As a first-generation immigrant to the US some twenty years ago, I very quickly noticed the value and inherent culture of volunteerism in this country. People everywhere were giving generously of their time, skills, and funds to organizations and groups that they cared about. I was inspired and impressed by people’s desire to come together with friends, neighbors, and colleagues to strive toward common goals.

In this issue, I will discuss the value and impact of volunteerism in our communities in general, and in the nonprofit sector in particular. I will also touch on some opportunities for you to volunteer at SES.

Here are some interesting facts around volunteerism in the US:

- volunteers donate fifty hours of their time per year on average;
- volunteerism has a combined monetary value of over $184 billion dollars;
- women currently volunteer more than men (approximately six percent more);
- sixty percent of hiring managers see volunteerism as a valuable asset when making recruitment decisions, and
- parents volunteer at rates nearly forty-eight percent higher than nonparents.

Churches, schools, nonprofit organizations, charities, and sports groups, all rely on volunteer time and resources to reach and maintain their mission and goals. Volunteers pick a cause and make a difference in someone’s life. Sometimes, the difference is merely a drop in the bucket. Other times, it creates a tidal wave of change that impacts entire communities or workspaces. From the anonymous volunteers who donate their resources to those whose efforts are part of larger national organizations like 4-H, Boy and Girl Scouts of America, American Red Cross, or professional associations, their generosity provides valuable support to communities and worthwhile causes in times of need.

According to a recent Federal study, fifty-eight percent of employees engage in volunteer time through the workspace. Volunteering is considered the second most important component of employee giving programs, and the number one motivation of workspace donors.

Despite all these encouraging data, there are some real challenges with recruiting and retaining volunteers. Most of us standardization professionals are well aware of the following:

- finding and retaining volunteers with the appropriate knowledge base and skillset;
- working with volunteers who have limited time and resources;
- working with volunteers who are no-shows, or are not committed to the cause;
- training new volunteers;
- greying of the profession, and
- managing and coordinating volunteer schedules.

In my experience, the following strategies help organizations and communities working with volunteers:

- matching volunteer skillset and interest to the most suitable opportunities available;
- providing volunteers with leadership and growth opportunities;
- communicating often and effectively with volunteers;
- offering volunteers rewards, recognition, and incentives in exchange for fulfilling opportunities, and
- asking your volunteer base for feedback regarding your organization and its processes.

SES, like most nonprofit organizations, is a volunteer-led organization. We need your expertise, perspective, and contribution to maintain SES as the premier organization for the standardization professional. SES offers multiple avenues for volunteer engagement, recognition, and fulfillment. If you are looking for a way to get connected to your standards peers, and give back to the standardization community, here are some opportunities I would like to suggest:

- SES Committees—whether your interest lies in the conference program planning, education, marketing, membership, or standards for the standardization profession, we have committees working on each of these areas. Joining an SES committee is a great way to get your feet wet and make some great contacts.
- SES Speaker—SES invites speakers periodically for the Annual Conference and SES Webinar Series. Presenting at an SES conference or webinar provides an opportunity to provide value, expertise, and knowledge to your peers, and gain recognition as an industry leader and subject matter expert.
- SES Certification—SES offers two levels of certification for you. If you are not certified, consider adding this valuable feather to your professional cap. If you were recently certified, we need your feedback on the process so we can work to improve and enhance it.
- Local Network—if you live in the Washington DC metro area, consider joining the National Capital Area Section of SES, and getting plugged in to your local network.
- SES Journal Article—our peer-reviewed journal is the premier publication for standards research, industry news, and best practices.
- SES Awards—if you have a standards colleague who has done noteworthy work in this area, we encourage you to nominate the person through the SES Awards Program.
If any of these opportunities pique your interest, I invite you to contact us, and let us get you connected to the right group and best opportunity for you.

If this information was helpful to you, stay tuned for my next article on professional certification, and what SES can offer you in this area.

Mili Washington, CStd
SES President

“Volunteers are not paid – not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.”

—Unknown.