels of volunteerism in Central Kentucky as well as targeted recruitment efforts towards older citizens and answer the following questions:

- Are retiring citizens being actively recruited and utilized in non-profits in Central Kentucky?
- What are the advantages and benefits of utilizing retiring citizens for volunteer purposes to accomplish the mission and daily tasks of non-profit organizations?

### **Methodology**

The indication that this “untapped” resource is not being utilized to its full potential by nonprofits has been found through my research of 21 Central Kentucky non-profit agencies. I have conducted this research using open-ended phone survey questions and collecting data about the current usage and targeted recruitment efforts towards retiring citizens. I have compiled survey data statistics grouped into categories of organizations with light (40-200 volunteers) medium (201-500 volunteers) and heavy (501+ volunteers) annual usage. These data are grouped into number of volunteers currently utilized annually and percentage of volunteers over age 55, additional volunteers needed annually and types of volunteer services that the organizations identified as most immediate needs. Also analyzed was the percentage of those volunteer coordinators who were familiar with national senior volunteer programs such as Senior Corp, GetInvolved and the Corporation for National Service. In terms of qualitative data,

I report respondent insights on the advantages and disadvantages of working with older volunteers, future recruitment plans for getting more senior volunteers, and opportunities for family volunteerism.

## **Results**

The 21 non-profit organizations surveyed were divided into three categories; light, medium and heavy volunteer usage, with seven organizations in each category. The number of volunteers used annually ranged from 40 to 9,217 volunteers per year with a median of 300 volunteers. The analysis indicated that as organizations use more volunteers and fall into a more “heavy” volunteer usage category, they also utilize more senior volunteers. This was indicated by the averages of senior volunteers for light usage (24%), medium usage (30%) and heavy usage (33%) organizations.

The results from the study of the number of additional volunteers that could be utilized annually indicated that those organizations ranging from 201-500 annual volunteers have the greatest need for more volunteers with a mean of 523 volunteers needed per year. The light and heavy usage organizations had similar needs for additional volunteers stating that they could utilize an average of 273 volunteers and 202 volunteers, respectively. Analysis of the types of work most volunteers will be needed for demonstrated the greatest need for volunteers with participant/patient services, youth needs and tutoring/literacy training. These needs were followed closely by special events. The lowest areas of need were in the areas of transportation and hospitality. However, there were a variety of areas in which volunteers were needed that were identified through survey analysis.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

From this analysis it is concluded that additional recruitment efforts should be initiated by non-profit organizations in Central Kentucky. These may include utilizing national services such as the Senior Corps and the Corporation for National and Community Service programs as well as directly targeting retiring baby boomers. Some suggestions for this recruitment include workplace campaigns, public relations presentations at community organization and association meetings, special events targeted at substantive project work and family events, and peer recruitment events. It will also be important to recognize and respect these volunteers for their experience and knowledge they will provide for these organizations in order to retain their services. There should be additional research completed by the non-profit organizations pertaining to the time, costs, resources, and locations of these older citizens before beginning the proposed volunteer recruitment process.

### **Identification of the Problem**

There are more than 10,000 non-profit organizations in Kentucky covering a broad array of societal needs and providing services for citizens ranging from literacy training to homeless shelters to aesthetically pleasing historic sites. However, more than 80 percent of these organizations have assets under \$100,000 (*Kentucky League of Cities, 2005*). This indicates a great need for these organizations to provide for indigent, handicapped, young and aging citizens, although there are limited resources and budgetary constraints. Volunteers are a valued asset to these organizations and can be of great importance in providing necessary services for day-to-day operations as well as special events throughout the year.

Although there is a huge generation of currently retiring and soon-to-be retiring citizens across the nation, many of them are not currently involved with volunteer work. Though there has been an indication of a need for increased volunteer force for non-profits, several of these organizations are not currently utilizing older volunteers and have no specified plans for targeting this generation in the future. This under-utilization may be attributed to a variety of reasons, including insufficient recruitment efforts targeted to these older citizens, lack of understanding about how to utilize national programs such as Experience Corps and Senior Corps and inadequate preparation for increased free time among Boomers.

Research has indicated that this age group is a special target for recruiting due to the limited monetary resources of non-profit organizations and the great need for volunteers to subsidize a shortage of paid staff and assist in accomplishing the mission of these organizations. One of these studies was conducted by Research Triangle

International and stated that this is a “generation that if as actively engaged as their parents were during retirement, could leave a lasting impact on their communities” (RTI International, 2005). According to another study by the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center, “Americans are volunteering 20 percent more today than they did 20 years ago and seniors are responsible for nearly all of this increase. Many of these citizens are ready to contribute their time and talents” (Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center, 2006).

Because many non-profits in Central Kentucky have not taken advantages of the volunteer services provided by older citizens, they are not aware of the numerous benefits from this group. Nonprofits with a history of utilizing older volunteers have identified these benefits: wisdom and expertise, dependability, commitment to the organization, knowledge, leadership skills, consistency, and flexibility of scheduling. If non-profits with a need for additional volunteers used appropriate recruitment methods and incentives for older volunteers, they may tap into a very fruitful resource. This is especially important for these organizations serving a variety of community needs with limited resources to accomplish their mission.

### **Research Questions:**

The research question that I seek to answer is, “How can non-profit organizations in Central Kentucky prepare to utilize the time, talents and resources of a retiring Baby Boom generation?” I seek to identify the current levels of volunteerism in Central Kentucky as well as targeted recruitment efforts towards older citizens to answer the following questions:

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- Are retiring citizens being actively recruited and utilized in non-profits in Central Kentucky?
- What are the advantages and benefits of utilizing retiring citizens for volunteer purposes to accomplish the mission and daily tasks of non-profit organizations?

### **Background**

Baby Boomers, identified as those 77 million babies born in the U.S. during the “boom years” of 1946-1964 began turning 60 last year. This is considered the “prime age for volunteering” due to the increased leisure time and familiarity with career experiences (Nonprofit Charitable Organizations, 2007). This is the largest generation in American history and considered to be the “healthiest, wealthiest and most active” of all their predecessors (White House Conference on Aging, 2005). According to statistics from the Council on Aging at the University of Maryland, in the year 2000 there were 34.7 million individuals over age 65 and that number is expected to double by the year 2030 (Wilson and Steele, 2001). These citizens can be of service to non-profits, which are seeking dependable volunteers with specialized skills who have had experience in areas such as health, education and social welfare.

