

Investing in Your Volunteers With C.A.R.E.

Dr. David W. Vandewalker

One general attribute of the human spirit is the need to be loved and appreciated. Particularly, the members of your booster club have that same desire. With some careful planning you can offer C.A.R.E. to your booster members enabling them to fulfill personal aspirations as well as assist you and your organization's goals. To C.A.R.E. involves strong **C**ollaborations, skillful **A**vailability, compelling **R**elationships, and effective **E**mpowerment.

A collaborative spirit must be modeled from the top (the director). Seek to be a collaborator within your community as well as in your building with colleagues and administrators. Your booster organization will catch this spirit from you. Next, seek to connect the talents, skills and contributions of multiple people in your booster organization for the common good of the organization.

In his best-selling book *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell used the term “connector” to describe individuals who have many ties to different social worlds. It's not the number of people they know that makes connectors noteworthy; importantly, it's their ability to join people, ideas, and resources together that make a connector an important facilitator

in today's world. Therefore, be on the lookout for the diverse talents in your organization, attract them to join the team through thoughtful empowerment and relationship building; then, be prepared to leverage all they have to offer to make your group strong and vital.

As music educators, life can be so busy with rehearsals, lesson plans, faculty meetings, etc., we often need help in the “now” thus, finding ourselves quickly accepting the willful “yes” from whomever will step up to the plate to help. To be truly effective, **taking extra time and effort to connect the right people to the right responsibility can have a significant effect on the organization.** At that connection point—true collaboration will flourish. Furthermore, when people are volunteering in areas where they are comfortable and find success, they are significantly more willing to continue serving and investing more into the organization itself.

Additionally, being available to key leaders or stakeholders in the organization can make meaningful difference. Volunteers can easily monopolize large chunks of time. Therefore, it is critical to strategically focus your accessibility to a small core group

of volunteers **whom you can empower to meet the needs of the larger volunteer base, allowing you to truly engage in important issues requiring the expertise of the music educator** (i.e., pedagogy, score study, etc.). Booster volunteers can organize projects, complete travel planning, manage databases, and prepare music; volunteers can assist with virtually all aspects of the band program not requiring a music degree. Therefore, investing time in a core group of volunteers can pay off with large rewards and ultimately meet the needs of a larger volunteer base.

Furthermore, entrust! Allow your executive board to make decisions **by authorizing and empowering them to make plans and wise decisions without micromanaging them.** Monitor the executive board on a regular basis only to step in when needed on big picture decisions.

However, delegation doesn't end with entrustment of authority, it comes full circle when you partner with your team in service. When an event comes to fruition, be there to participate and serve. When a decision needs to be made, step up and wisely and efficiently assess, evaluate and determine an outcome, otherwise, encourage

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and praise as you come along side them in their service.

Another key way to show C.A.R.E. to your volunteer organization is to develop a personal knowledge and understanding of each volunteer. At the beginning of each season offer a simple survey seeking to ascertain four different people types: Doers (intuitive, creative), Relaters (feelers, imaginative), Organizers (logical, sequential, organized, and predictable), Researchers (like documentation, theories and models). Your core volunteer group can spend time linking each volunteer's skill set, talents, and hobbies to the roles you need to fill. See the "Getting to Know You Survey" from *Strategic Plans for a Successful Booster Club* (Vision Publications)

for a simple tool that can be used to assist you this task. This tool, or others like it (i.e. www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test) can help you identify the skill set and talents in your booster organization. It is well worth your time to access your needs and link volunteer skill sets with the intended roles. Again, this creates a win-win in the parents' volunteer investment by matching their roles of service to the things they enjoy doing the most thus providing opportunities for personal gratification while serving the needs of the organization simultaneously.

Historically, many booster club presidents and executive officers, by default, end up being those with the most seniority in the organization. Consider how personal knowledge and understanding of each volunteer can further impact the organizational structure. For instance, if you desire your booster club president to be the cheerleader and vision-caster in

the community, you should seek to capture the talents of professionals that are in people-oriented business (i.e. sales or real estate). Connecting these people-focused attributes to this role allows you to enlist their charisma and ability harnessing their unique talent to inspire and engage your community. Likewise, someone with a project management background that possesses detail oriented skill sets would do well in leadership roles overseeing and managing significant fundraising projects.

