

# CREATING AND MAINTAINING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

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If residents of your community are just beginning to organize as a group, now is the time to identify and find community leaders—those people who are willing to take on the responsibility of ensuring that “things get done.” Make sure that these potential leaders are kept involved and are included in the planning of community activities and problem-solving efforts.

The clear “leaders” will soon rise to the top, but be careful that they don’t become overburdened. Having the support of the community and volunteers will help to ease the workload of those organizing the community, and its activities.

Work to ensure that the leadership in your community reflects the makeup of your community. Don’t have all your association officers or committee heads from one block, one church, or one anything. Try to have your leaders be representative of your community as a whole. Serving as a leader is a great opportunity for a person to learn and grow. The skills acquired as a community leader—organizing people around an issue or problem, working efficiently with government, gaining proficiency in publicity, fundraising, and bookkeeping—are useful far outside the realm of community problems and projects.

## **LATER ON**

1. If your organization has been operating for a while, you, as the community leader and the person everyone always looks to for help, may be tired. How many times have you looked around your community and wondered why it’s always the same, few people who seem to be involved in all projects, helping to organize them, and seeing that they are successful?
2. For that matter, have you wondered why you are always the one coordinating activities and making things happen? Is this because no one else will come forward to help out? If the few people who are doing “everything” move away or just feel “burned out”, what will happen to your group?
3. It is important for the health and survival of your organization to work continuously at creating and maintaining community leadership, so there are always a number of people carrying the ball and others waiting on the bench

4. It is also important to know when to step down as president or committee chairperson and let someone else assume that leadership role. Giving others, who are involved and gaining skills, the opportunity to lead ensures a high level of enthusiasm and continuation of the organization's goals.

## **BASIC STEPS**

Provide access to the kinds of information and contacts to make the transition into a leadership position easy. All too often people will say, "She is the only one who can do it," because whoever "she" is has the knowledge of where to go to for help to get things done. Sharing this information will make others feel more confident and better equipped to take on the leadership role(s).

1. Provide support for your leaders. Give the kind of help you would like. Don't expect the person chairing the fundraiser to sell all the tickets!
2. Provide leadership-training sessions. Talk about the importance of: staying open and receptive to new ideas and ways of doing things, sharing the limelight, giving credit when due, working together instead of in cliques, and keeping each other informed. Invite someone in to lead discussions on board responsibilities, how to handle conflict situations, how to lobby, parliamentary procedures, or other areas of interest. Maintaining this ongoing leadership development training will help experienced leaders stay enthusiastic, and will help new, upcoming leaders to learn the skills of effective leadership.
3. Don't let former practices or common ways of approaching a problem box you into a given method or solution. If you want to encourage people to become leaders, you must allow them to help develop solutions and your group must be open enough to allow new approaches.
4. Provide for upward mobility in your organization. Encourage your nominating committee to consider members who have demonstrated interest and ability as candidates for office and committee assignment. Appoint people as committee heads who have been active committee members.
5. Provide for rotation of officers through your bylaws or informal rules. Set terms of office and work to have someone training for each office and committee assignment-that way, a person does not become a president for life.

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

1. **Volunteer Central**- Volunteer Central is the primary resource for recruiting, developing and organizing volunteers in the Greater Baltimore area. Through their programs, more than 30,000 people have helped strengthen hundreds of nonprofit organizations while serving the community. Volunteer Central is a nonprofit organization that works with businesses, nonprofits and individual volunteers to build healthy, vibrant communities.

**BVU's Volunteer Central - 175 W. Ostend St. - Ste. 100 - Baltimore, MD 21230**

**Phone: (410) 366-6030 - fax: (410) 366-6032**

**[www.volunteercentral.net](http://www.volunteercentral.net)**

**2. CPHA Leadership and Community Building Fellowship Citizen Action Workshops**-Creating and maintaining community leadership are a specific concern of **Citizen's Planning And Housing Association**. The organization's desire is to provide leadership and capacity building trainings, which offer a rich knowledge to offer to community association's who hope to cultivate more leaders.