They also have an average life expectancy of 83 years and have a 33.2% volunteer rate, which is four points above the national average of 29% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006). Current statistics show that volunteering tends to peak at mid-life, around the current age of the boomers, and then decline slightly. The biggest enticement for baby boomers to volunteer is being asked by someone with whom one has an established relationship and as part of social interaction. If they are presented with the

opportunity for self development or self-esteem building, they are more likely to get involved with the volunteering efforts (Get Involved, 2007). According to a study by *Research Triangle International* in North Carolina regarding the longer life expectancy for this group compared with their counterparts, “their participation in volunteer activities provides a significant national resource to addressing social and community-based problems” (RTI International, 2005).

One resource that is currently available and will have an increased amount of leisure time is volunteers from the Baby Boom generation. The oldest Boomers will begin retiring in approximately five years and will have an abundance of additional free time that they have not enjoyed in their working careers. This provides many opportunities for continued service and for nonprofits to utilize these 77 million citizens, which account for almost 28 percent of all Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). This could assist non-profits in beginning new activities and expanding current ones around the community and state, while keeping older citizens active and contributing to their communities. Also, this could help non-profits to offset rising costs of providing services and current administrative costs.

The White House Council on Aging revealed some information about the demographics of baby boomer volunteers (White House Conference on Aging, 2006). This report indicated that boomers are more apt to volunteer with more than one organization, whereas the average volunteer supports only one organization at a time. Also, boomers who own businesses have a 45% volunteer rate compared with 34% of those who are not business-owners, controlling for other factors, including education levels, race and ethnicity. Approximately 36.9% of women volunteer compared with

29.4% of men, although this is still a higher rate than other male groups. College-educated boomers volunteer at a higher rate (49.8%) than those without a college education (25.7%) (Fritz, 2005). These statistics may be important for volunteer coordinators and CEOs of non-profits seeking to recruit boomer volunteers.

There has been some research and interviews completed on this issue by many different organizations. The Corporation for National and Community Service has completed extensive research on the subject such as an extensive report on “Volunteer Growth in America: A Review of Trends since 1974” which utilizes U.S. Census Data emphasizing the need for additional volunteers by 2010. They have also started SeniorCorps whose mission is to “tap the rich experiences, time and talents of the 55+ generation.” The Corporation for National and Community Service has conducted state performance reports on the impact of SeniorCorps programs, such as foster grandparents, Retired Senior Volunteer Corporation (RSVP), and Senior Companions. According to their studies, 94 percent of SeniorCorps volunteers report that their service has improved their knowledge, health or social connectedness (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2004). Senior volunteerism is not only a valuable asset for non-profits, but includes substantial health and social benefits for these older citizens who volunteer.

The White House Conference on Aging has been held annually since 2000 and makes recommendations to help “focus on the aging of today and tomorrow” (White House Conference on Aging, 2006). Experience Corps, which is an award-winning program, has worked to engage citizens over 55 to meet their communities’ greatest challenges and currently contributes more than 466,000 hours annually in tutoring and

mentoring services (Experience Corps, 2006). This program conducted an extensive two-year survey which found that in addition to volunteer hours contributed, significant increases were found in feelings of usefulness and physical strength among volunteer seniors than with a control group.

The Urban Institute completed a Performance Management Report with outcome indicators on the impact of the Senior Corps and State Performance reports (Urban Institute, 2002). The Points of Light Foundation as well as the Volunteer Center National Network have developed reports concerning the need for volunteers in nonprofits organizations and how to utilize older citizens in these roles (Points of Light Foundation, 2004). Recently, The Harvard School of Public Health MetLife Foundation Report issued a report titled, “Unprecedented Opportunity Ahead to Mobilize Millions of Aging Boomers as Community Volunteers.” This report indicated ways to attract and retain volunteers, motivations for Baby Boomers, and assessed levels of retirement participation (Harvard School of Public Health, 2004). These are a few of the many reports and analyses that have been conducted around the nation concerning this topic.

Although there is a great need for an increased volunteer force in non-profits, a 2003 study indicated that “despite the fact that retirees respond positively when they are asked to volunteer, they are less likely to be asked to do so than those who are still working” (Association of Fundraising Professionals, 2003). This report recommended that nonprofits need to plan ways to get people age 50 and older involved in their volunteer programs. This finding was supported by my telephone surveys based on responses regarding future organizational plans to recruit older volunteers. The responses indicated that only three of the organizations had initiated programs to recruit and retain

older volunteers, such as utilizing Retired Senior Volunteer Corps individuals and matching older volunteers with their interests using trial runs at different volunteer positions.

