

## **RESOLVE TO GET INVOLVED IN 2013**

### **Volunteering Requires Less Time Than We Think**

by Shannon Albritton

January is a month of new beginnings—a time to leave the past behind and resolve to make the New Year more happy, healthful and prosperous. By definition the word resolve means: to come to a definite or earnest decision about; determine (to do something). If you're anything like me you've made an earnest decision about your resolutions and you're now mucking through the process of remaining determined.

I have an idea for 2013 — along with the traditional resolutions such as losing weight, eating more healthful and getting more exercise, let's collectively determine to do one more thing. Let's resolve to become more involved in our community. We have the power to make 2013 a year of strengthening our resources, organizations and the overall well-being of Windham County. We're blessed to live in a community with spectrum of organizations which are focused on prevention and support efforts around important causes including, but not limited to, homelessness, substance abuse, recovery, access to healthy foods, food insecurities, fuel assistance, youth mentoring, parent education, vocational assistance, mental health, education and emergency response. These hardworking organizations are often understaffed and in need of volunteers and resources. This information is not a news flash, but, it's deserving of a reminder now and again.

The predominate reason people give, when declining an invitation to volunteer, is not lack of interest or compassion; it's the perception of a lack of time. We're generally good-hearted people who strive to do our best to care for each other. Vermonters have set the bar high as a state known for helping its neighbors. We're so good at helping and wearing multiple hats that many of us feel overwhelmed and burned out. We often decline accepting a new responsibility for fear that we can't hold up our end of the deal. We don't want to disappoint ourselves and others. Sound familiar?

There's a misperception that volunteering will require too much of our time. This may be true if we're asked to join a board or committee; however, many non-profits and organizations have a laundry list of small tasks which may require as little as an hour a month. BAPC often needs volunteers to help stuff bags for parent education, website technical support, graphic design, distribution of flyers and posters, guest writers, workgroup participants, event staff, sharing social media posts, forwarding informational emails and we'd love to see a few new faces at our monthly coalition meetings. The coalition meetings are held monthly for roughly ninety minutes and we feed you. It's a time to share information, provide feedback and discuss strategies around the prevention of substance misuse and abuse in our community. That doesn't sound so bad, does it? Many tasks, such as these, require literally minutes of your time and cumulatively they help organizations to grow and accomplish their goals. Corinne Kendrick, Volunteer Coordinator at Turning Point of Windham County, recently shared that they need volunteers to assist with paperwork and to help clients use a computer. Recruiting donations for their annual silent auction is a simple task and you can start today. If you're an artist or

crafters, you could begin a project now to be offered at their next auction, this fall. If you're interested in helping youth, you can begin forming your team and filling your pledge sheet for the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Windham County Bowl for Kids Sake fundraiser coming up in April. You see, you don't need a degree in volunteerism to make a difference. You just need to resolve to get involved.

Will you join with me now, to resolve to get involved in 2013? You can begin today but following these easy steps; (1) Select a cause that's important to you (2) Contact a supporting organization and offer your talents and skills; be realistic and communicate the amount of time you can contribute. (3) Ask to be on a volunteer list if there is no immediate need (4) Subscribe to information updates via email and help spread the word to your friends and family via email and social media (5) Write letters to newspaper editors showing support or asking for a call to action. It's that easy.

I leave you now, to marinate in the inspiring words of Margaret Meade, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has".

Shannon Albritton is the communications coordinator for the Brattleboro Area Prevention Coalition and "Matters of Substance" is a collaborative column of the BAPC, a comprehensive community effort to prevent and reduce alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse in Windham Southeast area. The coalition meets on the second Friday of each month at 12 p.m., lunch is provided and all are welcome. Please visit the [BrattleboroAreaPreventionCoalition.org](http://BrattleboroAreaPreventionCoalition.org) or call [802-257-2175](tel:802-257-2175) for more information on our prevention efforts.