One America

Opening day brought the launch of the One America campaign, which brings together rivals in politics, entertainment and sports to inspire millions to unite in service. At the closing plenary New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie offered an on-the-ground perspective on the value of service. In between, Wharton professor and author Adam Grant spoke on the science of givers and takers, and Grammy Award-winner John Legend also spoke out as an education activist. Read on about a packed 2013 Conference sponsored by Chase!

We are the optimists. We hold the vision for and the belief in the power of people to create change. – Michelle Nunn, opening plenary
Service Unites on Stage

“The fact is, the simple fact is, that service is the greatest unifying force in America,” said Neil Bush, chairman, Points of Light, at the opening plenary launch of One America, a nationwide Points of Light campaign with founding support from Chase.

And those who followed on stage proved the point. Conservative talk show host Bill O’Reilly, liberal pundit and political strategist Donna Brazile, along with Karl Rove, former advisor to President George W. Bush, and David Plouffe, former advisor to President Obama, all found common ground on the theme of service.

Senior Advisor to the President Valerie Jarrett applauded the work of everyday volunteers and announced that on July 15, the White House will host a celebration to honor the winner of the 5,000th Daily Point of Light Award.

Sandy Relief Efforts Show Bipartisan Support

In times of need, we are all One America. That was the powerful message delivered by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie during the Conference closing plenary, where he recounted heroic stories of Americans coming together to assist with Superstorm Sandy relief efforts.

Service does not know partisanship, Christie told Conference attendees. “When people are suffering, we are Americans.”

Christie praised the work of AmeriCorps volunteers who mobilized quickly to bring aid to Garden State residents affected by the storm. While post-Sandy rebuilding efforts are ongoing, they’ve sparked a spirit of bipartisan service in New Jersey, Christie said – a spirit he hopes catches on throughout America.

The governor was introduced by Wendy Spencer, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service, who lauded the country’s 820,000 AmeriCorps members for “taking on big challenges from the ground up.”
Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stressed the need to honor those who serve in the military and ease returning service members’ transition to civilian life at the June 21 Military Summit, sponsored by ITT Exelis and Chase.

“We the country have to make a commitment to the people who serve, equal to the commitment the people who serve make to the country,” said Dempsey, during the “Converting Good Intentions to Greater Impact for Veterans and Military Families” luncheon.

Dempsey added that locally driven programs, such as the Community Blueprint – an initiative of Points of Light, ITT Exelis and the Corporation for National and Community Service to support returning service members and their families – have the power to make real change in service members’ lives.
On June 19, A Billion + Change announced it has inspired the largest commitment of pro bono service in history. More than 500 companies across the country have committed to provide more than $2 billion worth of skills-based volunteer services to help nonprofits address pressing community needs.

This historic commitment comes at a critical time of significant need in our communities, when nonprofits are struggling to grapple with increasingly complex challenges with fewer financial resources.

At “A Billion + Change: The Pro Bono Marketplace – LIVE,” the campaign’s Leadership Partners, including Deloitte, IBM, HP, The Case Foundation, the Corporation for National and Community Service, Capital One and MWW shared how their employees use their skills and talents to create change in the communities where they live and work.

A group of game-changing impact entrepreneurs, part of the Civic Accelerator (#CivicX), received a coveted business opportunity on June 21 when they got to pitch their for-profit and nonprofit ventures to a packed conference hall and received feedback from a panel of experts in social innovation and business leadership.

This cohort of Civic Accelerator participants presented to some 300 attendees how they are redefining civic engagement across the globe. Chris Simmons, President of the PwC Charitable Foundation, led the discussion as entrepreneurs had their ventures and presentations constructively critiqued by Cliff Burrows, group president, Starbucks; Joe Sibilia, CEO, CSRWire; and Sonal Shah, Senior Fellow The Case Foundation (also an event partner).

Veterans of the AmeriCorps service program were everywhere at Conference, and helped lead several lively discussions. At the annual AmeriCorps Alums Town Hall, sponsored by the University of Southern California School of Social Work, alums heard from national and chapter leaders about exciting service opportunities happening around the world. AmeriCorps Alums also discussed connecting with HandsOn Network action centers in their communities to tap into local service opportunities.

On June 22, representatives of HandsOn Network affiliates from around the U.S. and as far away as India came together to share successes, challenges and opportunities. The day included the first convening of the HandsOn Network Affiliate Assembly, a group of 23 delegates representing a combined 220 years of affiliate leadership. Earlier in the Conference, affiliates participated in educational sessions that covered everything from natural disaster response to engaging volunteers on social media.

HandsOn Nashville was also recognized at the closing plenary, where the organization was lauded by Nashville Mayor Karl Dean for its local work.

Volunteers and staff from Points of Light enterprises turned out in force at Conference for engaging networking and training sessions that will help them activate and improve volunteer service in their communities.

Teens of generationOn’s Youth Advisory Council (YAC) designed and facilitated the conference’s only entirely youth-led session. The session was part of the Conference Youth Track, sponsored by Hasbro. The YAC members – all volunteer leaders in their schools and communities – shared best practices and tactics for reaching and engaging youth and harnessing their compassion, energy and skills as volunteers.
The June 20 Business Track luncheon, sponsored by UnitedHealth Group and KPMG LLP, posed the question: “Can giving make you healthier, happier, more productive and successful?” According to research by featured speaker Adam Grant, Wharton professor and New York Times best-selling author, and to a 2013 study sponsored by UnitedHealth Group, the answer is yes.

“Givers can be extremely successful, but we need to screen out the takers,” Grant said. “We need to create organizations that build people up versus cutting them down.”