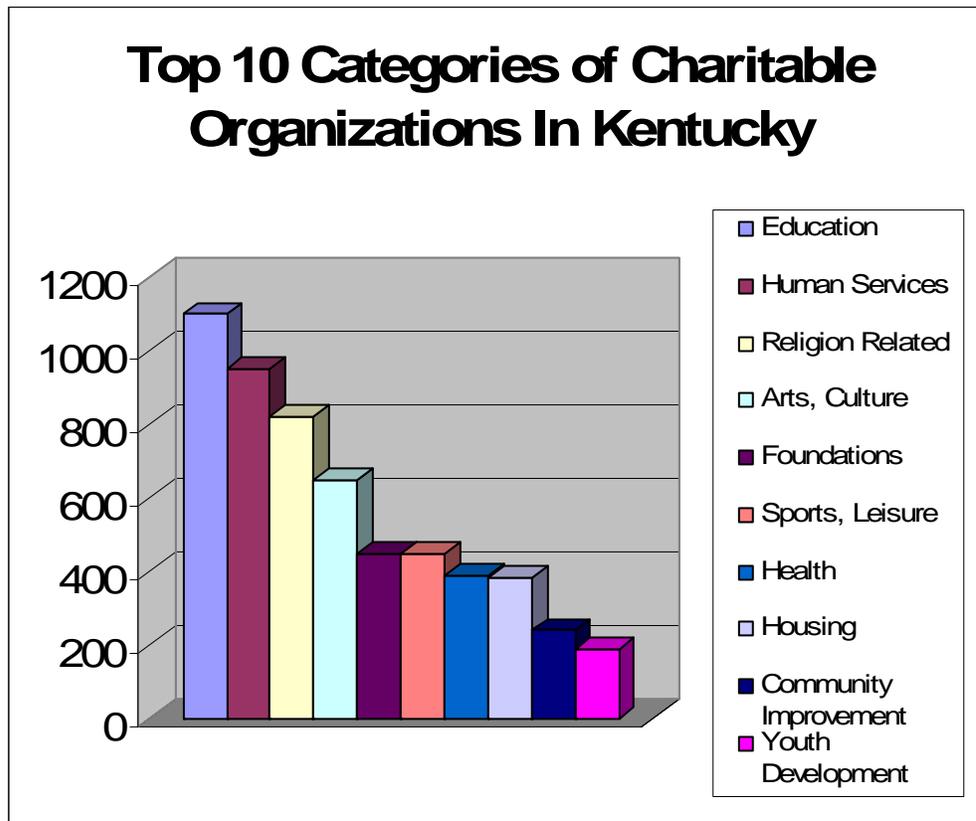
### **Literature Review**

The main concept of this paper is the identification of the volunteer needs in Central Kentucky non-profit organizations and the resources that Baby Boomers can provide for these organizations. So, I will begin by identifying what non-profits are as well as what volunteer needs exist. According *America's Nonprofit Sector: A Primer*, a non-profit organization is defined as: "one formed for the purpose of serving a public or mutual benefit other than the pursuit or accumulation of profits for owners or investors". The nonprofit sector is a "collection of entities that are organizations; private as opposed to governmental; non-profit distributing; self-governing; voluntary; and of public benefit" (Salamon, 1999). The nonprofit sector is often referred to as the third sector, independent sector, voluntary sector, philanthropic sector, social sector, tax-exempt sector, or the charitable sector.

These organizations can be classified into one of 25 major categories that have been assigned by the Internal Revenue Service. These categories exist mainly for identification purposes as well as marketing to citizens who want to support specific causes. The top four groups in Kentucky are: Education, Human Services, Religion and Arts/Culture (Monroe, 2005). These four categories account for more than one-third of all non-profits in the state and represent 19 of the 21 organizations that I surveyed for this report. The two organizations included in my survey which fall into different categories are the Lexington Humane Society and Henry Clay's Ashland Estate. The top 10

categories of charitable organizations in Kentucky from this Kentucky League of Cities article are shown:

**Figure 1: Top 10 Categories of Charitable Organizations in Kentucky**



Source: National Center for Charitable Statistics (2006).

In an article about ways to contribute to non-profit organizations in Kentucky, Monroe suggests that “anyone considering sharing with an organization should understand what is personally important to them so that they can match their expectations with the needs of the charities they support” (2005).

In a 2006 article in the *Arizona Daily Star*, Marc Freedman, founder of Civic Ventures, a San-Francisco based organization that promotes the use of experienced, older adults to help non-profit organizations, baby boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, are “beginning to retire and many of them want to make remarkable contributions

to society.” It is suggested in this article and several others that this generation will not be satisfied with traditional retirement activities such as playing golf and watching television. Freedman suggests shifting the view of retirement from “the freedom from work” to the “freedom to work” and developing community programs to get non-profits and retiring citizens connected as well as making volunteer experiences positive. This includes treating volunteers as respected and valuable resources to the organization and providing clear expectations, job descriptions, orientation and training and supervision (Arizona Daily Star, 2006).

According to a study by the University of Maryland Center on Aging, “if organizations are going to attract and retain a new generation of baby boomer volunteers whose education levels are higher than that of previous generations, are individualistic in their thinking and looking for meaningful roles, then status quo thinking must be replaced with new internal and external paradigms of operation.” According to the Cornell Retirement and Well Being Study, 60% of older adults say that “feeling valued and needed” is important for personal fulfillment and 53% talk about the need to be intellectually challenged (Moen, 1999). This group has suggested that non-profit organizations consider seven important questions to prepare for recruiting older volunteers:

- Organization Strategies- how might organizational strategies change? Outline a new strategic approach to address the next generation of volunteers.
- Organization Structure- what kind of structure will attract and retain the next generation of volunteers? Describe the ideal organizational structure for tapping the market and making the best use of the new generation of volunteers.

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- Organization Resources- what resources will enable you to attract and retain the next generation of volunteers?
- Organization Technology- how can you use technology in new ways to attract, retain and support the work of the next generation of volunteers?
- Organization Funding- how can funding and/or investors play a role in attracting and retaining the next generation of volunteers? What roles might volunteers play with respect to funding?
- Organization Partnerships- Can you imagine new network strategies, partners, and partnership roles that might be created? How will these attract and retain the next generation of volunteers?
- Organization Culture and Values- How might organization cultures and values be affected in light of what we know about the next generation of volunteers? Will the way work is structured and conducted change in order to attract and retain the next generation of volunteers? (Wilson and Steele, p.4, 2001).

The Corporation for National and Community Service held a Senior Corps Conference in Utah and conducted networking sessions to get ideas from project directors about ways to capture the “time, talent, and skills of younger seniors age 55-65.” Responses provided several ideas for effective recruitment approaches in the areas of: marketing, customer service, event planning/volunteer roles and agency preparedness.

The marketing ideas included: connecting volunteers with community needs and impact, demonstrate the monetary value of their time to the organization, create partnership to form boomer leadership institutes, find volunteer opportunities for grandparents and grandchildren to volunteer together, advertise in locations boomers

frequent. In terms of customer service, organizations should ensure that there is effective follow up and quick turnaround from the agency after the initial contact, respect for experience, business atmosphere and choice in the agency they serve and the location. For effective event planning and volunteer roles, directors found that creating a program for Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) professional placements, providing mentorship for young professionals, collaborating with other organizations such as American Association of Retired People (AARP), using volunteer skills to train others and finding intergenerational events was most effective. For agencies to be prepared, they should view volunteers as employees without pay, provide job descriptions and provide ongoing education and training (Hernandez and Wilson, 2002). One template of a volunteer handbook for these volunteers has been created by the Retired Senior Volunteer Corps and Volunteer Center of Vermont and includes: an introduction by the program director, definition of terms, volunteer responsibilities and benefits, reporting hours, administrative issues and handicap accessibility (Rutland County RSVP, 2002).

