

N O T - F O R - P R O F I T S

# Building volunteer bridges

By KENNETH R. CERINI

**E**veryone needs a helping hand, including if not especially non-profit organizations.

With June being volunteer month, it's only fitting that nonprofits get the assistance they deserve. But finding volunteers can be a real problem, especially when there are no major organizations to connect nonprofits and would-be helpers.

Since 1993 the Long Island Volunteer Enterprise has been a bridge between corporate volunteers and not-for-profit organizations. "It's a win-win for everyone involved," said Sandy Viola, 2007 LIVE chairwoman. "Our mission is to build an environment where corporations have an easy avenue to find a volunteer project, help nonprofit agencies and be able to say that they're doing great things for Long Island."



Photo courtesy of To The Next Level

**MATCHMAKER:** Sandy Viola is Long Island Volunteer Enterprise's 2007 chairwoman.

**How does your organization work?** Basically, we send out solicitations to nonprofit agencies asking them to provide us with projects that they need done. It can be anything from a basic clean-up to planting ... or, in some cases, they ask for some more specific help, like putting computers together and things like that. We have to draw the line, though, because sometimes the projects get very difficult, like with electrical work or plumbing, and for the most part our volunteers are not specialists.

After we receive the requests, we then solicit corporations on Long Island, asking them to put together a team of volunteers and select one of these projects. It's a great opportunity for employees to work with their sleeves rolled up, side by side with their corporate executive all while building teamwork, creating a positive public image and providing assistance to nonprofit agencies.

**Are the projects short term, or do some carry on over an extended period?** The majority are meant to be done within a day, and with June being volunteer month, the concept that we're trying to get corporations to embrace is "choose

a day in June to do a volunteer project." However, we have an entire scope of projects, from small – which can be done in four to five hours – to much larger projects, which may require several week-ends to accomplish. These projects can also be done during the week if a corporation wants to give a group a day or a half-day off. It's very flexible, and there's a wide choice of projects for companies to choose from.

What we've seen happening over the years is that many of the corporations that do adopt a project become heavily involved and rooted with that nonprofit agency. They tend to come back during the year and continue to volunteer their services. That's kind of a side benefit that we never really planned on.

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**How many volunteers can you expect on average?** Well, it really varies from year to year. We're in our 15th year now and I would say on the low end we might have 40 or 50 corporations participate, the high being around 125 to 130 corporations. We looked back, though, and did some leg-work to really see what our impact has been; it turns out that since our inception, we've had over 400 different corporations participate.

**Address:** 110 Schmitt Boulevard, Farmingdale

**2007 chairwoman:** Sandy Viola

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**Web site:** [www.liveli.com](http://www.liveli.com)

**Founded:** 1993

**Staff:** 0

**Annual budget:** \$10,000

**Fundraised budget:** \$10,000

**Program services:** 100 percent

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