

# VOLUNTEERS, COMMUNITY SERVICE & YOU

A UNITED THANK OFFERING STORY



“I HAVE AN uncomfortable feeling that we should be doing more about the people in need in our parish and community.”

“I’m not so old and decrepit that I couldn’t go out *somewhere* and do *something*.”

“I wish someone would come in that door, walk up to me and say, ‘Good morning, Mrs. Smith, I’ve come to visit you.’ To visit me! It’s been so long since I’ve had a visitor.”

“My husband is coming home from prison today. He’s paid for his mistake, but how will he be received when he comes back into our community and parish? How will they treat him?”

Do you know anyone who might have made any of the above statements? Have you ever said to yourself, “I would like to do something useful, but I don’t know how to go about it. I’d like to volunteer my services, but where? What would be required?”

Has your parish tried to set up a program of service to persons in need in your community that dragged along, bogged down, fizzled out? Perhaps you never started because you didn’t know how to begin.

If so, you will be glad to know that a United Thank Offering grant of \$68,400 has been made to Episcopal Community Services of the Diocese of Pennsylvania. It is being used

in an experimental project to find out how volunteer workers can most effectively assist professional staff in serving the needs of the community.

Episcopal Community Services is already making use of volunteers in its five divisions: Institutional Chaplaincy Service, Church Work Among the Blind, The James C. Smith Memorial Hospital for Convalescent Women, All Saints Hospital for the Treatment of Chronic Diseases, and Family Counseling Services. With this money it will be able to secure the services of a Co-ordinator of Volunteers who will recruit more volunteers (those over 65 years old also), give them the basic training needed for each field, and work with three parishes to set up and maintain a program of volunteer service to persons of special need.

The "One-to-One" program of Episcopal Community Services, in which a carefully trained and supervised volunteer is assigned to one person of special need, is of particular interest. Through the continuity of person-to-person service a strong bond of friendship can develop. Mrs. Smith, who wished someone would come to see her, would know that *her friend*, Mary Brown, would visit her that very morning.

Then there is the Fellowship of St. Dismas. Within prison walls men often experience a true religious conversion and become devout communicants of the prison chapel. When the

day comes to return home they often find it difficult to make the transition to the parish church. The Fellowship of St. Dismas, named for the repentant thief on the cross, is composed of two groups of male volunteers. The first group is made up of men still in prison who are active members of the chapel family and who intend to continue in the Fellowship for a time after leaving prison. The second group, "out-mates," have a genuine interest in helping these men to become an integral part of the home parish and community upon their return. The out-mates help to find jobs and homes, or act as sponsors for men about to be released.

Episcopal Community Services is a multi-function religious, health, and welfare agency officially recognized by canon law of the Diocese of Pennsylvania. Its high professional standards have received approval by such

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bodies as the Joint Commission of Accreditation of Hospitals, the Family Service Association of America, the State Department of Welfare, and the United Fund of the Philadelphia area.

Episcopal Community Services is equipped to carry out many services that perhaps could not be offered in every town or city.

Do you say, "That's in a big city and I live in the small town of Rocksboro. How will this experiment help us?"

Episcopal Community Services has one element in its program that can be put into action even in the smallest community, and that is the use of volunteer workers.

### **USE OF VOLUNTEERS**

To find out more about the best way to use volunteers, three parishes are being sought, hopefully quite different from each other, willing to participate fully and enthusiastically in experimental efforts to develop a parish-based



volunteer visiting program to people of special needs. The goal is to find out what kind of help needs to be provided for a parish in selecting and training volunteers, and in its ongoing supervision. A real effort will be made to try to pinpoint the problems and the roadblocks in this kind of ministry of the laity.

Many people are looking for a more meaningful ministry as lay persons. *I have an uncomfortable feeling that I should be doing....* They need and desire opportunities to give concrete witness to their faith in constructive volunteer service through their own parish, as well as through Church-related and community agencies.

When this three-year experimental venture has been evaluated and the findings made available, the Church can then not only present the opportunities to its lay persons, but can also offer suggestions for the necessary special training to help them become effective witnesses to the faith and the instruments of God's grace.

### **UNITED THANK OFFERING STORY No. 5**

*Our gifts to the United Thank Offering have made and will continue to make important differences to many people throughout our nation and our world.*

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