Many studies also stated that it is very important to understand the motivations of baby boomer volunteers and to find innovative opportunities for baby boomers. From the *Points of Light Foundation* and the *Volunteer Center National Network*, there have been three clear patterns that have emerged as to the motivations for baby boomers to volunteer. These have been discovered through interviews with project directors and older volunteers. These are: these volunteers want to make a difference, they expect numerous ways to do so, and they insist that these opportunities be professionally managed with incentives that speak to their own personal and economic needs. A newsletter from *The Boomer Project* entitled, “You Can’t Always Get What You Want-

It's Time to Retire Retirement," stated that this concept of retirement needs to be changed into a "re-stage" of life not a "rest-age" in order to tailor to retiring baby boomers (Boomer Project, 2004).

This study has also identified three of the most popular innovative ways to get volunteers involved in their community: workplace volunteering, family volunteering and singles volunteering. Workplace volunteering may engage current and retired employees of an organization to donate their time and talents to a non-profit while building teamwork skills and morale. This also allows employees to get involved with a local non-profit during their employment years in order to continue volunteering after retirement. Many baby boomers are also volunteering with their children, grandchildren and other family members, which not only allows them to make significant contributions to their communities but also provides quality time, strengthens communication and offers opportunities for family members to serve as role models. Singles volunteering includes connecting socially with new people in order to form new relationships and shared sense of mission (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2004).

One guide to non-profit charitable organizations developed eight tips for working with baby boom volunteers. These are: respect their schedules, treat them as colleagues, develop opportunities that really matter, remember that volunteering is optional, make sure you are organized and professional, train with relevance, reach boomers through their peers and recruit boomers at work. To respect their schedules organizations should seek to provide volunteers with flexible opportunities that include short-term timelines with clear start and finish dates and understanding that they may still be working part-time, looking after children and aging parents and traveling. Many anti-authoritarian

boomer volunteers resist authority, talk back or question how things are being done. Because of these characteristics of this demographic, it is important to ask them, don't tell them to do something and take advantage of their intelligence, experience and education, in order to get the most from older volunteers (Fritz, 2007).

Most volunteers want meaningful and challenging volunteer opportunities that include their passions and knowledge and organizations are urged to involve them in decision making and goal setting. Always remember that volunteering is optional and seek to understand what the volunteers are looking for; friendship, recognition, the opportunity to be creative, leadership roles, learning new skills or setting a good example for their grandchildren. This article also states that baby boomers will not tolerate disorganization or sloppiness because they have been working all of their lives, often in responsible positions, so they know what works and what doesn't in organizations. Be clear, be organized and don't make volunteers have to spend excessive amount of time to get answers to their questions. The author even suggests assigning one staff member to be the point person for volunteer to contact with questions.

Another key point is to provide training that is relevant, meaningful and well-presented and treats volunteers as colleagues as well as making lessons experiential, not book-based. In order to get the best response rate from these volunteers, coordinators should focus on using other older volunteers to recruit their peers and friends and focus on testimonials from this group. Finally, since many of these boomers are still working, try recruiting them at the office by working with companies to present your organizational mission and develop programs for volunteering through their company.

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These are some of the important tips highlighted in a non-profit charitable organization article for working with baby boomer volunteers (Fritz, 2007).

Another article by the Points of Light Foundation and Volunteer Center National Network classified baby boomer volunteers into three main categories: activist, consumers, and workers. These categories were generated from data provided by volunteer centers that work with nonprofit and government agencies to engage volunteers in service activities. Following, the categories are implications and tips for working with each type of volunteer. Activist are those who share a deep desire to make a difference in ambitious and inspirational ways, many of whom were involved in the political activism that helped define the 1960's. These volunteer opportunities should be designed and marketed for mature activists who want to change their neighborhoods, communities and the world by showing them how their efforts will bring purpose and change to the work. Some tips for dealing with activists are to form relationships and substitute for the relationships that were formed with work colleagues and not to seek "volunteers" but rather seeking "activists" for a particular cause or mission objective.

The second type of boomer volunteer is the sophisticated consumer accustomed to expecting an abundance of options and considers time a limited commodity. The best ways to target these volunteers is to offer a variety of short and long-term opportunities and implement project-based opportunities with significant results for agencies and volunteer satisfaction. Some pointers for these individuals are to organize a half-day needs assessment retreat centered on the question: "If we had more time or expertise, we would..." in order to create an abundant selection of volunteer opportunities. Organizations should also have clearly stated goals and objectives in project descriptions,

engaging volunteers in creating strategies for project implementation, and targeting adults that will be most interested and qualified to volunteer for the organization.

The final group is comprised of workers, or those who are overworked and thinly stretched and exhausted from their work lives. Although a survey conducted by the American Association of Retired People (AARP) shows that 70% of workers over the age of 45 plan to continue working into retirement, even those who do not work cherish their newfound freedom. However, when asked about their overall happiness with the retirement experience, many revealed a powerful sense of loneliness and absence of bonds created at work. In order to effectively target these volunteers, non-profits should emphasize the chance to regain meaningful identity and relationships while putting talents and skills to work. Also, reward increased commitment and accomplishments with recognition and responsibility. Some incentives suggested are: learning new things, making friends, putting career skills to good use, reduced costs on prescription drug and education credits (Points of Light and Volunteer Center National Network, 2004).

### **Methodology**

Telephone surveys with both open-ended and closed-ended response questions were conducted with 21 nonprofit organizations in Central Kentucky. I chose to use this type of survey because of the quick turnaround time as well as higher response rates compared with mail and internet surveys. I also realized that many of the nonprofit leaders that I contacted have very busy schedules and that they are responsible for many duties and operations in their organization and that a survey that takes longer than five to ten minutes to complete would be difficult to get their agreement to complete. The input

from these leaders is very important to me, so I wanted to design a survey that would be appropriate for them to participate in and contribute their experiences and ideas.

This survey contained 11 total questions and allowed respondents to elaborate on information as well as contribute ideas on their current older volunteer usage rates and demographics, projected need for additional volunteers, volunteer areas in need, and advantages and disadvantages encountered in working with older volunteers. The survey was administered to chief executive officers and directors as well as volunteer coordinators at 21 non-profit organizations in Central Kentucky. There was a 100% response rate and many thoughtful and detailed answers pertaining to volunteer needs addressed by these non-profit administrators.

These individuals were chosen because of their direct relations and understanding of volunteer coordination and training within their organizations. These leaders were identified through United Way's Volunteer Match online database, Kentucky.com website and recommendations from the University of Kentucky NonProfit Initiative and United Way personnel. I also used the snowball technique of relying on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects. At the conclusion of the survey, I was able to seek recommendations of respondents about other nonprofits that utilize volunteers and then contact these recommended organizations. These methods were effective in obtaining a list of several different types of nonprofit organizations and willing participants to survey.

