

An OpEd from the OFBCI

Before you see it in the newspaper or online, we wanted to give you a special preview of the new OpEd from our executive director, Jim Huston, and the chair of the Indiana Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism, Aleeah Livengood.



When you volunteer, you become special

Jim Huston
Aleeah Livengood

The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, 'Everyone can be great because anyone can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't even have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. . . . You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.' As we reflect on 2012, we can be proud that so many Hoosiers understand that message, and the number of servant volunteers seems to be growing.

Most recently, we have seen countless Hoosier volunteers help with the recovery of Hurricane Sandy. From monetary donations to in-kind items to individuals traveling east to help out, Hoosiers have stepped up to meet needs quickly in the wake of disaster.

This spirit may be a reflection of how close to home disaster recovery efforts have hit, as so many Hoosiers responded to the March tornadoes in Southern Indiana. Within just a few days, members of the group Indiana Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster took action. The Seventh-day Adventist church set up a warehouse to receive donated goods, and the United Way managed volunteers and coordinated its network of resources.

As that effort continues, our community partner Hope Crisis Response Network reports that through a partnership with Country Lake Christian Retreat, The Salvation Army, UMCOR of Indiana, 87 church partners and individual advocates, they have directed more than 16,000 volunteers who have completed repairs on 257 homes. These volunteers have contributed 103,000 hours, an in-kind value of \$2.2 million.

Hoosier companies also have had a remarkable year in service. Subaru Automotive of Indiana received a Governor's Service Award for Corporate Volunteerism, highlighting its multifaceted efforts of philanthropy and volunteerism. We also saw Cummins recognized in 'The Civic 50' for its generous heart, and Lilly continued to grow its Global Day of Service. Indiana's corporate culture includes a heart for service and volunteerism from small business to big business.

As we reflect on these highlights, it seems clear that generosity will be a priority for Hoosiers during the holidays. We can't wait to hear of the giving totals received by organizations such as Gleaner's, the Salvation Army and dozens of faith-based groups that address hunger. We can confidently say that 2012 has been a good year for service and volunteerism, and we are excited to see what's in store for 2013. The love and care we show for others in need is part of us. You don't have to be special to give of yourself, but you become special once you do.

Huston is the executive director of the governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Livengood is chairman of the Indiana Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism.



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