



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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## Education

# JOYS OF VOLUNTEERING

BY JIM MANGE

***Volunteers are unpaid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless—ANONYMOUS***

How often are you asked to tell someone about yourself and, when you respond proudly that you are an actuary, you receive a blank stare? The conversation grinds to a halt briefly as you try to offer an explanation that your new acquaintance will understand.

Of course, none of us are just actuaries. We are students, managers, or business leaders. We are fathers or mothers, sisters, or brothers. Some are caregivers for family members.

**The need to make a positive, long-lasting difference is rooted deep in our psyches. We all seek to imbue our lives with meaning.**

Others are accomplished artists or musicians. And many are volunteers.

*The Actuary's* "Out of the Office" feature highlights actuaries who devote countless hours to their passions. For some, that passion is volunteer work. We've learned in recent

months that Steve Fredlund addresses the issues of sub-Saharan Africa. Nathan Worrell is a high school basketball referee. Thomas Hull maintains natural habitats in his spare time. Jennifer Gillespie judges figure skating competitions. David Ruiz is a volunteer leader in the Boy Scouts of America. The list goes on, and everyone on that list has found a passion, a purpose, in their volunteer work. Through their work, they derive a sense of well-being or personal satisfaction. In short, they have found their bliss.

Many members of the SOA devote hundreds of hours of their time volunteering for the

SOA itself. Some members offer their talents as researchers supporting, for example, the SOA's highly regarded experience studies or serving as research project leaders. Others participate as leaders of their sections, and, of course, hundreds of members volunteer as part of the SOA's Education System, in either

prequalification or continuing education. But why? Why do they, and why might you, volunteer for the SOA? One reason lies in the SOA's very reason for being.

The SOA's recently updated Vision Statement is the following:

*The SOA is the leading provider of globally recognized credentials establishing actuaries as business leaders who measure and manage risk to support financial security for individuals, organizations and the public.*

Our Vision tells us:

- **Who we are**—We're business leaders.
- **What we do**—We measure and manage risk.
- **Why we do it**—We support financial security for individuals, organizations and the public.

What incredibly important work. Millions of people, thousands of organizations, and society as a whole depend upon us to pursue our work with care, passion and dedication. We must often sweat the "small

## Benefits of Volunteering at the SOA

**YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.** Volunteering at the SOA provides you with the opportunity to make a meaningful impact on your profession. You will grow personally and gain new skills that can be taken back to your workplace. What's more, your volunteer work can be tailored to you, offering opportunities that interest you and flexibility around your schedule.

### WHAT YOU GAIN

- **Leadership skills**, such as agenda planning, delegating, strategic planning, decision making, and managing virtual teams
- **Collaboration and communication skills**, such as brainstorming, negotiating, and developing presentations
- **Competitive advantage**, by working on key issues facing the profession
- **Important connections**, through professional networking
- **Direct, hands-on experience**, in a controlled, supportive environment
- **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)** credit for certain volunteer activities

### GET ON THE PATH TO LEADERSHIP AT THE SOA

If you are interested in expanding your volunteer experience, you can pursue leadership opportunities at the SOA by serving on committees and elected section councils and in elected board positions.

### VOLUNTEER TODAY!

No matter how you choose to volunteer, there's something for everyone at the SOA. Volunteer and watch a world of opportunity unfold. Log on to the SOA website at <http://www.soa.org/volunteer> to volunteer today!



**Jim Mange**

the direction of actuarial research, to network with other business leaders, or, perhaps most important, to have an impact on the next generation of actuaries.

Daniel Wolak, FSA, MAAA, puts it this way: "Volunteering, be it to serve a three-year term on the Health Section Council, a writer for an article or a chapter for a textbook, or a presenter at an industry meeting has naturally required additional time from an already busy schedule. For me, though, the benefits from doing so have outweighed the efforts in that it increased my awareness of professional matters as well as was a great way to network with my actuarial peers. It is also a privilege to be asked to support our profession in these different ways."

Diana Montigney, FSA, and Kathleen Wong, FSA, MAAA, CERA, are both former chairs of the SOA's Education Committee. Montigney joined the Education Committee "as a new FSA out of curiosity on the exam development process and a desire to develop actuarial relationships outside of my own company." Wong has always had a passion for adult education. Volunteering for the Education Committee enabled her to indulge that passion and brought her "in contact with many other actuaries, some of whom were top leaders in the profession."

Daniel Pribe, FSA, MAAA, who is a general officer on the SOA's Education Committee, states that volunteering "is a great way to stay current," improve skills, expand tool sets, and gain exposure to "a broader set of topics than one may get in their current job." He

stuff" because, in the long run, the small stuff sometimes matters a great deal. And most people and organizations don't even know we exist. Nonetheless, we can be proud of the work we do to ensure that a

person's or organization's sense of financial security is not just perception; it's reality. Volunteering for the SOA offers you the opportunity to extend the knowledge of measuring and managing risk, to influence

adds that it's a great way to earn continuing education credits.

Some years ago we surveyed the SOA's Prequalification Education Committee's volunteers. Among the questions we asked were why they originally volunteered and why they continue to volunteer. The reasons respondents volunteered included:

- Travel opportunities
- Networking opportunities
- Someone, perhaps at their Fellowship Admissions Course, asked them
- Keeping up with actuarial practice
- Giving back to the profession and
- Making a difference in the education of future actuaries.

The need to make a positive, long-lasting difference is rooted deep in our psyches. We all seek to imbue our lives with meaning.

Serving the profession and, through that service, serving the public is one way to satisfy that need.

Many volunteers serve for years as members of the Education Committee. When asked why they continue to serve, many reiterated the reasons cited above for joining the Education Committee. Some new reasons joined the list, including the sheer enjoyment of the work—yes, it can be fun to craft exam questions and/or new study material. Others cited the joy of working with a group of talented professionals, both staff and other volunteers. Montigney says that “staying involved allows me to maintain relationships, make new friends, and have fun all while doing my part for the SOA.” Pribe describes the SOA volunteers he knows as “extremely intelligent and dedicated.” He adds that working with them is “one of the greatest advantages in volunteering.”

Years after initially volunteering, then, the need to make a difference still matters, but it is the joy of the work and, especially, the people we meet that sustain us in our volunteer efforts. The SOA's Education Committee is filled with exceptionally talented people. They care deeply about their work, and they challenge you to be at your best. I volunteer with other organizations, and the people I've met as part of the SOA's Education Committee are the most dedicated volunteers it has ever been my pleasure to know.

What is your passion? What is your bliss? How will you affect the lives of future generations? Whatever it is, volunteer or support it in whatever way you are able. You'll be glad you did. **A**

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# YOUR VOTE COUNTS



## SOA '13 ELECTIONS

### CALLING ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS

Elections open **August 19** and will close **September 6 at 5 p.m. CDT**. Complete election information can be found at [www.soa.org/elections](http://www.soa.org/elections). Any questions can be sent to [elections@soa.org](mailto:elections@soa.org).