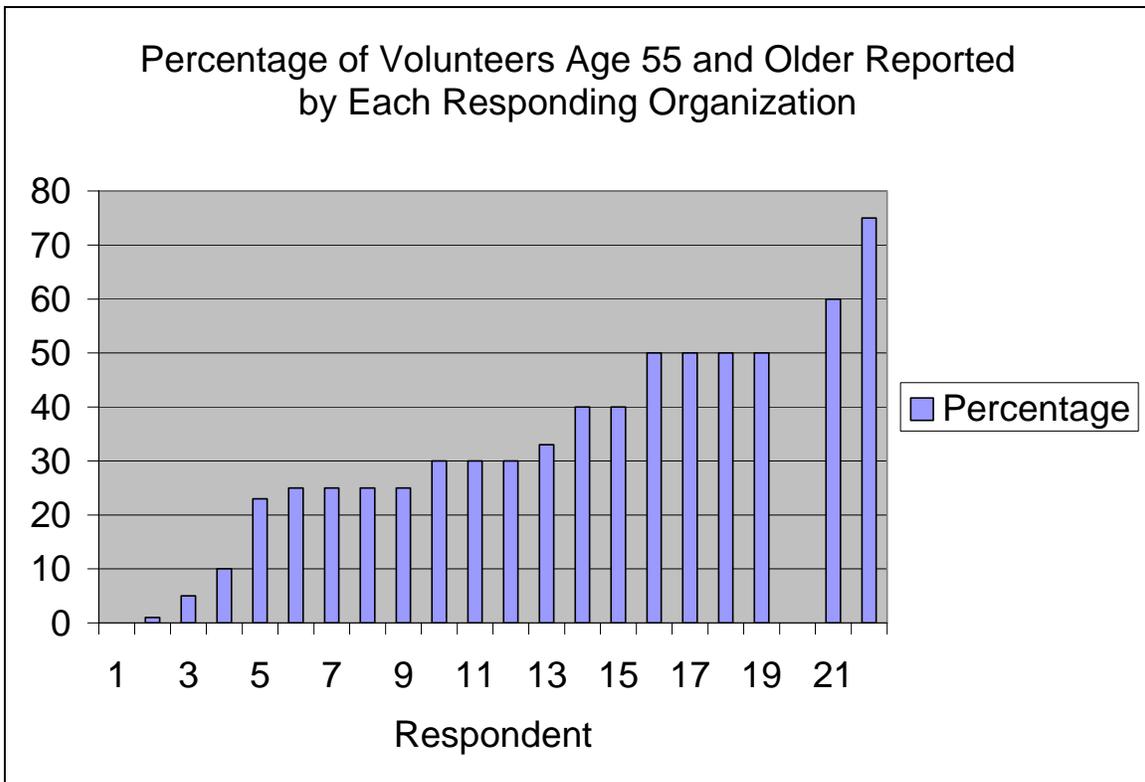
Respondents answered a combination of open-ended and close-ended survey questions. This information was analyzed in terms of frequency of responses as well as variations among open-ended responses and coded according to various categories of

responses. These responses have been useful in understanding the current and anticipated volunteer needs because the respondents represent a wide array of nonprofit areas. This information will assist with volunteer recruitment because of the information about best practices and those which have not been as effective as well as benchmarking ideas that have been effective and could be helpful for other organizations. A best practice is defined as “a management idea which asserts that there is a method, process, activity, incentive or reward that is more effective at delivering a particular outcome than any other technique, method, process, etc. The idea is that with proper processes, checks, and testing, a project can be rolled out and completed with fewer problems and unforeseen complications” (California State University, 2007).

### **Results**

The extensive telephone interviews and discussion produced some interesting findings. I found that of the 21 organizations utilizing volunteers, only six organizations gained at least 50% of their volunteers from the 55 and older population group. The other organizations ranged from utilizing no older volunteers to having 40% of their volunteers ages 55 and older. This data is represented below:

**Figure 2: Percentage of Volunteers Age 55 and Older**



Source: Author’s Survey of 21 Kentucky Non-profit Organizations

This is an interesting finding because it affirms that very few organizations in Central Kentucky are utilizing a majority of older volunteers and some are using a very small percentage of volunteers over age 55. Nine of the organizations surveyed are drawing less than a quarter of their volunteers from this age demographic.

Another key point in this study was that once the organizations were separated by number of annual volunteers into the light, medium and heavy volunteer usage categories, each had two organizations obtaining more than half their volunteers from the 55 and older group. However, the ranges for the percentages of older volunteers currently used as well as median percentages were different for each group:

**Table 1: Older Volunteer Usage by Organizational Categories**

**Central Kentucky Non-profit Organization**

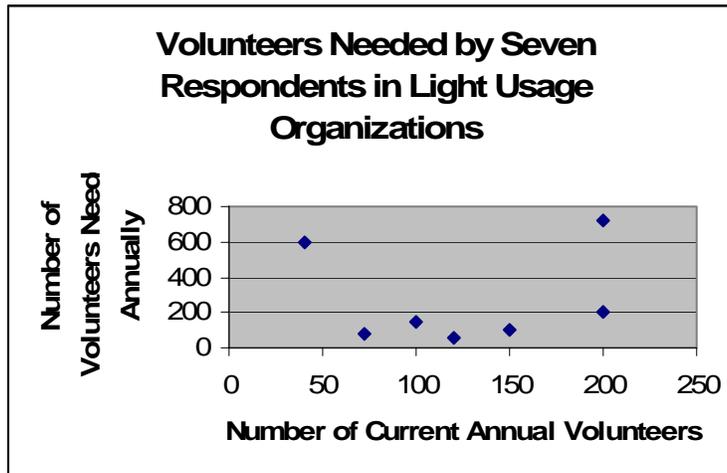
	<b>Light Usage</b>	<b>Medium Usage</b>	<b>Heavy Usage</b>
<b>Annual Volunteers</b>	40-200	201-500	501+
<b>Range Age 55+</b>	0-50%	10-60%	23-75%
<b>Mean Percentage</b>	24%	33%	39%
<b>Median Percentage</b>	25%	30%	33%
<b>Mode Percentage</b>	50%	25%	N/A

Source: Author's Survey of 21 Kentucky Non-profit Organizations

These data indicate that as organizations utilize a greater number of volunteers annually, they also utilize a greater percentage of older volunteers. The mean and median percentages increased as the volunteer usage rates increased which shows a correlation between number of volunteers used and percentage of older volunteers in an organization. This may be attributed to a variety of factors such as size of the organization, recruitment resources available to attract older volunteers, reputation and history of the organization, and location.

