

Volunteers Honored, New Funding and Management Mechanism Launched

Recipients of the Presidential Call to Service Award

Representing President Bush, USAID Administrator Natsios presented the Presidential Call to Service Award to 11 individuals involved in Volunteers for Prosperity. Each of these donated more than 4,000 hours over their lifetimes in support of international economic growth. Pictured here is Damon Symanski, a dairy farmer from Pulaski, Wisconsin. Mr. Symanski has served in 64 assignments totaling more than 8,500 unpaid hours in Poland, Russia, and elsewhere in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. He volunteered through the organization ACDI/VOCA. Other award recipients include:

Citizens Development Corps - Don Marshall
International Executive Service Corps - Susan Slomback and Edward L. Tucker
Winrock International - John Marenic
Partners of the Americas - Sherin Bowen
Financial Services Volunteer Corps - John Douglas
MBA Enterprise Corps - Frank Bafaro, John Walter, William Sycalik and Ian O'Brien

American professionals affiliated with Volunteers for Prosperity received the highest honors of the President's Volunteer Service Awards in a ceremony in Washington May 18, 2004. On behalf of President Bush, U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Andrew S. Natsios presented the Presidential Call to Service Award to 11 American professionals who each had served more than 4,000 volunteer hours over their lifetimes in support of the U.S. international prosperity agenda. U.S. Rep. Doug Bereuter (R-Nebraska), a senior member of the House International Relations Committee, also took part in the ceremony.

Besides the Presidential Call to Service Award, other levels of the President's Volunteer Service Award are bronze, silver and gold. A minimum of 100 hours of qualified service is required for the bronze cat-

egory. All organizations participating in Volunteers for Prosperity are encouraged to become certifying organizations for the presentation of these awards to deserving individuals. Visit <http://www.presidentialserviceawards.gov/> to enroll.

While Volunteers for Prosperity is a new "call to service" for highly experienced American professionals, there is a long tradition of American volunteer service in support of world stability and development. The May 18 ceremony marked the 50th anniversary of U.S. volunteer programs in economic growth and agricultural development.

"Volunteerism is an important part of America's response to problems in the developing world. From the Peace Corp to today's Farmer-to-Farmer programs, American volunteers have been making a difference in these countries for 50 years. Today we take time to acknowledge their efforts and thank them for their support of so many worthwhile programs around the world," said Administrator Natsios.

The May 18 event also represented the official launch of a significant contribution to the Volunteers for Prosperity initiative - a consortium of 15 organizations called Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA). Earlier this year, USAID awarded \$2.5 million to VEGA. With this award, VEGA volunteers can work directly with USAID missions to design, develop and rapidly implement technical assistance projects to address the host countries' programs.

This award provides for VEGA professionals to help USAID mission officials assess and evaluate the economic priorities of the host country, and formulate effective technical assistance projects to encourage economic growth and development in transition and developing countries.

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“VEGA is an efficient funding and management mechanism to support critical economic growth activities of Volunteers for Prosperity,” said Volunteers for Prosperity director Jack Hawkins.

Alliance member organizations are well respected in the field of international economic development, and have decades of collective experience in designing and implementing technical assistance programs. VEGA members have assisted in the implementation of over \$770 million of USAID-funded technical assistance projects over the past forty years. VEGA’s member organizations have deployed volunteers to more than 50,000 overseas assignments in 148 countries serving in every USAID mission.

VEGA members draw on the experience and skills of over 30,000 volunteers to provide host country officials and private sector counterparts’ economic assistance and training. Senior business leaders, industry experts, and skilled technicians frequently serve as volunteers, donating their expertise and experience to help build stronger economies overseas.

These volunteers are committed, and donate significant time and energy to their projects. Most have served over several years, and have completed multiple 4-6 week assignments overseas.