The luncheon also honored companies and organizations that have made giving a part of their culture. Points of Light Chairman Neil Bush and CEO Michelle Nunn presented the award for the 2013 Corporate Volunteer Council of the Year to the CVC of Montgomery County (Maryland); the 2013 Fast Start Award to the CVC of Orange County (California); and the Corporate Engagement Award of Excellence to HP and The Ritz-Carlton.

How the Volunteer Sector Can Sway Public Policy

At the June 20 National Policy session, Michelle Nunn, Points of Light’s CEO, laid the groundwork for a robust discussion between two U.S. Senators about the national problems confronting Congress and the volunteer sector’s role in helping address those problems.

“Our challenges as a nation don’t disappear as our public resources shrink,” Nunn noted. “In fact, many of those challenges become even more profound. We believe that when the twin engines of service – impact volunteering and national service – work side by side, we can make significant progress in addressing the great issues of our time.”

Senator Dan Coats of Indiana and Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia, who joined Nunn on stage, discussed the vital role nonprofits play in partnership with government to meet critical needs. They emphasized how important it is that members of Congress hear the stories of impact from volunteer-driven interventions around the country.

“We’re focusing on policy issues, and we get isolated from real-world consequences,” Kaine said. “We as public policy people need to be more connected to the stories.”

Sen. Dan Coats, right, talks about how volunteerism can help address the nation’s challenges. He’s joined by Sen. Tim Kaine, center, and Points of Light CEO Michelle Nunn.
When Conference attendees rolled into Washington, D.C., this year, they also rolled up their sleeves, ready to spend countless hours giving back to the D.C. community. This year’s Conference was filled with service projects that will bring lasting benefit to the nation’s capital, its residents and visitors.

Two hundred volunteer leaders pitched in alongside members of Congress and their staffs on June 19 for Hill Day, sponsored by Altria and Voices for National Service. At the historic Sewall-Belmont House & Museum, they filled hundreds of lunch boxes donated by Newell Rubbermaid with school supplies for low-income students, and assembled school readiness kits to be used by national service members serving in City Year and Jumpstart for their work in struggling schools. Participants were joined by Rep. John Lewis of Georgia (bottom photo, second from right, with Michelle Nunn), Sen. Johnny Isakson of Georgia, Sen. Carl Levin of Michigan and Rep. Jim McGovern of Massachusetts.

Later that evening, Conference attendees gathered for the Welcome to Washington, D.C., Unite in Service Celebration, sponsored by Bank of America and in partnership with Outreach Program, to package 100,000 “All American Mac n Cheese” meals to be provided to the Capital Area Food Bank to distribute throughout the region.

Conference began with service, and ended with service. On June 22, hundreds of volunteers turned out at the National Mall for the Servapalooza Service Festival, an event led by Points of Light and the Student Conservation Association, and sponsored by The Coca-Cola Company. Conference attendees and their family members, community members and SCA student leaders came together to spruce up this landmark national park by planting, weeding, mulching and more.

Chase Community Giving Honors, Assists Service Organizations

Six organizations with missions ranging from technology education for girls to construction in developing nations each received $25,000 grants to continue their vital work through Chase Community Giving Awards announced at Conference. Attendees stopped by the Chase booth throughout Conference to vote for the organizations they wanted to see receive the awards. The winners are:

- Builders Beyond Borders: Engages student and adult volunteers to build much-needed facilities in communities in developing nations.
- CareerVillage: Offers students college and career advice from real working professionals.
- Girls Who Code: Provides high school girls from underserved communities with the skills and resources to pursue opportunities in the engineering and tech sectors.
- Mobilize.org: Empowers and invests in millennials to create and implement solutions to social problems.
- Project Humanity: Performs micro projects in rural villages that bring sustainable and meaningful benefit to individuals and communities.
- The 6th Branch: A veteran-led community service organization that tackles aggressive community service projects alongside civilian volunteers.
“We can’t look to the future as a nation with some families still looking for the next meal,” said Bill Shore, Founder and CEO, Share Our Strength, at the June 19 Economy Forum, “Community Revitalization Through Social Entrepreneurship,” sponsored by Chase.

Looking to nurture new thinking on tackling long-standing social issues, Shore joined a panel of leaders who shared their approaches to community development, the lessons they’ve learned, and how to best support civic entrepreneurship in communities.

Other participants included: Matthew Beardall, Market President, Commercial Banking, Md., D.C. and Va., JPMorgan Chase; Lisa Hall, President and CEO of Calvert Foundation; Nick Vilelle, founder of Cause Bar DC; Jonathan Greenblatt, Special Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation in the Domestic Policy Council; and Darius Graham, Co-Founder, D.C. Social Innovation Project & Social Entrepreneur-in-Residence at the University of Maryland Smith School of Business.

Outstanding volunteers, institutions and corporations were honored at Conference for their commitment to service and civic engagement. Congratulations to the following award winners:

2013 Corporate Engagement Award of Excellence: HP and The Ritz-Carlton

George W. Romney Excellence Award:
HandsOn Greater Richmond

Daily Point of Light Award:
Aaron Hurst, President and Founder,
Taproot Foundation

Corporate Volunteer Council of the Year Award: Corporate Volunteer Council of Montgomery County (Maryland)

Corporate Volunteer Council Fast Start Award: Corporate Volunteer Council of Orange County (California)

Hasbro Community Action Heroes:
Yash Gupta, Carter Jenkins, Stephanie Jennis, Zachary Morgan, Grace Ann Remey, and Katie Stagliano

President’s Volunteer Service Awards:
Cliff Burrows, Gene Carter, Joe Leal, and Valencia Pease

Conference is coming to beautiful and historic Atlanta in 2014! Next year, Conference promises to unite thousands of volunteers for service, education and networking. For the latest updates on 2014 Conference, watch the Points of Light website at www.pointsoflight.org and be sure to follow Points of Light on Facebook and Twitter.
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