In regards to questions about their organizational needs for additional volunteers, every organization indicated a need for additional volunteers. These requests for additional volunteers ranged from 36 to 2,400 volunteers per year, with the median number for those with light volunteer usage at 174 volunteers annually, for medium usage organizations the number was 120 volunteers annually and for those with heavy usage the median request was for 240 volunteers annually. Volunteer needs for each of the three categories of organizations are shown on graphs below:

**Figure 3: Volunteers Needed for Light Usage Organizations**



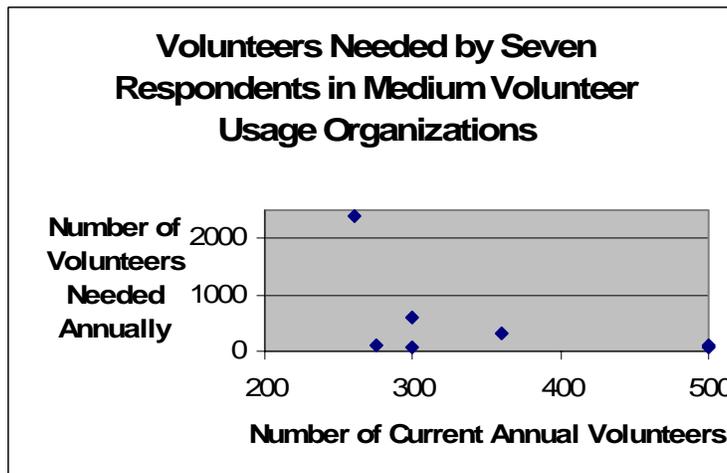
Source: Author's Survey of 21 Kentucky Non-profit Organizations

Mean- 273 annual volunteers

Median- 174 annual volunteers

Range- 60 to 720 annual volunteers

**Figure 4: Volunteers Needed for Medium Usage Organizations**



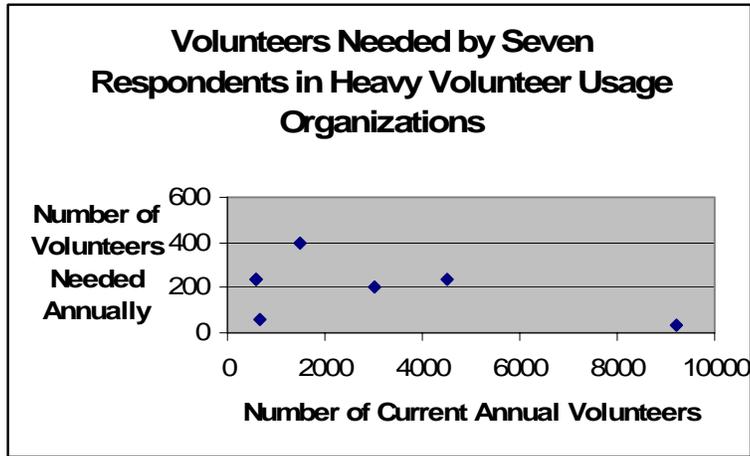
Source: Author's Survey of 21 Kentucky Non-profit Organizations

Mean- 253 annual volunteers

Median- 120 annual volunteers

Range- 60 to 2400 annual volunteers

**Figure 5: Volunteers Needed for Heavy Usage Organizations**



Source: Author's Survey of 21 Kentucky Non-profit Organizations

Mean- 202 annual volunteers

Median- 240 annual volunteers

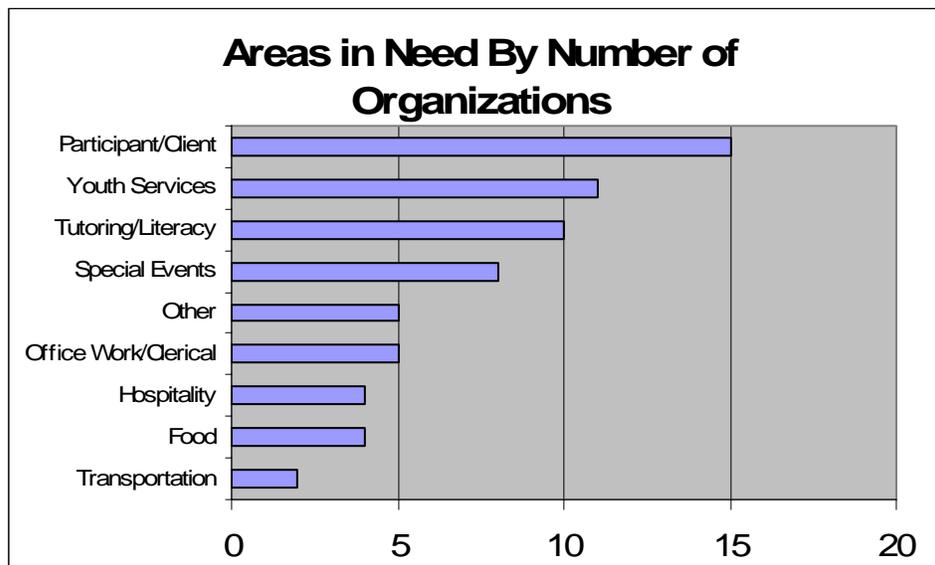
Range- 36 to 400 annual volunteers

The x-y plot graphs depict how the number of current annual volunteers and the number of volunteers needed annually correspond. The x-axis, or number of current annual volunteers, is increasingly higher for each volunteer usage category. The y-axis, or number of volunteers needed annually, has the greatest range for the medium usage organizations. The data indicated that those organizations with a light volunteer usage rate (between 40 and 200 annual volunteers) report the highest number of additional volunteers needed each year. The other two categories- medium and heavy volunteer use- have close numbers requested, 253 and 202 respectively. The medium usage organizations also had the greatest range of volunteers requested, from 60 to 2,400 volunteers.

