



A newsletter of the Society of Actuaries/Casualty Actuarial Society

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Volunteering: together, we can make a difference

By Shirley Song

Background

A survey conducted by The Corporation for National and Community Service recently shows that volunteering initiative is at a 30-year high. To date, volunteering is growing at a rate of 27 percent, representing the highest rate than past generations.

Actuaries have always been generous in volunteering their time, and volunteers are inevitably the core of the Society of Actuaries and the Casualty Actuarial Society. Each year, thousands of actuaries, ranging from entry-level exam candidates to retirees devote their time in giving back to the actuarial community. Volunteers assist in a wide variety of program activities, such as the design and implementation of the profession's qualification process, examination, research, and continuing education. Many candidates and actuaries also participate in high school and college outreach programs to introduce the profession to students.

Why volunteer?

There are many motivations to why people volunteer. A 2007 survey of existing SOA volunteers indicated that one of the main reasons for volunteering is to give back to the profession. As I progress through the actuarial path, I always feel grateful for being able to benefit immensely from resources that are already well in place within the actuarial profession: my professors who offered unconditional guidance along the way; my sponsors who generously took time from their busy schedule to share their experience with me; actuarial clubs that provided a platform for students to network and learn more about the profession, and actuarial associations that supported me financially for school. When I need help, all of them are there for me. Now I feel this great urge to give back to the community, so I can be there when my peers need me.

Volunteering opens the door to a bright future for others and helps us to develop and mature into an even more well-rounded actuary. Volunteers are rewarded with precious opportunities for professional development and skill growth. It provides us the opportunities to learn from other professionals with similar background; to attain a leadership role within the profession; to get involved in setting the future direction of the organization and profession, and to network.

Interview with Tom Edwalds, President of the Chicago Actuarial Association

"As a member of the actuarial community, volunteering enables me to become a part of the profession. Together with other members, my involvement helps our profession grow and benefits both existing professionals and potential candidates," said Tom Edwalds, FSA, ACAS, MAAA, an active longtime volunteer in the actuarial community. Tom is currently serving as the president of the Chicago Actuarial Association, and he is a significant contributor to the Committee on Life Insurance Research, Committee on Living to 100 Research Symposia, Centers of Actuarial Excellence Appeals Board, the Actuarial Foundation and many other affiliates. Tom has been serving on the Education & Research Section Council for a number of years. He adds, "Volunteering is a part of my life, and it's exciting to see our profession grow."

Together, we can make a difference

Last year, I joined Tom in volunteering at a local college prep school math team in Chicago, where he has been an active volunteer outside the academic and research field. The mentoring program is called "Advancing Student Achievement (ASA)" and it was launched by the Actuarial Foundation. We met with the math team members each week for a team practice and helped them prepare for their competitions. The students were very enthusiastic and engaged, and I felt a strong sense of satisfaction and contentment when I saw the smiles on their faces after a problem had been solved. "I want to see the kids learn and help them with any math problem," said Tom. "If the students are interested in joining the math team on their own time after school, that means they think math is OK. I want to teach the kids math, inspire them to become more interested in math, and make math a BIG OK for them." This year, the math team performed very well and ended up with a commanding lead in the division. At the end of year, all the tutors received a thank you card from the students, and at that moment, I realized that even small gestures can make such a big difference in others' lives.

Volunteering inspires, motivates and encourages individuals to achieve a common goal, for the benefits of a bigger community. Two years ago, along with four other principal organizers from the Actuarial Students' National Association (ASNA), we volunteered to organize a 400-student, three-day national actuarial convention. ASNA gathers actuarial students and employers from all around Canada and the United States to enjoy a range of networking activities as well as educational seminars. Volunteers from different universities and organizations worked closely together in organizing activities and logistics for the conference. With the help from more than 100 individuals, and after numerous strategic planning sessions, the event turned out to be a great success and earned us very positive feedback. Not only did the experience strengthen all the volunteers' professional and personal skills, but it also gave everyone a sense of recognition and appreciation. Together, we made a difference.

Interested? Take ACTION and Join NOW!

Yes! Volunteering is for anyone, and together, we can make a difference! If your time allows, please get involved—we need you! If you are interested, please check the volunteering section on the following websites for more information

- [Society of Actuaries](#)
- [Casualty Actuarial Society](#)
- [Actuarial Foundation](#)

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