As you understand volunteers' skills, passions, and talents you begin to build a unique community based on relationships. Community begins with a network of people sharing common goals and agendas but goes to another level when the group

shares mutual concern, thoughtfulness and kindness. As the leader of the booster organization, seek to foster this environment by posting successes on social media and writing notes of concern or congratulation. Share meals or coffee before or after executive board meetings. An atmosphere of care begins with you; others will catch that spirit and, generally, will go beyond their tasks to achieve an extraordinary band community. Relationship begins with developing personal knowledge and understanding of your team but continues as you invest in your team building a community empowered by loyalty.

Finally, empower your booster executive board by developing their leadership identity and offering leadership development. Leadership identity involves the board's authority and effectiveness in your band organization. Make certain organizational management structure properly provides job titles, roles, and

Band Boosters
Friday, July 24, 2015
8 am to 6 pm
Cost: \$100 per school
The seminar will provide detailed instruction on organizational management, volunteer support, fundraising and event planning.

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job descriptions (i.e. project coordinators, team leaders, project marketing leaders, logistics, etc.) that are pertinent to the successful completion of the organization's mission. Through empowerment you permit your board to take on new challenges and impact the band program and local community allowing them to reflect your mindset and vision for the band. Thus, information, training, and resources necessary to implement the vision one has entrusted the volunteer to fulfill are vital to properly empower your volunteers. **Consider building in some team building or leadership training into your booster calendar.** This could be easily added to a Saturday morning brunch setting or inviting a guest speaker to make a 20-minute presentation to your executive board on topics for organizational growth, social media marketing, communication, etc.

Another easy and profitable way offer leadership development is to send your team to the TBA Booster Day on Friday, July 24, 2015, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. The seminar will provide detailed instruction regarding organizational management, volunteer support, fundraising and event planning with opportunities to network with other parents and exhibit hall vendors as well.

C.A.R.E. for your booster organization is achievable by bringing people together from different walks of life, cultures and disciplines and leveraging them to fulfill their personal desires of being part of an engaging team as well as achieve your organization's objectives. Strive to provide skillful collaborations with your leadership teams, clear-cut availability, engaging relationship and valuable empowerment opportunities. With these four fundamental booster concepts you can invest in your volunteers with care.

David W. Vandewalker is the assistant director of bands at Georgia State University and the music director/ principal conductor of the Metropolitan Atlanta Youth Wind Ensemble. During his tenure, the GSU Marching Band has received several honors and accolades including an invitation to march in the 2014 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, participation in the 57th Presidential Inaugural Parade, and a national top-ten honor by the 2013 College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA). Prior to his appointment at GSU, Mr. Vandewalker taught for 24 years in both middle and high school settings in Texas and Georgia. He is a recipient of the Sudler Flag of Honor (Harrison HS, GA), nine NBA Citation of Excellence Awards, three National Wind Band Honors Awards, is recognized in multiple editions of Who's Who Among American Teachers, and is an elected member of the prestigious American Bandmasters Association.

As a conductor, Mr. Vandewalker has led acclaimed concerts at The Midwest Clinic, MFA National Concert Festival, GMEA, and the CBDNA/NBA Southern Division Conference. As an active clinician, he has had multiple appearances at conferences for the Georgia Music Educators Association, Music for All Summer Symposium, Smith Walbridge Directors Institute, Texas Bandmasters Association, and The Midwest Clinic. He is the author of Boosters to the Rescue, Everyday Stuff Every Director Needs to Know, Foundations for Wind Band Clarity Arrangements, and the Foundations for Wind Band Clarity Instructional DVD published by Vision Publications. Mr. Vandewalker and his wife, Pamela, reside in Marietta, Ga. She is Minister of Creativity and Worship Programming at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church where she has over 1000 children actively involved in music making.