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In terms of the areas and duties that additional volunteers could be used, the area most frequently mentioned was that of participant and client services, cited by 15 of the 21 organizations. These services range from conducting camps for an animal shelter to managing a thrift store at a homeless shelter. The next highest requested services were youth services and tutoring/literacy programs. The least of the requested service areas in need were: transportation, hospitality and food serving/preparation. This was an interesting finding because it indicated that the majority of non-profit organizations surveyed have a need for additional volunteers in involved programming areas and with substantive work rather than administrative and clerical duties. The following chart graphically depicts this information.

**Figure 6: Areas of Volunteer Needs**



Source: Author's Survey of 21 Kentucky Non-profit Organizations

These findings were interesting because they indicate that most nonprofits want new volunteers to be involved in substantive program work and many to work directly with program participants or clients. This is important in considering how baby boomer

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volunteers could factor into alleviating this volunteer shortage keeping in mind their education, skills and desire to make a difference in a meaningful way. The needs of the nonprofit organizations and those desired of potential baby boom volunteers are closely related.

Another interesting finding concerned future plans for recruiting efforts targeted toward older volunteers. Of the 21 total organizations, only two organizations indicated any future plans for recruiting volunteers over the age of 55. One of these organizations was a patient care facility and another was a homeless and low-income shelter. The future recruitment plans that were indicated were matching volunteers with their interests and having trial runs to place them in appropriate positions. The trial run was described as “having the volunteer come to facility and experience volunteer opportunities in different areas of the organization in order to find the best fit for individual skills and passion and organizational needs.” The other idea was to form relationships with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program and to gain additional volunteers through their program. Some of the ways that volunteers are currently recruited include: United Way’s Volunteer Match website, television advertisements, partnerships with businesses, churches and volunteer fairs. However, none of these events were identified as specifically targeted towards recruitment of older volunteers.

Also discovered were several ideas about the advantages and disadvantages of working with older volunteers as well as difficulties in recruiting these citizens. These were responses to these survey questions as well as references to experiences working with volunteers age 55 and older. These were identified by the nonprofit organization leaders in regards to their experiences with volunteers over age 55. The responses are

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shown in a descending order with those receiving the greatest number of responses first followed by those receiving the least number of responses. The number of organizations identifying a specific advantage or disadvantage is shown in parenthesis beside the response. For example, ten different organizations identified flexible schedules as an advantage of utilizing older volunteers and four organizations said that physical impairments are a disadvantage.

**Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of Older Volunteers**

<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
Flexible Schedules (10)	Physical Impairments (4)
Real-World Experience (4)	Technological Impairments (3)
Consistency (3)	Socialize too much
Dependability (3)	Must have leadership roles
Knowledge/Wisdom (3)	Fear of some locations served
Realistic Expectations (2)	
Commitment	
Reliability	
Follow through with duties	
Willingness to do anything	
Professional	
Eager to learn	
Relate well with others	
Work Ethic	
Efficiency	

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Productivity

Recruit other volunteers

Trustworthiness

Patience

Donors to Organization

Source: Author's Survey of 21 Kentucky Non-profit Organizations

As indicated by this chart, there were 20 different advantages and only 5 disadvantages that were identified. Of the 21 total organizations, 18 identified advantages associated with using older volunteers and 7 cited any disadvantages. This indicates an overall positive view and experience examples from utilizing older volunteers in a nonprofit organization.

When asked about the most difficult aspects of recruiting older volunteers, the majority of organizations indicated they had not identified any specific aspects. Some other difficulties included: technology efficiency/not checking email frequently for updates, they feel limited in their abilities although they could be utilized, feel like they've done their share of work, not having monetary rewards and getting them involved as soon as they retire.

Another interesting finding was the response to questions regarding familiarity with national programs promoting senior volunteerism, including the Corporation for National and Community Service, GetInvolved and Senior Corp. Only five of the 21 organizations were aware of the mission of the programs and another two had heard of them before but were not familiar with their services. The other 14 organizations were not aware of these programs or the services and ideas they may offer for nonprofits seeking to recruit retiring volunteers.

### **Weaknesses of Study**

One important weakness of this study was the small sample of nonprofit organizations that were surveyed. Although 21 organizations were surveyed by telephone, there are several thousand more organizations in Central Kentucky that were not represented. If given a greater amount of time to complete the surveys and projects, I would have surveyed several other organizations. Another weakness of the study is the location of the nonprofits that were surveyed, since 20 of the 21 were located in Lexington. This is due to a variety of factors, mainly, the size of the city of Lexington and fact that the majority of larger nonprofits are located here as well as inability to receive contact information for organizations in other counties. A final weakness of the survey is the need for interviews of actual volunteers over the age of 55 about effective as well as ineffective recruitment efforts they have experienced. All of my data were derived from interviews with volunteer coordinators, executive directors and staff of the nonprofit organizations and not actual volunteers. I would have liked to include volunteer input on effective recruitment practices and ideas for retention of older volunteers.

### **Recommendation**

Based upon the results and findings of this study and data analysis from the telephone interviews, I would recommend that nonprofit organizations in Central Kentucky direct extensive efforts towards planning ways to recruit baby boomer volunteers. These efforts should begin as promptly as possible with the knowledge that

this large group of citizens beginning to retire and continuing to retire over the next 22 years can be a valuable resource for these organizations. These efforts may include training management and volunteer coordinators about the characteristics of baby boomers and most effective recruiting practices, such as the three patterns for success: they want to make a difference, they want to be offered numerous ways to do so, and they want to be professionally managed. This will also include understanding the three types of baby boomers and seeking to meet their volunteer needs: the activist, the consumer and the worker (Volunteer Center National Network, 2004). Also, the nine tips for working with these volunteers: respect their schedules, treat them as colleagues, develop opportunities that matter, understand that volunteering is optional, be organized and professional, train them with relevance, reach them through their peers, recruit them at work, and ask them to do tasks rather than telling them what to do (Fritz, 2007).

Another important recruitment method will be to utilize data from the most recent U.S. Census to identify geographic groupings of people age 55 and older. Non-profit volunteer coordinators and CEOs can actually create a map and identify target areas where there is an opportunity for targeting older citizens, such as grocery stores, doctor offices, churches, restaurants that are “favorites” of this demographic. After identifying these places it is important to go to them and talk with people there to let them know about the mission and need for volunteers in your non-profit. Since it will not be possible to go to every location, establish relationships with business owners, social workers, veteran’s organizations and others who work with the public in order to get referrals and recruit volunteers who identify with your organizational mission. It is key to market your organization by identifying what is unique about your non-profit, who the

target audience is, what you are doing to reach them, and how volunteers can help (Allen-Cabellero, 2001).

