

Volunteerism: You Receive as Much as, If Not More Than, You Give

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“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”
—Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Often, when we think about volunteering, there are many considerations that drive our decision to accept an opportunity. Research actually suggests that there are six motives that drive the desire to volunteer. These include gaining career-related experience, enhancing our self-esteem, learning more about life, improving our outlook on life, acting on our values, and strengthening our social ties.¹ Not included but perhaps also belonging in this list is improving our health and well-being. Research on the benefits of volunteering is still limited, but the evidence available suggests that volunteering improves health and well-being, lowers blood pressure, and can even lower mortality rates.^{2–5}

In this, my last editorial at the helm of *Diabetes Spectrum*, I would like to take a brief look at these motives and reflect on how being involved in the journal for the past 8 years (5 years as editor-in-chief, preceded by 3 years as an associate editor) has changed my life. When we are asked to volunteer, we no doubt think about the sacrifice our service will require in terms of our time and energy. Too often, I think, we do not adequately consider what we stand to gain from the volunteering experience. I am hoping here to emphasize all that is gained.

As an educator and researcher, I have learned a great deal from this experience. During my time with the journal, I have had the opportunity to work with many authors and review-

ers who are experts in their field. My knowledge of the pathophysiology of diabetes, its treatments, its medical management, and the role of each member of the diabetes health care team continues to expand as a result of the excellent work happening in both research and real-world settings and the articles we have published reporting on that work.

The diverse readership in *Diabetes Spectrum*, which encompasses nurses, dietitians, physicians, behavioral and mental health professionals, pharmacists, and other members of the multidisciplinary diabetes care team, motivates us to cover a wide range of subjects from a variety of perspectives. The breadth and depth of topics we have focused on—ranging from medication management to glycemic variability, from life transitions and behavior-change efforts to technological advances—has been fascinating. There is great joy in finding new and innovative research, clinical strategies, tools, and resources and bringing them to life in ways our readers can practically apply to improve patient care in their own clinics and settings.

Through my experience as a journal editor, I have also learned about the processes and mechanics of publishing. For example, I now know that few manuscripts get published as originally submitted; almost all require some level of revision or refinement. To improve your chances of having an article accepted for publication, it is important to follow the given journal’s guidelines, keep the manuscript focused and concise, cite current references, and ensure that you are providing a fresh approach or innovative pearls of wisdom to

potential readers. When an article is accepted with requested revisions based on reviewer comments, the next key to success is to respond thoughtfully to all suggestions, revise the manuscript accordingly, and return the revised version in a timely manner. And, if you have questions, do not hesitate to ask. I have also learned that aspiring authors who are struggling to publish their work can greatly benefit from finding a mentor to guide them along the way by providing critical feedback and support through the writing, submission, and revision process.

These are all lessons that have furthered my professional development. But there have also been lessons regarding the more personal benefits of volunteering. Perhaps the most important of these is that, when considering volunteer opportunities, choose activities through which you can surround yourself with the best possible people.

One of the six motives mentioned above¹ was related to strengthening social ties. If you are going to invest considerable effort in an endeavor, look for ways to do so with people you enjoy and can learn from. Although this is not discussed in the published literature on volunteering, I do think it may well factor into the health benefits one can accrue through volunteering. Enjoying your role will motivate you to continue and to recognize the value in what you do, even when the task at hand is challenging.

As much as I have enjoyed my time with *Diabetes Spectrum*, I do not believe I could have made it through my 8-year tenure without the bright, talented, exceptional people who have been by my side. In 2006, when then Editor-in-Chief Davida F. Kruger, MSN, APN-BC, BC-ADM, asked me to serve as an associate editor, I had no idea that I would one day follow in her footsteps. I so appreciated her vote of confidence in my abilities to assume her role when her term as editor ended in 2008.

Throughout my entire 8 years with the journal, I have had unwavering support from the exceptional

staff at the American Diabetes Association (ADA). Many thanks to ADA Managing Director of Scholarly Journals Christian Kohler, ADA Editorial Office Director Lyn Reynolds, and ADA Manager of Periodicals Production Keang Hok, who regularly provided feedback, answers, and support at all hours of the day and night.

Special thanks go to *Spectrum* Managing Editor Debbie Kendall, who is the rock star behind this journal. She is the one person who keeps continuity and focus from one editor (and their team of associates) to the next and who provides unending support when we are struggling to keep issues on schedule.

Deanna Bulthuis from the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation was also essential to my day-to-day successes as editor. I am grateful to her for agreeing to make working on *Diabetes Spectrum* a part of her job responsibilities. Her positive attitude and attention to detail immeasurably helped authors and reviewers, as well as the editorial team.

Of course, any successful editor has an amazing, talented, and organized group of associate editors on her team. Before I signed on as editor, my dearest friend and colleague, Alison B. Evert, MS, RD, CDE, agreed to serve with me, first as an associate editor and, since 2010, as deputy editor. Her expertise, exceptional project management skills, and strong professional and social network (she is well connected to diabetes educators and clinicians across the country) have been invaluable to me and to the quality of the issues we have produced. I cannot thank her enough for sharing her time and talents.

In addition to Alison, I have had the distinct privilege of working with the following individuals, who served as associate editors for either part or all of my 5-year term: Vanessa J. Briscoe, PhD, MSN, CDE, Fran R. Cogen, MD, CDE, Patti L. Duprey, MSN, ARNP, CDE, Eleanor D. Kinney, JD, MPH, Virginia A. Lewis, MN, ARNP, FNP, CDE, Joshua J. Neumiller, PharmD, CDE,

CGP, FASCP, Peggy Soule Odegard, BS, PharmD, BCPS, CDE, FASCP, JoAnn Sperl-Hillen, MD, GERALYN Spollett, MSN, ANP-BC, CDE, Carrie S. Swift, MS, RD, BC-ADM, CDE, and Jeff VanWormer, PhD. The members of this editorial team have given countless hours, shared their valuable expertise, and provided much-appreciated support to me and to our authors. I am grateful to have had so many opportunities to collaborate with them to bring readers such outstanding and informative issues.

And I know I am leaving the journal in capable hands. Joshua Neumiller, who joined the team as an associate editor in 2010 and now serves with Alison as a deputy editor, has graciously agreed to serve as the journal's next editor-in-chief and will provide exceptional leadership in that role. Readers can expect many high-quality issues with engaging topics and a wealth of practical information with Josh at the helm, aided by Alison, who will continue as deputy editor.

In closing, I just want to say that I have definitely gained more than I have given through this wonderful opportunity to serve as the editor of *Diabetes Spectrum*. I have learned and grown, expanding both my professional expertise and my personal social network. More than anything, I truly appreciate all of the talented and committed people I have met along the way.

References

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