



## Washington Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

COOPERATION | COMMUNICATION | COORDINATION | COLLABORATION

### MARTY GRISHAM: WASHINGTON VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTERS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERS

*By Kellie Hale*

**Did you know that April is National Volunteer Month in the United States?** It is a month where the importance of volunteering is recognized and honored. To celebrate volunteers and their contributions (particularly during COVID-19), the Center's monthly Confluence newsletter will be highlighting people and organizations who donate their time and talents to causes that help the betterment of communities.

One of those people who is dedicated to volunteer work is Marty Grisham who is the Vice President of the Washington Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (WA VOAD). The purpose WA VOAD is to bring voluntary organizations together within the State of Washington during times of need through "cooperation, coordination, communication, and collaboration."

Before Marty became Vice President of WA VOAD, he was the Emergency Manager for the City of Tukwila Fire Department where he had been with the organization for 38 years. In the early 1980s, he co-founded the Seattle King County Disaster Team, an international response team. While being on the team, Marty participated in the response of major disasters around the world from Mexico City, San

Salvador, the Soviet Republic of Armenia, and the Philippines. "My experience over the years has taught me firsthand the importance of emergency preparedness and the somewhat daunting work of Emergency Management" said Marty.

Transitioning from City of Tukwila to WA VOAD was not difficult for Marty since being a volunteer was how he started his career in the fire service as a volunteer firefighter. To this day, he still serves as a Merit Badge Counselor for the Boy Scouts of America on subjects such as first aid, safety, and emergencies.

Center Director, Linda Crerar and her staff had the privilege of conducting a Zoom interview with Marty to learn more about WA VOAD, his experience as a volunteer, and the importance of volunteer work. Marty shared that, "WA VOAD is really an important element in the state, in that we as members of WA VOAD come from all aspects of our volunteer base in the state." Members of WA VOAD have worked in volunteer organizations that are faith-based, non-governmental organizations, and non-profit organizations.

Marty went on to add, "When we receive requests, the norm is usually following a major windstorm, a tornado, earthquakes, and flooding. These are the big ones that we would

normally receive a request. What people are requesting are volunteers."

Some of WA VOADs volunteers are trained with a background dealing with disasters, but most of the people WA VOAD engages with are simply good people wanting to help others.

"Volunteering requires out-of-the-box thinking," Marty said and then added, "We aren't going off of a class where we learn how to do this. We sometimes get put in situations where we are asking ourselves, how can we do that?" When asked about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted WA VOAD and its operations, Marty shared, that with all the restrictions of businesses closed and social distancing, it has brought on a lot of challenges. "Our people are not trained in that" he said when it comes to a medical emergency disaster. In this area, people are looking for volunteers who have a medical background and experience. Marty added, "It has limited who we can send out to volunteer. Another challenge with this pandemic is that most of our volunteers are older and in the high-risk age group of possibly catching the Coronavirus. It presents a whole new challenge in who can help and who cannot help in regard to their training, but also their individual circumstances."

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Volunteering is an important economic factor in our country's proprietary resources to help expand the capacity of non-profit organizations, faith-based groups, local agencies, and community organizations by allowing them to serve more people than they could not through the assistance of good Samaritans wanting to volunteer their time to a good cause.

It was a pleasure talking with Marty about the importance of volunteers. His experiences and the stories he shared were very inspiring. Marty reminded us that the majority of the people in the world are good, and that at the end of the day, people want to help out others in times of need.



To view Marty's interview, click here: <https://youtu.be/mT9LMLA-OTA>  
Visit their website at: <http://www.wavoad.org/cms/home>

## WHEN DISRUPTION BECOMES THE NEW NORMAL: RESILIENCE AND CONNECTION WITHIN THE EDUCATION COMMUNITY

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*By Kellie Hale*

Community colleges and universities across the state of Washington have all been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, instructors were ordered to move their classes online so students could complete their course work. Switching from a face-to-face setting to online teaching has not been easy for some instructors and students, particularly those who have never taught online or taken online courses. The lack of experience with online can be both daunting and stressful for students and instructors.

The instructors that I have been able to converse with have all expressed that they are essentially "exhausted" and "stressed." I asked them, "How have operations changed due to COVID-19?"

Darren Linker, Director of the Occupational Safety & Health degree program at Pierce College and Edmonds Community College shared with me in an interview, "The biggest impact for me is the adjustment to working from

home, and the challenge of trying to work with all the different college administrative departments to solve problems when they are all working from home as well, and trying to figure out how to carry out colleges procedures." It is understandable that with such a dramatic change to operations and procedures that there is an adjustment period everyone will have to go through.