After emphasizing the importance of seeking out this generation of potential volunteers and understanding their motivations and passions, nonprofit organizations may utilize the Corporation for National and Community Service, Senior Corps, and the RSVP program to gain connections and important communication information in order to enhance recruitment efforts. There should be research regarding the costs and benefits of holding volunteer fairs, encouraging current senior volunteers to recruit peers and offering incentives, holding family volunteer events so baby boomers can bring their family members with them, and developing partnerships with local corporations. This will be done in order to get this generation on board before they retire so they will remain active with the organization into retirement. These citizens should be regarded as a source of numerous volunteer hours, wisdom, leadership, talent, and important asset just waiting to be discovered for these organizations.

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**APPENDIX A  
NONPROFIT TELEPHONE SURVEY**

1. Name of Organization, Address, Phone #, Locations:

Respondent Position:

Cities/Counties and Demographic Served:

What is the mission of your organization?

How do volunteers assist you in accomplishing this mission?

2. Approximately how many individuals volunteer with your organization each year (they may be better equipped to tell you a monthly number)?

Please tell me how your organization recruits volunteers.

3. What percentage of these volunteers would you say are over 55? \_\_\_\_\_ %  
(If they don't have data readily available, offer to let them send it via email or  
By phone)

4. Do you have any special strategies for recruiting volunteers over the age of 55?

Yes → Name programs/activities:

5. Are there any distinct advantages or disadvantages to working with volunteers age 55 and older?

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6. Do you plan to target this population in the future? How do you plan to recruit them?
  
7. What have you found to be the most difficult aspects of recruiting older volunteers?
  
8. Many studies have shown that Baby Boomers are more likely to volunteer if They can do so as a family, do you have any volunteer opportunities for families? If so, how have you recruited families?
  
9. Programs such as GetInvolved, Senior Corps and Corporation for National Service are created to assist nonprofits in recruiting Senior volunteers. Have you utilized these services?

If so, what has been your experience with these programs?

If no, why?

No -> Would you like information about them?  
(Offer to send information)

10. How many additional older volunteers could you utilize monthly?
  
11. If you had more volunteers, what types of programs would you start or expand?

Thank you greatly for your valuable time and responses. These will be used in a report this Spring. Because I value your opinion and contribution to the community, I am using a referral system to get the best respondents for my survey. Could you give

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me 2-3 other nonprofits that you work with or know from experience who utilize volunteers?

**APPENDIX B  
CENTRAL KENTUCKY NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION SURVEY  
INFORMATION**

<b>Name of Organization</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Demographic Served</b>	<b># of Annual Volunteers</b>	<b>Mission Areas</b>
<b>AIDS Volunteers, Inc.</b>	<b>Jean-Luc Cotto Executive Director</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>72 counties, including Fayette</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>HIV/Aids education, financial assistance</b>
<b>American Cancer Society</b>	<b>Beatrice King, Income Development Assistant</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>15 Counties in Bluegrass Region</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>Cancer education, patient services</b>
<b>American Lung Association</b>	<b>Ann Evans, Regional Director</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette County and Eastern Kentucky</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>Promote lung health, education</b>
<b>American Diabetes Association</b>	<b>Lisa Edwards, Association Director</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette and Surrounding Counties</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>Prevention, education, patient services</b>
<b>American Red Cross</b>	<b>Dewayne Edwards, Volunteer Coordinator</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette, Bourbon, Clark, Estill &amp; Powell Counties</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>Disaster relief, human services</b>
<b>Ashland- Henry Clay Estate</b>	<b>Mary Ellen Carmichael, Director of Volunteers</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Various states</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>Historic preservation, education, art</b>
<b>God's Pantry</b>	<b>Mandy Brajuha, Volunteer Coordinator</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>49 counties in Central &amp; Eastern Kentucky</b>	<b>4,500</b>	<b>Hunger relief, human services</b>
<b>Hope Center</b>	<b>Audra Meighan, Volunteer Coordinator</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette and Surrounding Counties</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>Food service, human services, health, education</b>
<b>Hospice of the Bluegrass</b>	<b>Turner West, Volunteer</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette and Surrounding</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>Patient services,</b>

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	<b>Coordinator</b>		<b>Counties</b>		<b>transportation</b>
<b>Hospital Hospitality House</b>	<b>K. Lynn Morgan, Executive Director</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Entire State of Kentucky</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Human Services, health, housing</b>
<b>Junior Achievement of the Bluegrass</b>	<b>Ron Wigglesworth, Program Manager</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette and 17 other counties</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>Education, youth Services</b>
<b>Kentucky Horse Park</b>	<b>Gina Beare, Director of Volunteers</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Entire State and Country</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>Education, animals</b>
<b>KY United Methodist Homes for Children and Youth</b>	<b>Diana Thames, Volunteer Coordinator</b>	<b>Versailles, Kentucky</b>	<b>Entire State of Kentucky</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>Youth/Child, housing, education</b>
<b>Lexington Leadership Foundation</b>	<b>Eric Geary, Chief Operating Officer</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette County</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>Youth, education, mentoring, sports</b>
<b>Lexington Humane Society</b>	<b>Katherine Pinero, Manager of Volunteer Services</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette County</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>Animals</b>
<b>Lexington Rescue Mission</b>	<b>Melissa McDonald, Director of Development</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette and Surrounding Counties</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>Food service, mentoring, youth, homeless</b>
<b>Manchester Center</b>	<b>Greg Cornett, Office Assistant</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette County</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>Youth, children, education, human services</b>
<b>Operation Read</b>	<b>Phillip Roberts, Basic Literacy Coordinator</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette County</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Literacy, youth services, adult education</b>
<b>Ronald McDonald House of the</b>	<b>Anna Cooper, Volunteer</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette County and Entire</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>Housing, health services</b>

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<b>Bluegrass</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>		<b>Country</b>		
<b>Salvation Army</b>	<b>Kally Proctor, Volunteer Coordinator</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Fayette County</b>	<b>9,217</b>	<b>Education, Human Services, Youth, Homeless, Food</b>
<b>Shriner's Hospital</b>	<b>Maggie Warren, Director of Volunteer Services</b>	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b>	<b>Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, West Virginia and Tennessee</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>Children, health services, human services</b>

