



Department Source: Community Development - NS

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: December 16, 2019

Re: Annual report of Volunteer Service to the City

## Executive Summary

One Columbia's most valuable assets are the volunteers who share time in support of local government. Each year the Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS) provides to Council a report of the efforts of volunteers who support the City of Columbia. In FY19, volunteers shared 39,867 hours of service valued at slightly more than \$1 million.

## Discussion

Volunteer service to the City of Columbia for FY19 is slightly above last year with 39,867 hours of service. Eleven City departments reported volunteer services with Parks & Recreation having the greatest support with 16,122 hours contributed to 58 programs and activities. The Community Development Department logged 10,902 hours and City Utilities including Solid Waste Management and Storm Water Management had 6,964 hours of service.

Volunteers support the City's effort to fulfill our mission, vision and values. Specifically, volunteers help us provide service to our residents and visitors and their gift of time enhances our stewardship of resources.

Staff estimates that more than 6,000 residents volunteer with the City – some on a regular basis and many for one-time events. Neighborhood Services annually surveys volunteers about their experience. In the 2019 survey distributed in January, 94% of respondents said they would recommend volunteering with the City to a friend or family member.

Additional notes about the City's volunteer program:

- Litter pickup along City streets, in our parks or near our streams continues to keep volunteers busy. In FY19, volunteers reported picking up 6,475 bags of litter. Litter is an unfortunate reality but volunteers show pride in our community and help us protect our environment and improve the appearance of our City.
- Recycling Ambassadors: A team of forty Recycling Ambassadors shared time promoting waste reduction and proper recycling, assisting at 38 education events with 1,818 participants. Table displays and education booths resulted in 731 quality engagements. The apartment recycling program outreach provided information to 2,536 residents. Recycling Ambassadors assisted with six school waste audits guiding 132 student volunteers through the process. Waste audits are one of the most effective tools in making an impact on participating volunteers and giving a clear baseline for change to improve recycling rates.
- Residential Composting Program: Five volunteer compost workshop instructors conducted 14 compost workshops with a total of 257 participants. The program



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evaluations indicated that 76% of workshop attendees are actively composting and diverting their kitchen and yard waste from the landfill, with the remainder responding that they plan to do so.

- Special events: Volunteers continue to play an integral role in the City's many activities and special events. In FY19, volunteers contributed to the success of more than 30 events, most with Parks & Recreation including races, festivals, childrens' sporting events and Neighborhood Park Fun Days.
- Adopt-A-Spot Beautification: There are 100 landscaped spots in street right of way cared for by volunteers, with 95% adopted. ONS continues to work with the Office of Sustainability and Public Works-Street Division to convert beds to pollinator habitats and native plantings. On a related note, staff hopes to have volunteers assigned to rain gardens along Providence Road and in other locations in 2020.
- The Live Well By Faith program in the Department of Public Health & Human Services grew this year, with volunteers sharing nearly 2,500 hours of service.
- A new program for high school students was created this year called Teens in Action to provide continued volunteer opportunities for those who aged out of the Youth in Action program that provides volunteer opportunities in the summer for those 12-15 years of age.
- The Columbia Police Department is exploring a renewed effort for volunteers to support their work in FY20.

Staff believes the contributions that residents share are tremendous and there is strong support among staff and the community for volunteer service with the City. Volunteer service to the City fluctuates from year to year due to staff changes, department priorities and volunteer preferences.

In addition to the hours and service represented in this report, hundreds of volunteers share time on more than 40 Boards & Commissions that advise the City council and staff.

## Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: Volunteers share time each year valued at \$800,000 or more.

Long-Term Impact: Volunteers have been serving the City of Columbia for many years and we anticipate their service well into the future.

## Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

### Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Social Equity, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

### Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

## Legislative History



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Date	Action
n/a	n/a

## Suggested Council Action

Acceptance of this report.