According to Bobi Foster-Grahler, Program Director and Instructor for the Criminal Justice program at Pierce College said, "A lot of things have changed. For example, all our work is remote. Working with students has changed a lot. What would take 30 minutes to help a student now takes at least three hours. I think, for Pierce College at least, our administration is doing an amazing job of actually getting ahead of most things. They are trying to help out faculty, staff, and students to be successful inside of this crisis. But I think the main thing that it did is create a higher number of barriers for people. I think we are getting at it the more time we get into it." However, for some instructors the

change has not impacted them as drastically as their colleagues. Ryann Leonard, Criminal Justice faculty at Big Bend Community College and Highline College revealed that for her, "very little has changed". This is because Ryann had already been teaching online for several quarters. "The difference for me is I have set up more check-ins with students and have extended a bit more grace. More globally, my colleagues are stressed. They have been rushed to change their teaching radically without the proper time to even contemplate how they would transition successfully. They care about students and miss the face-to-face and are struggling on what to do for students who are not engaged."

What about when a degree program was already established online? For the Homeland Security Emergency Management (HSEM) Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) and Associates degree programs, there have been very minimal changes since it is primarily an online program.

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I asked John Pennington, Program Director for the HSEM BAS degree program how operations changed since the degree program was already online? He responded with, "It really only impacted one particular course with the bachelor's degree, and it has been a very easy transition for us, I would say, compared with other programs at Pierce College and really nationally. Every quarter we have one particular course that is grounded and is offered on Monday or Tuesday nights. We did that originally to satisfy requirements for those students who are funded under veteran services and veteran programs so that they are able to meet their full housing allowance. It is an interesting connection on how we have done this. We started off to help students meet their full housing eligibility. If they didn't, as an example, our military students would probably lose around \$900.00 per month if we didn't help them meet those requirements and our professors stepped up." John also mentioned that the Monday and Tuesday night classes were brought online for students to continue to take, along with being able to seek a waiver from the veterans administration that the courses would still help satisfy military students requirements to obtain their housing allowance.

What about students? How might they be coping with the changes? Program Specialist for the HSEM and

Criminal Justice degree programs, Cindy Bassage explained that it depends on the student. She said, "I think the students that have worked online before are doing great, they have no problems. Those that have never taken online classes because they do not like online classes are stressing out." It is no surprise that some students are feeling stressed, are having anxiety, and may be struggling with the rapid changes to their college education.

Another reason why students may be having difficulties with college campuses being closed is that they might not have the necessary resources at home to help them succeed in their studies (e.g. computer or Internet access). I asked Mary Weir, Program Manager for Prison-Based Education Criminal Justice at Highline College, if any of her students expressed whether they need assistance on getting the resources to complete their schoolwork. She said, "Highline has been able to distribute a lot of Chromebooks and hotspots. That has been hugely helpful to students," and continued, "I have worked with students to try to access those items and it has been a wonderful resource. I still have had some students who just have spotty Internet. Recently, when I taught a class, I had one student holding up a sign saying that their computer froze, which led them to not be able to participate in the class discussion. But I think that the College

is doing everything it can to help students, which is great. However, I think there are some students who are possibly slipping through the cracks. What I am doing personally, is sort of trying to extend more flexibility and trying to make sure that expectations are really clear."

Where does education go from here? The overall opinion from each of the instructors I interviewed for this article is that colleges will not go back to its old normal but have to accept the new normal. They are primarily focused on making sure students get through the spring and summer quarters successfully. To put it bluntly, the traditional form of education as we know, might be dead. The future of education will need to have more flexibility and accommodations for students and instructors. There are many different outlets to be used when it comes to online teaching and online learning.

On the bright side (and there are bright sides to everything) with the disruptions to education from COVID-19 has shown that we can still build a strong community within the education system between staff, faculty, and students. It has been shown that we no longer have to be siloed or closed off but can be more open to the ideas of cross-collaborations and partnerships that can help grow our wonderful education community.

To read Darren Linker's interview in its entirety: [click here](#)

To read Ryann Leonard's interview in its entirety: [click here](#)

To view John Pennington's interview in its entirety: [click here](#)

To view the Criminal Justice faculty interview in its entirety: [click here](#)





## WASHINGTON 2-1-1: HELPS CONNECT YOU TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES STATEWIDE

2-1-1 is a free confidential community service and your one-stop connection to the local services you need, from utility assistance, food, housing, health, childcare, after school programs, elder care, crisis intervention and much more.

2-1-1 is always ready to assist you in finding the help you need. Dial the three digit number 2-1-1 on your phone or Find Help here. If you are outside of Washington or have a problem dialing the number 2-1-1, please dial 1-877-211-9274.

Tim Sullivan is the Statewide Director for Washington 211. Tim has over 25 years of management experience in health and human services for both non-profits and government. As Director, Tim is responsible for overseeing a network of seven regional 2-1-1 call centers that comprise Washington's 2-1-1 system. Duties include program management, development, legislative advocacy, marketing and communications, strategic planning, board governance, operational oversight and evaluation.

"211 is a critical resource for communities across the country for managing emergencies like floods, wildfires, hurricanes and pandemics. 211 participates in community emergency planning and serves both during initial response and long-term recovery. WA 211 has a rich history of providing professional I&R service to meet the needs of our local communities during a crisis," shared Tim and then continued, "This includes WA211's response and assistance to the Department of Health during the H1N1 flu outbreak in 2009 and support of local emergency management during the OSO Mudslides in 2014. A common theme during these incidents and others is the over whelming support of communities to volunteer and donate."

Tim was able to elaborate more on how the organization is responding to COVID-19, "For the COVID-19 response, WA211 has been coordinating thousands of calls from community members in Washington State and across the Nation wanting to support state efforts and have referred many callers to the State's COVID-19 How You Can Help webpage or locally through our seven regional call centers. On a statewide level, when 2-1-1 started taking calls for DOH, we had offers of help from the State AARP and National Service Offices to assist with taking calls. The majority of call takers at our Peninsulas Regional 211 Call Center are AmeriCorps members from Evergreen College."

When asked to share his thoughts on the importance of "people helping people" and how WA 211 provides people the opportunity to make things happen in their communities, Tim's response was, "In my experience most people care about their neighbors and community and want to help especially during these difficult times, but may not know where to turn to volunteer. By calling the number 2-1-1, people can find out about volunteer centers and programs in their local area. If there is a specific service or cause that you want to support with your time or resources, Washington 211 can provide a list of organizations for you to contact. You can also complete an online format <https://wa211.org/give-help/> to provide information on your interest in volunteering or donating to support your local community."

For more information on WA 2-1-1, check out their website at [www.wa211.org](http://www.wa211.org).

## ANNOUNCEMENT: WASHINGTON STATE VOLUNTEER RESOURCE GUIDEBOOK

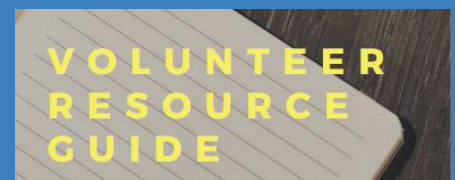
The Center will be creating a Washington State Volunteer Resource Guidebook, which will include organizations where citizens can volunteer. Many young people finish college successfully only to find that their resume doesn't have everything they need to land a job in their field. New graduates are advised to remember that their volunteer experience is a great thing to include when building their resume. People who volunteer and/or intern should remember that unpaid work is a valid and helpful thing to exhibit as part of their work experience history. Volunteers are advised to think about what specific

list of qualities applies to their history of experience and then gear it towards the field that they are hoping to go into. Someone who is volunteering in their career pathway to gain experience can document their volunteer hours both in long-term weekly volunteer commitments which count more like a part-time job as well as projects over a period of time which could be counted more as an internship.

The ultimate goal has always been, and will always be, to provide great experiences to volunteers and affect the community in an organized and efficient way. Organizations that have

successful advantage trends, utilize technology and adjust to changes have the best chance of recruiting volunteers, retraining them, making a bigger impact and positively touching the bottom line.

This guidebook will help potential volunteers be able to look for amazing volunteer opportunities across the state.



## 2020 GOVERNOR'S VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

Serve Washington today announced recipients of the 2020 Governor's Volunteer Service Awards. Ranging in age from 11 to 99, the recipients are being recognized for their outstanding commitment and achievements in volunteerism over the past year.

"Washingtonians across the state are making sacrifices for one another every day," Gov. Jay Inslee said. "For that, I am deeply grateful and our state is stronger. Our Volunteer Service Award honorees are outstanding representatives of this kind of determination. It is an honor to recognize the tremendous contributions they have made to the communities they serve. I encourage all Washingtonians to thank a volunteer and to find a way to make a difference."

An awards ceremony had been planned for this month at the Executive Mansion in Olympia, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic the ceremony had to be cancelled. Serve Washington hopes to reschedule the ceremony for later in the year. Instead, this year's recipients will be highlighted throughout the week on Serve Washington's Facebook and Twitter feeds to help showcase the countless acts of volunteer service performed by Washington citizens across the state every day.

"It is an honor to recognize the extraordinary volunteer efforts of these individuals, families and organizations," said Amber Martin-Jahn, executive director of Serve Washington. "Their stories are a powerful reminder of the difference we can make through volunteering."

Click to see video message: <https://youtu.be/hlFq4hYwOoc>

The recipients, who were identified through a statewide nomination process and selected by a review committee, are listed below:

[https://servewashington.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/news/2020\\_04\\_20\\_newsrelease\\_2020gvsaaawards\\_final.pdf](https://servewashington.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/news/2020_04_20_newsrelease_2020gvsaaawards_final.pdf)

If you would like to volunteer in a safe manner during the COVID-19 pandemic or to learn more about volunteer opportunities in general, find your local volunteer center by visiting Serve Washington or 360-902-0656.

Serve Washington advances national service, volunteerism and civic engagement to improve lives; expands opportunity to meet the local critical needs of residents of Washington; and strengthens community capacity while creating healthy and resilient communities. For more information, visit [servewashington.wa.gov](http://servewashington.wa.gov).

